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Third-Party Administrators in Public-Private Partnerships: A Multiple Case Study

Beata Ewa Haug
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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Beata Haug

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Walden University
2015

Abstract

Third-Party Administrators in Public-Private Partnerships: A Multiple Case Study

by

Beata Ewa Haug

MBA, Lakeland College, 2011

BA, Lakeland College, 2007

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2015

Abstract

Local public agencies turn to public-private partnerships (PPPs) to allow greater participation by private firms in delivering public services. In the last 25 years, private organizations had been reluctant to form PPPs with local government agencies because of the complex procurement processes and the bureaucratic business environment. Guided by the decision theory and complex adaptive systems theory, the purpose of this multiple case study was to identify what information leaders within third-party administrators (TPAs) need regarding the contracting process in the formation of PPPs. The data collection process consisted of face-to-face interviews with 4 executive leaders of 3 Wisconsin state licensed TPAs and examination of contracts and plan service agreements (PSAs) between TPAs and local government agencies. The data was analyzed using the Yin 5-step data analysis method and cross-case analysis. The results indicated that TPA leaders must understand collaborative leadership, key players, roles and responsibilities, and specialized services in the formation of a PPP; change and transfer of controlling interest, and understanding the strengths and weakness of contract provisions are complex business systems that influence the decision to form a PPP; ERISA and compliance with applicable federal and state laws are critical contract stipulations to consider in the formation of PPPs; that market assessment, health care reform, and transparency between private and public partners are critical in the formation of PPPs. The implications for social change include new insights for PPP leaders that may enhance the effectiveness of social services and save taxpayers' money.

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Dedication

The dedication of this study is to my family, particularly to my husband Mr. Michael Haug and our two daughters, Jessica and April Haug. My husband's continuous support throughout our marriage and through this educational journey has been remarkable. Thank you for sacrificing the time for me to complete my studies and for always encouraging me that all things are possible through dedication and perseverance. Thank you for taking care of our two beautiful daughters as I progressed through this demanding doctoral journey. Through your unconditional love and continual support, constant encouragement, and unwavering belief in me, you laid the foundation for the person I became. The dedication of this project also goes to my parents, Mieczysław and Teresa Kulas. Thank you for your bravery and sacrificing so much in the hope that I would have a better life in the United States.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The formation of the public-private partnerships (PPPs) is a government initiative to enable corporate growth and innovation to create an economic value (Kamal, 2012). Despite operational complexities of the interaction between the public and private sector, government agencies in various municipalities increasingly outsource fiscal operations to private companies (McIvor, McCracken, & McHugh, 2011). Many variables affect the complex contracting process information of PPPs. The focus of the qualitative multiple-case study was to examine the information some managers within third-party administrators (TPAs) need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs.

Background of the Problem

The economy and political environment pose challenges regarding how leaders in the private sector manage complex procurements in PPPs (Kertesz, 2012). In PPPs, the diverse dynamics of business systems and models can be a source of unpredictability and instability (Deverka & Dreyfus, 2014). In the PPP business environment, TPAs continue to be the most efficient source of benefits administrative services for the public sector (Keck, 2013). Rufín and Rivera-Santos (2012) stressed the importance of an established alliance between the public and private sectors to overcome the weaknesses of the public sector and to allow proper outsourcing with the private sector.

Problem Statement

PPPs are agreements intended to improve public services through innovative operational efficiencies, yet since 1985 private companies showed reluctance in forming PPPs in the United States (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2011). Conflicts in business models often trigger the lack of cooperation between contracting parties (Nisar, 2013) and uncertainties in state government's laws and regulations concerning contract provisions (May & Koski, 2013). Between 1985 and 2010, government agencies in the United States formed 363 PPPs with a total value of \$59.5 billion (Public Works Financing, 2010), which is 0.075% of the total spending at all government levels during the same period (U.S. Department of Health Commerce, 2014). The general business problem is that most TPAs and local government agencies do not enter contracts to form PPPs (Osei-Kyei & Chan, 2015). The specific business problem is that some TPAs lack information regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the information some managers within TPAs need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs. The study population included experienced leaders who directly participated in the PPPs contracting process. Four leaders with decision-making authority from three Wisconsin state licensed TPA companies that provide comprehensive benefits administration and management

services participated. The TPA leaders with decision-making authority in those three companies met the needs for this study, because of their familiarity with the information necessary regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of PPPs based on real-life experiences. The implications for positive social change included an increased value to employee health care benefits, trustees, beneficiaries, and taxpayer savings in the provision of public services (Simoneaux & Stroud, 2013).

Nature of the Study

The research method for this study was qualitative. A qualitative research method helps researchers understand social behaviors among groups of participants in a social setting (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011). The qualitative methodology suited the needs of this study because the focus of the study was to explore the social complexity in a stringent business environment in the formation of the PPPs. The objectives of the quantitative method are to be conclusive, enumerate a problem, and determine relationships between variables (Plotnikov & Vertakova, 2014). The goal of the mixed method focuses on the real-life contextual understanding of a phenomenon using multilevel perspectives (Bernard, 2013). The quantitative and mixed methods did not meet the needs of this study because the purpose of this study did not involve the enumeration of data, testing of variables, hypothesis testing, or developing multiple perspectives.

The goal of a multiple-case study design is to examine social complexity

in various units within identifiable situations in which multiple sources of evidence exist (Yin, 2014). A multiple case study design suited this study because the focal point was scholarly inquiry and analysis of the contractual agreements between private and public sector in PPPs. I considered four other qualitative designs for this study, which were ethnography, phenomenology, heuristic, and narrative inquiry. Ethnography did not meet the needs of this study. The purpose of this study was not to obtain an understanding of people or their entire culture (Weis & Fine, 2012). The phenomenological, heuristic, and narrative inquiry did not suit the needs for researching this specific business problem. This study did not include a focus on human experiences from the view of those living the phenomenon, on narrating life stories, or discovering meanings of experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2014).

Research Question

The research question for the proposed study was: What information do some managers within TPAs need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPP?

Interview Questions

1. What information do managers within TPAs need on the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPP?
2. What critical information did you consider during the contracting process when forming the PPPs?

3. What TPA capabilities did the state's contract provisions affect in the formation of the PPPs?
4. What TPA capabilities did the state's contract provisions strengthen in the formation of the PPPs?
5. What TPA capabilities did the state's contract provisions weaken in the formation of the PPPs?
6. What contract stipulations did you consider as a benefit to your organization when forming the PPPs? Why did you consider these to be a benefit to your organization?
7. What state's contract stipulations did you consider a risk to your organization when forming the PPPs? Why did you consider these to be a risk to your organization?
8. What other information would you like to provide regarding contracting for PPPs?

Conceptual Framework

The decision theory and complex adaptive systems theory were the conceptual frameworks for this study. The two theories provided a framework for assessing the complex contracting process in a democratic business environment and decisions to form PPPs. Barnard's (1938) decision theory and Buckley's (1967) complex adaptive systems theory included relevancy in business practice to research and manage the complex business environment. In 1938, Barnard first

introduced the idea of a decision theory in the business world. The decision theory was a framework to determine how leaders made business decisions using logical, rational, or optimal choices based on certainties, uncertainties, and conflicts (Barnard, 1938). I examined the decision theory to understand the conceptual framework for the formation of PPPs.

In 1967, Buckley introduced the complex adaptive systems theory as a scientific exploration on the high degree of systematic interdependence and adaptability to a changing environment and how those adaptations can occur. The complex adaptive systems theory signifies autonomous agents and network structure that make decisions and act on them based on information in their existing business environment (Hammer, Edwards, & Tapinos, 2012). I examined the complex adaptive systems theory to understand constraints and limitations in an authoritative and democratic environment.

Operational Definitions

Claim processing. For the purposes of this study, claim processing included health insurance plan claims processed and paid by a TPA on behalf of public and private entities (Fleet, 2011).

Contract. A contract is a binding, legal, and enforceable agreement between two or more parties (Campbell, 2013; MacLeod, 2011). Contract agreements included enforcement under the provisions of state and federal law (Campbell, 2013; MacLeod, 2011).

Government fixed price contracts. Fixed-price contracts permit reimbursable and allowable incurred costs with an established ceiling not to exceed limits as stated in the contracts (Federal Acquisitions Regulations, 2014).

Local government. A local government entity is an administrative municipality such as a city, town, county, or special district (Kiewiet & McCubbins, 2014).

Plan service agreement (PSA). A PSA is a written document that establishes how the supervisors or administrators will work together in administering and supervising services (MacLeod, 2011).

Private sector. The National Council for Public-Private Partnerships (NCPPP) identified the private sector as an organization controlled by individuals for profit not owned and operated by the U.S. government (NCPPP, 2014).

Public-private partnership (PPP). A PPP is an agreement between the government and private sector for the provision of infrastructure and social services (Zangoueinezhad & Azar, 2014).

Self-funded insurance plan. A self-funded insurance plan is a health plan with an employer or organization serving as the insurance company administering health care benefits (Feldman, 2012; McLeese, 2011).

Third-party administration (TPA). A TPA is a state-licensed organization that provides comprehensive ongoing benefits administration and management services to a client employer as agreed (Scialabba, 2012).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

During the development of this study, I made certain critical self-reflections to recognize the boundaries of this study as suggested by Merriam (2014). Silverman (2013) theorized that in a qualitative study, the researcher makes assumptions based on self-evident truths and their personal experience. Limitations are potential weaknesses of the study such as researcher biases and perceptual misrepresentations (Silverman, 2013). Similarly, delimitations are limitations imposed deliberately by the researcher (Silverman, 2013). The following is a summary of the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of this study.

Assumptions

Silverman (2013) asserted that assumptions were realistic expectations that a researcher believed to be true or plausible. Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) argued that the assumption provides a foundation for concepts and logic not proven or verified; however, without assumptions the study may not progress. The basis of this study included five assumptions. The first assumption was participants demonstrated integrity, sincerity, and truthfulness based on their experiences during the open-ended face-to-face recorded interviews. The second assumption was the questions asked during the interview process were clear and understandable, presented in an unbiased manner, and relevant to PPPs. The third assumption was TPA entities that provided comprehensive benefits administration

and management services included similar contract provisions with public sector entities within the state of Wisconsin. The fourth assumption was TPA entities that provided comprehensive services operated under similar laws and statutory requirements regulated by the State of Wisconsin. The fifth assumption in the study was the collection and analyzes of multiple sources of data were the best approach for collecting data.

Limitations

Silverman (2013) identified that limitations are inadequacies, circumstances, or influences that cannot be controlled and place restrictions on a research study. Leedy and Ormrod (2013) described limitations as potential weaknesses of the study. There were four limitations of this study. The first limitation was the population size in the multiple-case study. According to Small (2011), qualitative, multiple case studies use small populations that could pose difficulties in reaching adequate defense or may not reflect similar entities. The second limitation was the diverse definitions and interpretations of a complex and political environment within the participants selected for this study. The third limitation was the participants' willingness to identify and acknowledge bias linked to their expertise in understanding a complex and political government environment. The fourth limitation was the nature of the research because qualitative studies may not be transferable to the broad population.

Delimitations

Delimitations of a study are characteristics that arise from limitations in the scope or boundaries of the proposed study (Thomas, Nelson, & Silverman, 2011). Similarly, Ells (2011) added that delimitations are exclusionary and inclusionary decisions made by the researcher when constructing a research design. This study depended on four delimitations. The first delimitation was this study did not focus on TPAs that provided comprehensive benefits administrative and management services specifically for private organizations, not directly relevant to PPPs. The second delimitation was the exclusion of nonmanagement staff within TPA organizations because they had limited authority in the contracting process related to this study. The rationale for this study included limitations to PPPs between TPA and local government entities. In addition, this study included leaders (i.e., executive personnel and senior management) with the authority to make decisions in TPA organizations in the state of Wisconsin.

Significance of the Study

The literature illustrates the use of PPPs is a growing trend in the United States. The U.S. economic slowdown that began in late 2006, PPPs include increasing importance to provide effective collaboration to achieve a particular goal or set of objectives (Brewer & Brewer, 2011). Although PPPs can be a more complicated contractual process than any other types of procurement, PPP is a fast growing arena to improve economic development (Melnikas, 2013).

Contribution to Business Practice

The findings from this study may help to improve existing business practices by providing an in-depth understanding how TPAs that provide comprehensive benefits administration and management services can successfully form PPPs in a complex public environment. In addition, this study may contribute to efficient practices in a successful formation of the PPPs. Melnikas (2013) suggested that building business relationships between private and public management could generate opportunities to enhance communication channels, enrich transparency, and strengthen working partnerships. A better understanding of the public-private environment and the complex contracting process within local government agencies might improve collaborative relationships, provide and exchange knowledge, and leverage resources toward a common goal to make the project a success.

Implications for Social Change

PPPs play a significant role in society because public expenditures consume substantial taxpayers' contributions (Albanese & Modica, 2012). The findings from this study might help understand the need for collaboration and shared resources through the formation of the PPP toward social change. A structure of a successful PPP may promote environmental change and improve social conditions by overcoming the financial crisis and save taxpayer's money (Brewer & Brewer, 2011). In addition, a successful formation of the PPP may

enhance the effectiveness of social services and accelerate the response to emerging economic challenges (Alm, Buschman, & Sjoquist, 2011). Local government embraced the use of PPP to increase social well-being by improving service delivery and reducing costs. The goals of PPP are to improve the quality and quantity of collaboration, provide opportunities for employment and increase resources, and provide lasting solutions to community problems (Melnikas, 2013).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

This qualitative multiple-case study included exploration of the information some managers within TPAs need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs. In conducting a review of the literature, peer-reviewed articles provided a foundation for the business problem and the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs. The contexts of the literature review include research that provides an in-depth explanation of the organizational decision-making process in real world constraints and limitations in the formation of the PPPs. The research also focused on the procurement contracting process, PPPs, and the role of the TPA. I examined the complex adaptive systems and decision theory to understand the existing complex business partnerships between private and public entities.

The primary research libraries and databases included Walden University Library, ProQuest, Google Scholar, Thoreau, SAGE, and EBSCO. I examined peer-reviewed journals, books, expert reports, government websites, dissertations,

and census data from the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS; 2014).

Figure 1 displays a detailed tree diagram of the literature review elements and subsections.

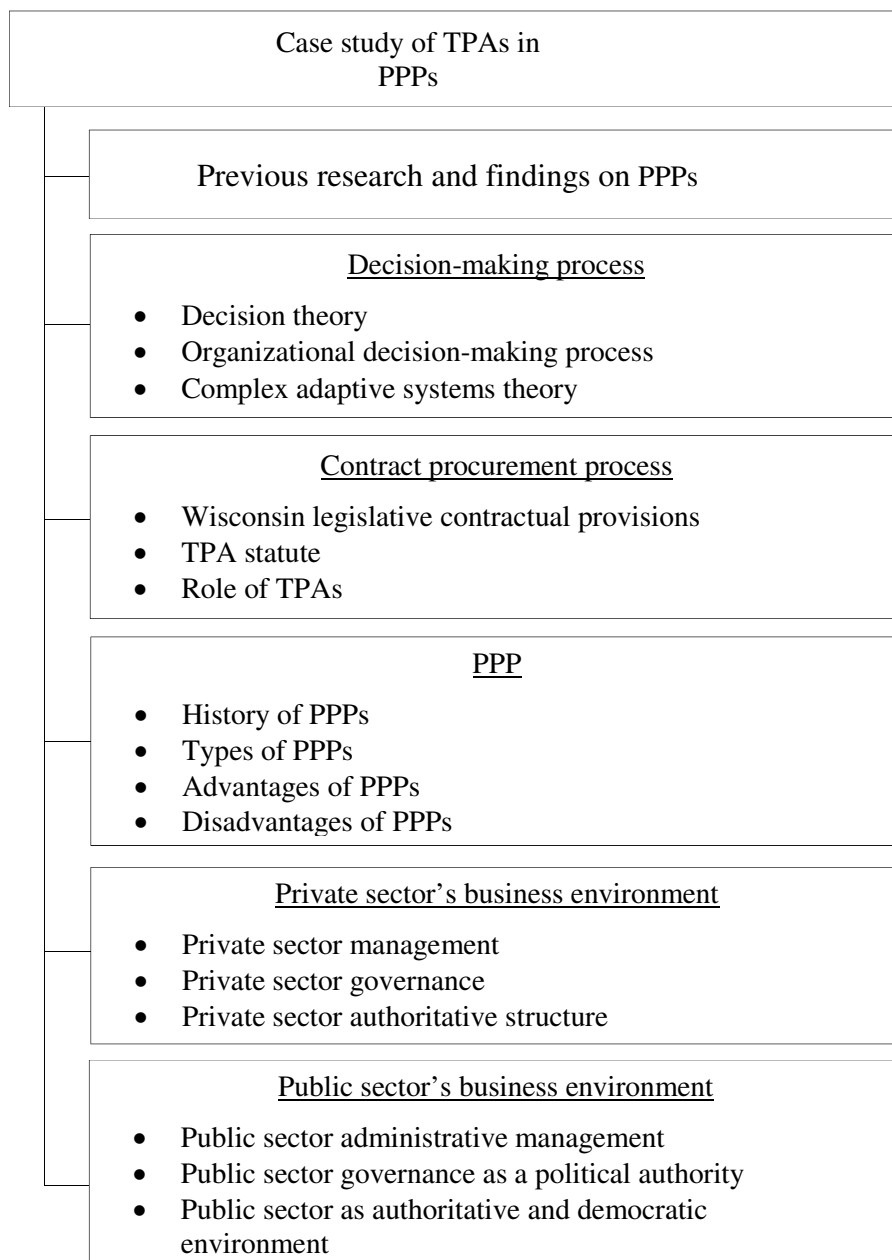


Figure 1. A tree diagram of the literature review elements and subsections.

The number of references provided in the literature review is 177. Of these, 154 (87%) are academic peer-reviewed within 5 years of the anticipated graduation date of 2015. Table 1 reflects the details of the number and sources utilized in the literature review for this study.

Table 1

Literature Review Source Count

Literature type	Recent (within 5 years of 2015)	Total sources	% (within 5 years of 2015)
Peer-reviewed journals	154	156	87%
Books	6	15	3%
Non-peer reviewed	3	6	2%
Total	163	177	92%

Previous Research and Findings on PPPs

The public and private companies face similar challenges and threats to those confronting local government because of an unstable and uncertain economic environment (Kamal, 2012). Business entities, public and private, experience a higher demand for quality services, an order to which they must respond with innovation and increased efficiency (Kamal, 2012). Kertesz (2012) theorized that the TPAs who provide comprehensive benefits services and who did not understand how to deal with the rigidities of the bureaucratic environment failed to remain profitable. In addition, TPA firms not willing to accept and abide

by government compliance responsibilities faced heavy penalties and lawsuits depleting their assets (Kertesz, 2012).

This qualitative multiple-case was an extension of previous research on the influencing factors of political relationships with local government agencies in PPP environment. Siemiatycki (2011) conducted an experiential study of the complex interorganizational networks between PPPs and their alignment in long-term partnerships. Siemiatycki conducted an analysis of governmental records and firms that participated in every PPP project in the United Kingdom between 1987 and 2009. Siemiatycki proposed that differences in PPPs have tensions and drawbacks in collaboration.

Siemiatycki's (2011) conclusion included recognition that public organizations in collaborative relationships with private sectors depended on their expertise over government bureaucracy. In addition, Siemiatycki suggested that extensive repeat partnerships encouraged innovation, created ongoing trusting relationships and reduction in costs, and contributed toward higher delivery. Siemiatycki recommended that a qualitative study might provide a further understanding of what constitutes existing relationships that connect PPPs to improve performance through decision-making processes.

Velotti, Botti, and Vesci (2012) examined the decision-making process between PPP and the new public management and new public governance using a qualitative comparative case study and secondary data. PPP was a unit of analysis

in Italian cities with particular reference to processes of coproduction and cocreation strategies and their differentiating PPP variables (Velotti et al., 2012). The differentiating PPP variables included degrees of participant involvement and decision-making process, legitimacy, transparency, and accountability (Velotti et al., 2012).

The goal of the Velotti et al. (2012) study was to understand how different methods of engagement between private-public partners in decision-making influenced sustainability in partnerships. Velotti et al. disclosed that public entities did not communicate effectively, and the lack of transparency led private sector partners to think the expectations were unclear and inconclusive. Further, lack of transparency between private-public organizations created uncertainties, and obscure legitimacy resulted in low sustainability. Velotti et al. advocated the need for further research to understand what sources or agents constituted a political environment and encouraged favorable legitimacy, accountability, and transparency between private-public entities to resolve their differences. Therefore, the findings from this study may provide a further understanding of what agents constitute desirable outcomes, in particular between public-private entities, to manage complex decision-making gaps.

Appleton-Dyer, Clinton, Carswell, and McNeill (2012) conducted a study to examine key concepts for evaluating influences understood to be critical private-public partnerships. Appleton-Dyer et al. analyzed key concepts from a

diverse range of contexts based on the evaluation of the influence models and existing theories on individual characteristics, stakeholders, and partnership context. Appleton-Dyer et al. based their research on an assessment of relationship attributes, functions, and behaviors that affected private-public alliances and their stakeholders.

Based on findings by Appleton-Dyer et al. (2012), public sector partnerships operated under specific policy context, thus the role of private sector partners was to understand their influences of shared power and pathways toward successful businesses. Similarly, Appleton-Dyer et al. argued that the magnitude of system complexities between private and public sector had a significant effect on business outcomes. Appleton-Dyer et al. recommended further research to explore in-depth types of participations needed to facilitate influence between private-public partnerships (e.g., collective or interpersonal levels).

Boardman and Vining (2012) advocated that scholars in various disciplines did not include careful study of partnerships between private (such as TPAs) and public or government organizations. Jiahuan (2013) wrote that limited research exists on relationships in a complex and bureaucratic environment and a private collaborative approach to overcoming partnership barriers. Similarly, corporate management and public administration relationships and alliances do not include clear understanding to achieve specific goals (Camén, Gottfridsson, & Rundh, 2012).

Landow and Ebdon (2012) proposed that relationships between private and public sectors be joint partnerships. However, the need to understand how these relationships differ from traditional business partnerships and how they contractually associate in joint ventures is essential to successful partnerships for services (Landow & Ebdon, 2012). Amram and Crawford (2011) and later Velotti et al. (2012) discussed that relationships with private and public sectors hold value. However, there are significant implications that individual industries will need to overcome (Amram & Crawford, 2011; Velotti et al., 2012).

Decision-Making Process

This section of literature includes critical factors to decision-making in complex systems that were relevant to this study. This section includes a summary of the literature review on the organizational decision-making process, decision theory, and complex adaptive systems theory. The literature review was significant to this qualitative case study because PPPs represent the connection of complex contract process in a public sector environment. Van Der Maas, Molenaar, Maris, Kievit, and Borsboom (2011) argued that cognitive psychology be the dynamic of choices individuals make. Theories and heuristics can explain how individuals make decisions and what factors influence the decision-making process (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011).

Gigerenzer and Gaissmaier (2011) identified that past experiences, cognitive biases, cultural differences, personal commitment and personal beliefs

influence the decision-making process. Decision-making includes a history back to the early work of Chester Barnard (1938; 1962). Akinici and Sadler-Smith (2012) argued that individuals' decisions included guidance to follow in various situations by familial relationships, relevance, past experiences, and social beliefs. Takemura (2014) stated that often the decision-making process involved specifics to particular situations that can be simple or complex in nature, requiring multiple steps to make decisions.

Decision Theory

Classical theories of choice emphasize decision-making as a rational process to describe how leaders make decisions (Betsch & Haberstroh, 2014). The traditional decision theory model involves highly rational, systematic, and comprehensive perspectives (Betsch & Haberstroh, 2014). Bouyssou, Dubois, Prade, and Pirlot (2013) added that in the traditional decision-making theory, the leaders make decisions based on a rational process and practical course of action that will maximize the attainment of their goals and objectives.

According to various theorists such as Edwards (1954), Simon (1960), and later Janis and Mann (1977), the process of decision-making varies considerably, depending on the methodological foundation of decision models. Edwards added that different decision-making strategies were the extent to which leaders make a decision based on trade-offs and attributes to their organizations. Janis and Mann supported Edwards's theory by stating that the decision-making process screens

and eliminates alternatives through sequential comparison or assessment of benefits and risks.

Simon (1960, 1997) grouped decision-making into three models: (a) the classical decision-making model, (b) administrative decision-making model, and (c) political decision model. Simon's (1960, 1997) characteristics of the classical decision-making process are decision goals, clear objectives, the rationale used, and all possible alternatives were considered. In the administrative decision-making mode, decision goals do not often include clear identification (Simon 1960, 1997). Similarly, the model does not always use a rational process as alternatives have limitations, and boundaries influence the decision-making within the process (Simon 1960, 1997). Last, in the political decision model, decisions are diverse and conflicting, conditions of uncertainty exist, bargaining and negotiations depend on agendas and political unions, and policymakers can act autonomously. According to Simon's (1997) model, individuals base their decisions on the satisfying choices, limitations, and boundaries of the decision makers.

The classical decision theory includes the assumption that leaders make decisions by gathering relevant information to choose the best alternative using rationale (Betsch & Haberstroh, 2014; Bouyssou et al., 2013; Simon, 1960). The goal of the classical decision theory is to make assumptions based on predetermined or distinct situations (Betsch & Haberstroh, 2014; Bouyssou et al.,

2013; Simon, 1960). Management must consider all possible alternatives, course of action, outcomes, and consequences of any decisions made (Betsch & Haberstroh, 2014; Bouyssou et al., 2013; Simon, 1960).

Effective decision makers must possess the ability to forecast the outcomes of each possible alternative that best fit a particular situation (Walter, Kellermanns, & Lechner, 2012). Whether a decision-making process is programmed or classical, a decision process typically consists of sequential phases. The five sequential steps in a decision process are (a) identify a problem or opportunity, (b) formulate goals and objectives, (c) plan alternatives by collecting data, (d) assess alternatives and select the best option, and (e) implement and evaluate decision effectiveness (Simon, 1960, 1997).

Ferreira, Manso, and Silva (2014) argued that the private and public sector varied in motivations, because of different environments or context. In the private sector, decisions associated with market forces and in the public sector are political forces (Ferreira et al., 2014; Vecchiato, 2012). Similarly, Kivleniece and Quelin (2012) compared the public and private sector decision-making dynamics and how leaders implied them in the decision content. Kivleniece and Quelin concluded that in the private sector, leaders are in favor of analysis-based decisions, and in the public sector, leaders are more in favor of bargaining-bases decisions. In addition, Kuipers et al. (2014) suggested that in the private sector,

managers make decisions based on opportunities while in public sector decisions were problem-based.

Private sector. In the classical decision-making model, the decision makers make various assumptions in all stages in the process (Betsch & Haberstroh, 2014; Bouyssou et al., 2013; Simon, 1960). In the private sector, leaders include increased latitude and resources to analyze and show due diligence when making business decisions (Thiel, Bagdasarov, Harkrider, Johnson, & Mumford, 2012). Similarly, in the private sector, accountability with uncertainty and risks includes consideration before taking any actions (Thiel et al., 2012). Savikhin and Sheremeta (2013) theorized that ongoing competitive environment causes decision makers to be more action-oriented and sensitive to increased risks than those of the public sector.

The administrative and political decision-making process can pose challenges to a private sector, because of the pervasive and complex political environment (Jennings & Hall, 2012). Jennings and Hall theorized that a leader in the private sector must understand the political terrain to analyze and navigate through the complex political environment during the decision-making process. Jurisch, Ika, Wolf, and Krcmar (2013) made interesting observations through case studies in a decision process between public and private leaders.

In the private sector, leaders who worked in PPPs experienced public sector as restrictive and bureaucratic (Jurisch et al., 2013). Conversely, leaders in

the public sector who worked in PPPs experienced private sector as extremely persuasive and unsupportive of the restrictive and bureaucratic environment (Jurisch et al., 2013). In contrast to the public sector, leaders in the private sector are proactive in decision-making (Anderson, Michael, & Peirce, 2012). In addition, leaders in the private sector are more proactive and opportunity based; therefore, persuasion meets successful outcomes (Anderson et al., 2012).

Public sector. In the public sector, the decision-making is a personalized bargaining process, driven by agendas rather than in a rational, systematic, and comprehensive manner (Betsch & Haberstroh, 2014; Simon, 1997). Influence and power among leaders in the public sector differ in a deliberative manner (Walter et al., 2012). That is, power and influence strategies are in the best interest of the existing general problem, instead of the organization as a whole and consideration of the long-term consequences (Walter et al., 2012).

Walter et al. (2012) added that the administrative and political decision-making models were standard amongst public organizations. The decision makers have varying degrees of motivation, agendas, policies and procedures enforced by the governing bodies. In the administrative decision-making model, decision makers chose alternatives that satisfy acceptable objectives instead of the optimal alternative with the highest value (Simon, 1997). Simon (1997) also theorized that meeting acceptable targets in a decision-making process were rational strategy

leaders chose to delay a decision to search for further alternatives with higher payoffs.

Frey, Schulz-Hardt, and Stahlberg (2013) suggested that the political climate had a significant influence on the decision-making process and outcomes in any groups and organizations. The four political conditions are complex policies, hierarchy of organizational structure, various public stakeholders, and unpredictable and unstable function of the relative power and authority of political leaders (Simon, 1997). Making business decisions under uncertainty requires dynamic planning process that provides the basis for informed and consistent decisions (Frey et al., 2013).

Organizational Decision-Making Process

Often, the decision-making processes include guidance by a formalized logical plan that is the most critical process in any organizations (Wong, Ormiston, & Tetlock, 2011). Many theorists argued that the decision process is one of the most significant and necessary responsibilities of management in any organizations (Bouyssou et al., 2013; Cabantous & Gond, 2011). Organizational decision-making is an ongoing process of evaluating alternatives and making choices necessary for actions that depend on the right information being available (Bouyssou et al., 2013). Decision-making processes are intended to: (a) identify a problem and limiting factors, (b) develop and analyze alternatives, and (c) select the best solution and implement the decision. Making decisions include formation

by two or more alternatives made by top management (Bouyssou et al., 2013).

The examination and analysis of various options can arrive at the best possible alternatives during the decision-making process (Cabantous & Gond, 2011).

Simon (1997) argued that characteristics of an organizational decision-making process involve rationality, nature and limitations and influences of organizational structure. Lahiri and Narayanan (2013) discussed strategic decisions, as a well-structured process with activities structured around innovations, solutions, and continuous evaluations. A strategic decision has multiple meanings by many authors; however, the primary focus is to establish a course of actions in competitive and economic challenging situations (Woolley, 2011).

In strategic decisions, the process requires appropriate timing, resources, expertise, imagination, and knowledge (Bouyssou et al., 2013). Klingebiel and De Meyer (2013) highlighted that short-term and long-term decisions were future-focused, evaluated scenarios, and assessed external and internal environments in new uncertainties. Wong et al. (2011) identified strategic decisions as an opportunity to evaluate organizational objectives, improve benefits and outcomes, develop critical steps to achieving goals, evaluate risks, and measure progress.

The decision-making process in any organization aims toward existing and future sustainability through the development of visions and objectives on how to achieve them (Vecchiato, 2012). Based on the existing literature, leaders support

strategic decision planning as ways to develop a long-term plan toward organizational sustainability (Al-Turki, 2011). Al-Turki added that any organization can benefit from long-term planning because, in the 2015 business environment, situational conditions require a meaningful vision of the organization's future (Al-Turki, 2011). A study by Mitchell, Shepherd, and Sharfman (2011) determined that strategic decisions in organizations included the goals to plan and react to the fluctuating market and frequent economic changes.

Complex Adaptive Systems Theory

Dixon, Meyer, and Day (2014) identified adaptability as the ability to respond to a changed environment to improve sustainability and gain competitive advantage. In addition, adaptability includes presumption when organizations recognize the need for change based on the existing situation or future requirements to manage complex and interconnected systems (Briciu, Capusneanu, Topor, & Burdea, 2014). In business management, a complex environment can create unknowable and unpredictable landscape and often cannot be anticipated in advance (Liu, 2013). In addition, a complex system has no particular controller, thus, depends on coherent systems, including the presence of agents (Hammer et al., 2012).

DeRue (2011) and later Paina and Peters (2012) theorized that the complex adaptive systems theory was a system function that enables self-directed individuals to engage in collective decision-making in a complex environment.

The complex adaptive systems theory signifies autonomous agents and network structure to make decisions and act on them based on information in their existing environment (Hammer et al., 2012). The complex adaptive systems theory emerged from the scientific framework of nonlinear systems dynamics that explained how various agents interact and adapt components governing rules sensitive to the environment (Marion, 1999). In management perspective, complex adaptive systems theory explores a new phenomenon where relationships emerge from diverse interactions in an unpredictable and unplanned environment (Reiman, Rollenhagen, Pietikäinen, & Heikkilä, 2015).

The complex adaptive systems theory also includes the suggestion that the outcomes from evolving diverse interactions, regularities emerge and new systems can be put in place (Reiman et al., 2015). Over time, the unpredictable agent changes, and thus the process includes replication (Reiman et al., 2015). An extension to the complex adaptive systems theory is the co-evolution. According to Foster and Pyka (2014), diverse environments coexist independently in the process; however, as the environment changes, the need to accommodate between agents takes place to ensure existing systems fit accordingly. Equally, when the actors change to accommodate to a new environment, the existing situation becomes transformed as well (Foster & Pyka, 2014). Foster and Pyka added that once stability emerged in a complex environment, the efficiency and effectiveness increases and both agents become stronger and co-evolve in their environment.

Stead and Stead (2013) stated that in a co-evolution environment, organizations in partnership developed resistance to chaos and uncertainty by the formation of joint survival systems.

The decision-making process in a complex business environment generates challenges and opportunities to optimize efficiency, respond to unexpected changes, mitigate risk, and predict cascading effects (Foster & Pyka, 2014). Relative to the relationship of the PPPs and the decision-making process, the aim of this section was to summarize and connect the organizational decision-making process, the decision theory, and the complex adaptive systems theory. The next section expands the complex decision-making process in the private sector. Examining the private sector decision-making process includes relevancy to the formation of the PPPs.

Contract Procurement Process

There are five stages in the PPP contract procurement process. After making a decision been to outsource services, the procurement process begins with the selection of the appropriate partnership model (Decarolis, 2014). The following steps include preparation of the request for proposal (RFP), evaluation of RFP requirements, awarding of the contract, and issuance of a contract agreement (Decarolis, 2014). Depending on the type of PPP and the complexity of the services, each procurement process requires extensive resources and weeks or months to complete (Bratt, Hallstedt, Robèrt, Broman, & Oldmark, 2013;

Decarolis, 2014). Similarly, the public procurement laws and federal health plan standards set restrictions on TPAs with minimal flexibility and pose complex requirements to fulfill the PPP contracts with local government agencies (Cruz & Marques, 2013).

Wisconsin Legislative Contractual Provisions

The legal environment of the host state includes a high likelihood to contain some restrictions on the TPAs to contract freely (Scialabba, 2012). McCann, Aranda-Mena, and Edwards (2014) added that a well-written contract may be unenforceable if it is not consistent with the host state laws and regulations. The existing laws adopted in the United States dictate how the PPP needs to adapt to fit within them (McCann et al., 2014).

Wisconsin does not have state legislative authority to implement PPPs. However, the Wisconsin Legislature adopted procurement laws identifying contractual services, the bidding process, purchasing power, and other relevant legislative purchasing provisions (Department of Administration [DOA], 2013). According to the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA), Wis. Stats. §§ 16.70-16.78, state, cities, and local government agencies must award contracts through a bidding process (DOA, 2013). The contracts include an award to the lowest responsible bidder, unless the bid exceeds the estimated reasonable value of the services or deemed not to be in the best interest of the public (DOA, 2013).

Wisconsin procurement laws included adoption to ensure compliance with the Wisconsin statutes and administrative codes, to and provide an open and fair competition for state contracts (DOA, 2013). Haruvy and Jap (2013) argued that competition through the bidding process encourage lower prices and higher quality goods and services. The public agencies develop a solicitation or bidding process with precise specifications to gather multiple vendors through a competitive environment (Marques & Berg, 2011).

The Wisconsin state procurement laws require that all public agencies use a consistent process to create a fair treatment of all vendors (DOT, 2013). An agency must publicly list all requests for bids or proposals, all proposals require equal evaluation process, and must have the same specifications presented in a solicitation (DOT, 2013). The DOT requires a request for a bid (RFB) for all purchased services above \$50,000. In addition, DOT requires a request for proposals (RFP) when an award cannot be made strictly on specified price.

The DOT (2013) requires that every public agency establish an evaluation committee and prepare criteria for scoring proposals prior to issuing an RFP. Equally, the committee must consist of at least three members, and one member must not have any affiliation with the public contracting agency or be an elected official or political appointee (DOT, 2013). The appointed committee may negotiate with multiple vendors prior to awarding the contract, and vendors may

be required to submit a best and final offer on the agreed upon price and service requirements (DOT, 2013).

TPA Statute

While many companies seek flexibility with self-funded health plans, few include preparation to administer their health plans (Feldman, 2012; Hall, 2012). Klepper (2013) added that companies who self-fund health plans cannot function without TPAs because of the complex statutory regulations and legal provisions. Palmer et al. (2012) stated that in most states, the administrative service agreement outlines the TPAs' duties with the employer. In this administrative service agreement, fundamental mechanisms for funding the claims, provisions for ancillary services, and fees alike are specified (Palmer et al., 2012). Insurance companies may also perform the function of a TPA under the administrative service only (ASO) arrangement (Palmer et al., 2012; Vats, Ash, & Ellis, 2013). In the ASO agreement, the employer bears the actual claims risk (Palmer et al., 2012; Vats et al., 2013). ASO agreements may appear similar to fully insured plan agreement, but they are not the same (Palmer et al., 2012; Vats et al., 2013). An ASO contract has significant preemption requirements under state insurance laws (Palmer et al., 2012; Vats et al., 2013).

In 1977, the National Association of Insurance Commissioners adopted a Third Party Administrator Statute known as Model Law 1090-1 (National Association of Insurance Commissioners [NAIC], 2011). The Model Law

requires TPAs who underwrite, adjust or settle life, annuities or health claims to be state licensed by the state department of insurance where the TPA engages in administrator activities (NAIC, 2011). The majority of the states adopted the Model Law including particular exemption from the licensure requirements as outlined in Model Law 1090-1, Section 1-a (NAIC, 2011). In 2011, the NAIC reported that 11 U.S. states including the District of Columbia do not require TPA licensures. In addition, 26 states did not adopt the Model Law, and 41 are must be state licensed except for 13 exemptions, as outlined in the NAIC Model Law 1090-1, Section 1(a).

In 1991, the State of Wisconsin adopted the Model Law 1090-1, and TPAs must require a state license under the Wis. Stat. § 633.01(1)(h) except for the exemptions outlined in the NAIC Model Law 1090-1, Section 1-a (Wisconsin Employee Benefit Plan Administrators and Principals, 2014). The Model Law requires that prior to any TPA functions, each TPA must apply for a licensure in each requiring state, where they provide the services including their home state license (NAIC, 2011). Similarly, the Model Law requires all state licensed TPA organizations to enter into a written agreement between the administrator and the hosting parties (i.e., public and private; NAIC, 2011). According to the Model Law, the agreement must include a statement of duties, provisions, and standards about the business of a TPA that will perform on behalf of their partners (NAIC, 2011).

Role of TPAs

This section of literature includes a definition of a TPA, types of TPAs, the formation of TPAs, functions of TPAs, and their business model. Successful PPPs depend on all leaders involved (Heres & Lasthuizen, 2012; Reynaers & De Graaf, 2014). TPAs that provide comprehensive benefits administration and management are vital partners of the future's health care landscape. Simoneaux and Stroud (2013) noted that TPAs are advocates for the advancement of public and business interests to foster quality in affordable health care delivery options for employers and their employees. In addition, TPAs' roles are to establish alliances to empower stakeholders, improve transparency, and costs savings in health care services to the working population who contribute toward health care benefits (Tawil, 2011).

Federal and state health care legislation and regulations have a critical effect on employers, employees, retirees, and anyone contributing toward health care benefits nationwide (Keck, 2013). Butcher (2013) identified that TPAs that provide comprehensive benefits services, government, and public legislators work together as a voice for helping communities. Butcher stated that TPAs' primary goal was to work together with governing entities to implement ongoing changes to the federal and state health care benefits.

Constant changes to the laws, regulatory languages, interpretations, and provisions increased the need for transparency (Butcher, 2013). With the

enactment of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2010, the TPAs and public entities will undoubtedly encounter challenges (Blumenthal, 2014). Blumenthal theorized that high professionalism, transparency, strong relationship, and continuous exchange in communication could overcome these challenges.

The Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (2014) revealed that in 2011, there were a total of 22.4 million government, state, and local full-time and part-time employees. Of these, 87% enrolled in health insurance plans (MEPS, 2014). In 2012, the public sector contributed a total of \$144 billion toward health benefits between government, state, and local employees and their agencies (MEPS, 2014).

In addition, according to Garmon (2013), two-thirds of the government, state, and local agencies self-fund their health insurance employee benefits. Hall (2012) disclosed that self-insured plans include complex state and federal regulation, making the business endeavor a complex and risky environment. In the 2015 business environment, many agencies (i.e., public and private entities) contract with independent TPAs for comprehensive benefits administration and management services to handle the intricacies of administering self-funded health plans (Taylor, 2011a). Reasons are to avoid substantial federal penalties, costly technology purchases, hire additional expertise, or train existing staff (Taylor, 2011a).

TPAs have been in operation since early 1933 to primarily service pension plans ordered in the Federal Taft-Hartley Act also called the Labor-Management Relations Act (1946). In 1974, the TPA industry had further grown after the enactment of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA, 1974), where private industries opted to self-fund benefits to save costs. Since the enactment of ERISA, companies require professional skills necessary to manage the complexities of self-funded health plans (Verno, 2014).

Self-funded health plans require high levels of expertise and resources to administer health benefits (Verno, 2014). Conrad, Grembowski, Hernandez, Lau, and Marcus-Smith (2014) argued that because of the complexities of managing health programs, many inexperienced employers paid substantial penalties for regulatory noncompliance practices with self-administered benefits. TPAs in the 2015 business environment that provide comprehensive benefits services depend on the servicing of private and public self-funded industries, processing claims, and managing health plans (Marshall et al., 2013).

Although TPAs do not assume insurance risk, their financial sustainability depends upon estimated claim count and cost per client (Scialabba, 2012). Scialabba stated that most TPAs' revenue streams came from several service fee options. The options might include per member per claim (PMPC), per employee per month (PEPM), enrollees, and the percentage paid on claims processed (Scialabba, 2012). Atlas and Sobotka (2013) concluded that TPAs included

difficulties forecasting the costs and revenues because of diverse service fees.

Further, TPAs are under stick delegations of clients' contracts, custom arrangements, and the capacity of beneficiaries (Keck, 2013).

The TPA industry is the preferred alternative for processing and paying claims on behalf of private and public industries (Davis & Pavur, 2014). The several reasons for outsourcing are manpower and expertise in health benefits and regulations, technology, lower administrative costs, and customer service (Davis & Pavur, 2014). A role of TPAs is to process claims and provide administrative assistance to agencies that provide health insurance, eligibility requirements, and enrollments alike (Simoneaux & Stroud, 2013). Plan administrators hold TPA organizations accountable for claim processing and TPAs have no responsibility to make discretionary decision on the clients' operations and control over their assets (Keck, 2013). Moreover, specific funds are set aside for claim payments by TPAs, and it is their responsibility to process claims in the terms and conditions specified in the contracts (Keck, 2013).

Approximately 79% of public and private agencies outsource health benefit administrative services with TPAs (Society of Professional Benefits Administration [SPBA], 2014). TPA industries are privately owned or insurance owned and serve as an independent entity (SPBA, 2014). In many cases, TPAs act as implementers and consultants; however, their clients or the benefits plan board of trustees make all the formal decisions (SPBA, 2014). The other authority that

mandates the use of TPAs is the government, including federal, state, county and city levels. The government oversees service rates, covered benefits, and regulations (Kautter, Pope, & Keenan, 2014). The medical officials make medical decisions, and TPAs have no legal authority to initiate any public and government or medical policies (Kautter et al., 2014; Nadash & Day, 2014). In Figure 2, I designed the context spheres of PPPs demonstrating how the TPA industry and government entities function as stand-alone organizations.

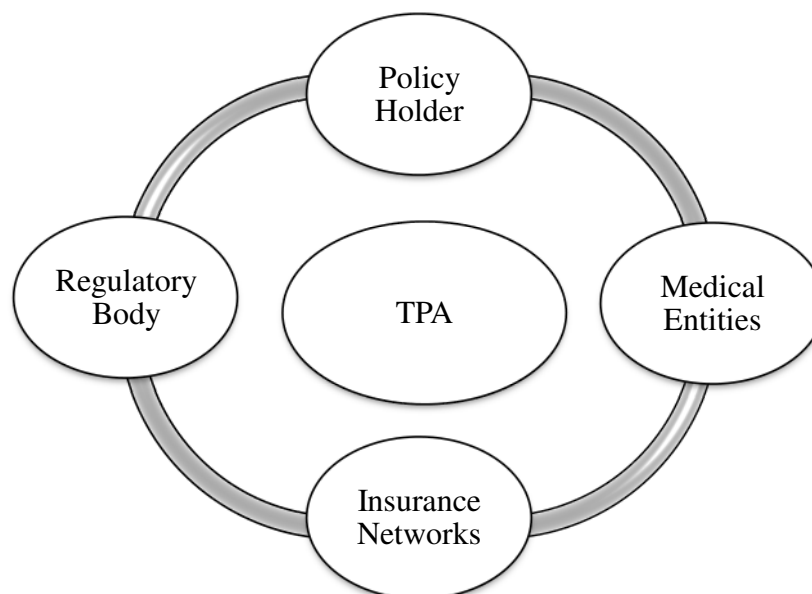


Figure 2. The context spheres PPP shown as stand-alone organizational functions.

Keck (2013) stated that the primary factor of TPAs' success is the personalization of services, innovation, flexibility, and customer services. Keck (2013) theorized that ongoing changes in health plans and government compliance had become the dominant specialty of third party claim administrators because of their management expertise, adaptability, and low overhead. Further,

regardless of the government laws and complexities in health plan policies and regulations, TPAs do not necessarily participate in the risk plans (Pope et al., 2014). In this section of the literature review, I provided the relevant elements and definition of TPAs, the formation of the TPAs, functions of TPAs, and their business model.

Public-Private Partnership

One of the most significant designs of decision-making is the advanced societies that mix political authority and private industry incentives (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2011). The PPP and their distinctive differences in the organizational environment, incentives, and constraints are relevant to understanding the role of public and private sectors (Mouraviev & Kakabadse, 2012). Smith (1999) and Zangouezhad and Azar (2014) identified a PPP as a partnering union formed under a contractual agreement between two organizations allowing increased value of a product or service delivery. This section contains a literature review of the history of PPPs, types of PPPs, advantages and disadvantages of PPPs. The in-depth analysis of PPPs was significant to this study because understanding the dynamics of PPPs represents the connection between TPAs and local government agencies in the state of Wisconsin.

A PPP includes confusion with privatization (Meidutė & Paliulis, 2011). The distinctive difference between PPP and privatization is the ownership of

assets. In privatization engagement, the private sector assumes the permanent property of an asset previously owned by the public sector (Meidutė & Paliulis, 2011). Rufín and Rivera-Santos (2012) identified that the public and private sector typically developed partnerships through service contracting, management contracting, and leasing and concessions.

In the PPP engagement, the public and private sector engage in the ongoing relationship. In addition, a PPP is an agreement between the public and private sector that stipulates the performance of services utilized by both parties (Meidutė & Paliulis, 2011). A public-private business relationship is normally for the purpose of combining knowledge and resources to accomplish the goal and objective (Brewer & Brewer, 2011; Butcher, 2013).

Button and Daito (2014) suggested that PPPs often merge to finance public services when sufficient funding is not available. Similarly, Tunčikienė, Grenčíková, and Skačkauskienė (2014) pointed out that PPPs were an essential strategic tool toward quality and sustainability of the communities and state. Sarmes, Csoz, Ciolac, and Martin (2014) stated that the public and private organizations have different functions and goals. However, with emerging new economic changes, participatory business relationships between private-public entities are essential to long-term sustainability and the success of both entities (Sarmes et al., 2014).

The PPP has played a significant role in economic growth in social infrastructure (Navarro-Espigares & Martín-Segura, 2011). Kivleniece and Quelin (2012) noted that collaboration between two organizations implement provisions based on the assumptions that each party was entrusted to complete their tasks and draw benefits proportionate to their interest. Kivleniece and Quelin added that as a public and private organization operates in different capacities and rationales, it was evident that the political environment created an asymmetrical effect on the partnership outcomes.

In addition, the asymmetrical effects caused by the bureaucratic environment and lack of the notion of public-private collaboration between the two entities (Kivleniece & Quelin, 2012). The assessed literature suggested that increased political uncertainty stems from the ongoing changes in the political climate and the administration turnovers (Lavertu, 2013; Lavertu, Lewis, & Moynihan, 2013; Teles, 2012). Durant (2014) disclosed that the enduring unpredictable political environment, the underdeveloped institutional framework, and uncertainty in enforced government commitment discouraged private companies from seeking governance partnerships.

Monterrey, De La Fuente, Lozano, Fernández, and García (2013) identified autonomous PPPs as a self-governing organization structured around independent operations. Further, the private firm's independent control of transactions under the autonomous model positioned stronger control of

compensations secured by efficiencies in service delivery (Biermann et al., 2014). The public counterparts engaged primarily in monitoring and enforcement of contractual obligations and provisions (Monterrey et al., 2013). Bel, Brown, and Warner (2014) added that limited oversight on requirements by public sector caused some degree of uncertainty in long-term planning for public sectors.

In a self-governing structure, Hvidman and Andersen (2014) recognized that public management relied on private managerial skills and competencies to carry out the partner engagement activities. Similarly, Nissen, Evald, and Clarke (2014) concluded in their research that in PPPs, private sector primarily undertakes the operational responsibilities because of their core competencies. In contrast, the public authority assumed limited knowledge and skills of private sector expertise that caused severe integrity concerns and uncertainty (Nissen et al., 2014). However, the complex political types of hybrids systems not residing entirely with private companies posed concerns with public sector partners (Hvidman & Andersen, 2014). Hoppe and Schmitz (2013) theorizing that the public sector's primary choice of the preferred partnership included the dependence on public policy constraints imposed on the private sector. The imposed constraints include complexities of the political systems, and their primary responsibilities to the general public and communities they represent (Hoppe & Schmitz, 2013).

Integrative PPPs are a collaborative environment where public and private organizations share operations and responsibilities toward joint public service (York, Sarasvathy, & Wicks, 2013). In addition, Goldman, Compton, and Mittleman (2013) argued that in an integrative PPP, both sectors unite their unique expertise and knowledge to execute their goals and objectives toward the public benefit. In the integrative environment, the private sectors continue to focus on quality and efficiency in contractual fulfillment (Holdman et al., 2013). The outcomes are, in essence, a function of public policy supported by limited funds (Holdman et al., 2013). Roehrich, Lewis, and George (2014) further noted that financial constraints and lower-power incentives imposed on private companies raised concerns for unstable revenue streams.

History of PPPs

Throughout history, PPPs included the ability to improve social wealth through collaboration and sharing innovative efforts (Reynaers & De Graaf, 2014). Geddes and Wagner (2013) argued that PPP models had no significant changes from prior centuries from the modern business environment. For example, PPPs in the 2015 business environment have the power to improve public services (e.g., education, health care, and public safety) through collaborative private-public sector management skills (Geddes & Wagner, 2013).

A public and private partnership dates back to Athens in the 4th century BC, where prominent citizens constructed public monuments and buildings using

federal funding (Stanton, 2002). During the Roman Empire, prominent citizens and government entities worked together to develop new infrastructures (Stanton, 2002). In 1742, the University of Pennsylvania used public funding through a PPP between the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania House of Representatives (Harkavy, Hartley, Axelroth Hodges, & Weeks, 2013).

In 1890, New York's Rapid Transit Commission awarded contracts to private companies to design and build its first subways (Kruse & Todd, 2013). In 1920, the Federal Electric Railway Commission awarded contracts to private firms to construct electric railways in Los Angeles, California and Indianapolis, Indiana (Thompson, 2011). In addition, in 1920, the Federal Aid to Highways Act established a national policy of federal aid toward the construction of highways (Wells, 2012). In 1920, U.S. Congress allocated approximately \$75 million toward the interstate highway systems with a stipulation that states hire professional highway engineers for the construction projects (Wells, 2012). In the 1930s, the United States entered into PPPs during the Great Depression to build toll roads and railroads (Wright, 2014). In the 1970s and 1980s, during the urban crisis and macroeconomic problems, the government encouraged investments in public infrastructure by private companies to strengthen the economy and improve services (Reynaers, & De Graaf, 2014).

Types of PPPs

The PPP encompasses a range of relationships and roles between the public and private sector partners (Nisar, 2013). Private organizations involved in PPPs take on additional risks such as design, finance, long-term operations, and user fees (Reynaers & De Graaf, 2014). The PPP types vary based on the scope of the project, interest, responsibility, and transfer of risk (Nisar, 2013). Wang and Zhao (2014) stated that while some PPP types are long-term and short-term, the public sector has a significant influence on the formation due to government funding and public use. In some cases, the U.S. government funds projects by grants, public fees, or compensation through tax-exemption (Wang & Zhao, 2014). Various designs and types of PPPs establish the balance between the private investors' and the public's interest (DeCorla-Souza, Mayer, Jette, & Buxbaum, 2013).

Operate and maintain partnership. In the operate and maintain (OM) partnership model, the public sector awards contracts to the private sector that will provide and maintain specific services (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). The public sector retains ownership of all assets (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). Under the OM model, the public sector has oversight on the overall management of the facility or systems, but the private sector may invest additional capital to administer the specific services (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011).

Private contract fee services partnership. Under the private contract fee services (PCFS) arrangement, a public sector transfers their program management responsibilities to a private sector. In addition, in the PCFS partnership model, the private sector assumes responsibility for providing operations, maintenance, program or financial management services (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). Yescombe added PCFS contract agreements allow opportunities for innovative technologies and efficiencies in the project design and management.

Build-operate-transfer partnership. In the build-operate-transfer (BOT) partnership model, the private sector handles construction and operations of the project for a designated time and then transferred to the public sector (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). The built-transfer-operate (BTO) partnership model is similar to the BOT model with the exception that transfer of ownership occurs upon the completion of the project (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). In addition, once the transfer of ownership occurs, the public sector can assume operation using their resources or contract with other private entities (Fen-May, Chih-Pin, & Borliang, 2012).

Design-build partnership. In the design-build (DB) partnership model, the private sector handles the design and construction of the project (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). The public sector has ownership of the assets and handles operations and maintenance (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). In the DB type PPP, private sectors assume additional risks regarding the projects and

reduce the potential collusion with public partners in the design and construction (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011).

Design-build-maintain partnership. In the design-build-maintain (DBM) partnership model, the private sector handles the design, construction, and provides maintenance that becomes the responsibility of the public sector (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). The public sector has ownership of the assets and is accountable for operations (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). In the DBM model, private sector raises equity, financing, and assumes risks for completing and maintaining the project (Yescombe, 2011).

Design-build-operate partnership. In the design-build-operate (DBO) partnership model, the private sector handles the design, construction and operations (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). The public sector has ownership of the assets and handles maintenance of separate maintenance agreement (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). The project transfers to the public sector upon completion of the project (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). Further, in the simple OBP partnership, individual contracts can be issued to multiple contractors with separate functions (Daito, Chen, Gifford, Porter, & Gudgel, 2013).

Design-build-operate-maintain partnership. In the design-build-operate-maintain (DBOM) partnership model, the private sector handles the design, construction, operations and maintenance (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). Under the DBOM partnership, the public funding secures the contract

under a single agreement (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). In addition, the public sector has ownership of the assets and oversight of the project (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011).

Operations, maintenance, and management partnership. In the operations, maintenance, and management (OMM) partnership model, the public sector awards a contract to a private sector that will operate, maintain, and manage systems to provide services (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). The OMM partnership is common in long-term infrastructure project or services (e.g., road project, public buildings, utility, and wastewater treatment services; NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). Under the OMM agreement, the public sector retains ownership the facility and systems, but the private sector may invest its capital in the facility or system (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011).

Build-own-operate partnership. In the build-own-operate (BOO) partnership model, the private sector assumes responsibility for the construction and operations of the projects without transfer of ownership to the public sector (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). Similar to the BOO partnership model is DBOO; the private sector handles the design of the project, construction, and operations. The infrastructure or service systems remain the property of the private sector with no public sector obligations to purchase (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). The public sector does not provide direct public funding; however, under the BOO partnership agreement, the public sector partner

provides incentives for tax-exempt status under the Internal Revenue Code (Little, 2011).

Buy-build-operate partnership. In the buy-build-operate (BBO) partnership model, the private sector assumes ownership through a sale. The private sector agrees to either rehabilitate or expand an existing public facility in a profitable manner (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). After the sale, the private sector assumes ownership, operating revenue risks, and any surplus for the life of the facility (Yescombe, 2011).

Design-build-finance-operate-maintain partnership. In the design-build-finance-operate-maintain (DBFOM) partnership model, the private sector handles the design, construction, financing, operations and maintenance (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). The projects are either partly or entirely financed by debt leverage of public user fees, public sector grants, and in-kind contributions (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). The public sector grants or issuance of public bonds often supplement the cost of the project (Yescombe, 2011).

Design-build-finance-operate-maintain-transfer partnership. In the design-build-finance-operate-maintain-transfer (DBFOMT) partnership model, the private sector assumes responsibility for the design, construction, finance, operations and maintenance (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). The public sectors regain ownership of assets by transfer upon completion of the project. This type

of the partnership model is standard for an overseas project and uncommon in the United States (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011).

Advantages of PPPs

The formation of the PPPs has various benefits for both private and public sector. The PPP can provide reasonable value to the general public, where the private sector seeks methods to capture market share and sustain profitable through competitive pricing and services (Geddes & Wagner, 2013). The advantage of PPP is that the shared partnership can save significant time, penetrate the public market, utilize resources, and reduce cost (Geddes & Wagner, 2013).

Advantages for the private sector. In the private sector, the core business objectives are to generate profits and ability to sustain financial conditions (Koliba, DeMenno, Brune, & Zia, 2014). As the demand for services increased, the U.S. government turns to a private sector as an alternative to meet the social needs and fill the financial gap (Kamal, 2012). Similarly, Iossa and Martimort (2014) added that the popularity with the growth of PPPs because of demand for better infrastructures and to meet existing and future needs for delivery of services. Landow and Ebdon (2012) and later York et al. (2013) concluded that the main principle of PPPs was joint ventures between the public and private sectors that undertook shared responsibilities to deliver particular services.

The public sector has a broad range of options for establishing competitive procurement. The private sector can benefit from the larger market share of a public sector that otherwise may not be available without PPPs (Ruffin & Rivera-Santos, 2012). For example, Demirag, Khadaroo, Stapleton, and Stevenson (2012) claimed that the private sector can secure additional revenue mechanism toward greater financial gain. Liu, Love, Smith, Regan, and Sutrisna (2014) speculated that PPPs provide the private sector firms other access to investment opportunities to secure their financial sustainability through procurement of government contract. Competitive prices and services, corporate social responsibility (CMR), increased capital investment, and lower correlation to equity markets are some of the advantages of PPPs for the private sector (Demirag et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2014). The additional advantages include less debt as government supports the project (e.g., subsidies, grants, and tax incentives), promotes innovation, increases levels of expertise, and allows shared resources (Demirag et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2014).

Advantages for the public sector. The increased use of PPPs in the 2015 business environment is to overcome existing challenges that the government and public entities face. An average of 23 out of 65 municipal services across the United States, engage in contractual services through PPP (NCPPPP, 2014). Berg, Barry, and Chandler (2012) theorized that PPPs were a combined effort to provide increased efficiency, improve compliance, and utilize public funding. The private

sector can provide a high level of services by enforceable management standards and adequate business controls (NCPPP, 2014).

The most significant advantage of PPPs is the creation of value for taxpayers' money and performance-based outcomes (Kivleniece & Quelin, 2012). Consequently, PPPs have greater capability to produce superior results through lean initiatives with less governmental funding (Demirag et al., 2012). Some of the advantages of PPPs for the public sector include creation of shared technological resources, fast and efficient delivery of products or services, and increased value of taxpayer's money (Liu et al., 2014; Tsamboulas, Verma, & Moraiti, 2013). Improvement in cost effectiveness and creation of added value through the integration of expertise, skills, and knowledge are additional advantages of PPPs for the public sector (Tsamboulas, Verma, & Moraiti, 2013). Last, higher levels of service through: (a) accountability, (b) flexibility, (c) innovation, (d) productivity, and (e) efficient use of governmental assets also are advantages to the public sector and the general public (Liu et al., 2014; Tsamboulas, Verma, & Moraiti, 2013).

Disadvantages of PPPs

Some of the complexities with PPPs include tendering and contract negotiations (Koliba et al., 2014). PPPs include highly complicated contracts because of the involvement of numerous stakeholders, diverse business backgrounds, legislative provisions, and contingencies often surrounded by a

complex political environment (Osborne, 2010). Consequently, the goals for the public and private sector can vary significantly. In the public sector, the core objectives are social and political (Koliba et al., 2014).

Disadvantages for the private sector. Siemiatycki and Farooqi (2012) theorized that arrangements in PPP can create significant risks because of the political actors and limitation. The private sector partners handle all levels of the project including capital, workforce, and on time delivery (Siemiatycki & Farooqi, 2012). Engel, Fischer, and Galetovic (2013) stated that private sector partners in PPP faced a significant disadvantage in generating limited or capped profits from the use of public funds. Similarly, the private sector partners have an obligation to their stakeholders and investors to maintain profitably (Engel et al., 2013).

While investors hold the private sector partners accountable, the public sector is the decision maker, whereas the general public is their primary concern. In addition, as private sector's objective is to maximize profits, the public sector partner's objectives may not align (Ng, Wong, & Wong, 2012). The lack of alignment results in a risk because the PPP is a counter of the private's objectives (Ng et al., 2012). In the PPP environment, the diversity of organizational culture and leadership styles has multiple structural layers (Roehrich et al., 2014). These layers include structural and cultural features that may affect the contractual joint ventures between the public and private managers (Roehrich et al., 2014). The

request for proposal (RFP), the complex procurement process, and high transaction and legal costs are some of the challenges for PPPs in the private sector (Koliba et al., 2014; Siemiatycki & Farooqi, 2012). The additional challenges for PPPs are the regulatory and political structure, changes in regulations, risk management, and allocation (Koliba et al., 2014; Siemiatycki & Farooqi, 2012). Similarly, the limits or caps on maximum profits, differing motivations and incentives, less flexibility to manage changing needs, and policies also pose barriers to the formation of PPPs for the private sector (Koliba et al., 2014; Siemiatycki & Farooqi, 2012).

Disadvantages for the public sector. The public and private sector include recognition as separate identities as early as 400 BC because of their differences in business structure and purpose (Gudelis & Guogis, 2011). In contrast to the private sector, the government and public entities included understanding as a social enterprise and not always comparable to private industries (Van Der Heijden, 2011). This preeminence caused unease between the two sectors (Van Der Heijden, 2011). Van Der Heijden noted that leaders within local government agencies did not support private industries profiting from taxations. Further, Tähtinen and Blois (2011) theorized that problematic relationships between partnerships typically resulted from interpersonal challenges that arise from working partnerships.

In PPPs, the public sector partners also oversee all steps of the project. The role of the public sector is to manage policy levels of the partnership, oversight of public funds, and safety regulations (Button & Daito, 2014). Koliba et al. (2014) argued that citizens' expectations of the project's favorable outcome become public sector's burden. The failure of the project or services delivery through PPP can become securitized when general public's expectations do not meet the quality services provided. Similar to private sector partners' disadvantages, some of the challenges for PPPs in the public sector include attracting private sector partners, the sensitivity of investors because of political risks, and the diversity of stakeholders (Button & Daito, 2014; Koliba et al., 2014). Similarly, the political stability and commitment to public funds, difficulties in measuring service outcomes, and the loss of control and influence on workers are additional disadvantages for private sector companies in the formation of PPPs (Button & Daito, 2014; Koliba et al., 2014).

The additional complexity of the public-private contract negotiations is that each party spends considerable resources in designing and evaluating the contractual projects or services (Da, Ferreira, & Marques, 2012). The added challenges in PPPs are the performance enforcement because of service delivery, and social impact consists of dimensions difficult to measure (Yescombe, 2011). Provided in this section of the literature review included relative elements and definition of PPPs, history of PPPs, types of PPPs, advantages and disadvantages

of PPPs. The next section identifies the role of the TPAs and their business practices because TPAs represent the connection to the complex contracting process with the public sector.

Private Sector's Business Environment

This section of literature includes critical factors relevant to the private sector's business environment. This section includes a summary of the research on the private sector management, governance, and authoritative decision-making process. The methods are significant to this study because understanding the private sector's business environment represent the connection of formation of the PPPs.

The organizational concept emerged from Weber's (1947) original work on bureaucratic principles that extended from the sociology. In addition, more modern organizational models in the 21st-century have been developed based on business practices, industrial organization, and economics (Nonaka, Kodama, Hirose, & Kohlbacher, 2014). The core emphases on organizational systems are to organize behaviors to accomplish goals, to survive, and to advance or grow (Nonaka et al., 2014). Similarly, Pennisi (2012) claimed organizational concept focused on how organizational goals align with the notions of internal operations, allocation of resources, and to motivate and produce favorable outcomes. Oswick, Fleming, and Hanlon (2011) argued that organizational cultures were unique and had a critical effect on internal processes. The internal processes affect the

organizational survival, ability to allocate resources efficiently, and in turn create advantages over their competitors (Oswick et al., 2011).

In the organizational environment, organizational systems provide assistance to understand better how behaviors in organizations influenced, and what constitutes the frameworks that explain the regulatory environment (Gilpin & Miller, 2013). A behavior in social content is a complex phenomenon, and researchers studied organizational systems to gather and to understand how human behavior influence decision-making (Gilpin & Miller, 2013). Gilpin and Miller added that organizations' systems meet the demands of the organizational objectives, develop relationships, gather resources, and provide better products or services. A study by De Ven and Lifschitz (2013) demonstrated that corporate collectives originated from organizational theory, supported the rational systems theory that depends on the social structure. The corporate collectives allowed leaders collectively to set reasonable goals and effectively utilize their talents to achieve their objectives (De Ven & Lifschitz, 2013).

Private Sector Management

In private industries, effective implementation of management centers or includes the focus on agencies' abilities to manage resources to achieve their organization's mission and goals (Alvesson & Willmott, 2012; Carroll & Buchholtz, 2014). Alvesson and Willmott pointed out that private companies cannot achieve their mission and goals by managing in a vacuum. More

specifically, according to Alvesson and Willmott, and later Carrol and Buschholz agreed that private organizations recognize stakeholders, customers, and employees as vital subjects to managing their success. Therefore, private companies make management performance a priority in day-to-day operations to improve processes for better outcomes for less (Alvesson & Willmott, 2012; Carroll & Buchholtz, 2014).

Managers in the private sector are under increasing pressure to increase profits while simultaneously improving outcomes and quantity outputs with quality standards (Schwenger, Straub, & Borzillo, 2014). Management in the private sector include accountability to their shareholders and focus on maximizing the bottom-line profits and focus less on people than the public managers do (Schwenger et al., 2014). Rufín and Rivera-Santos (2012) theorized that key leaders include motivation by market competition while, in the public sector, are almost always a legislated monopoly. Managers in the private sector require ability and skills to change, evolve, adapt, and continuously improve to add value to product or services sold to the public (Rufín & Rivera-Santos, 2012).

While bureaucracies exist in most large organizations, corporate bureaucracies tend to be smaller and less tradition-bound than those in government (Hodson, Roscigno, Martin, & Lopez, 2013). Private sector managements require leadership that involves monitoring the work of lower-level staff and focus on company mission and objectives (Hodson et al., 2013).

Management practices need to be customized to meet the ongoing demands of a particular market share (Hodson et al., 2013). Similarly, Graham, Harvey, and Puri (2014) emphasized private corporations give managers the authority to make decisions in ways for the corporation to increase profits and promote corporate responsibility. Managers in the private sector have the authority to hire staff, and implement changes (Graham et al., 2014; Hippmann & Windsperger, 2013). Also, managers have the authority to monitor the implementation and report any failures or successes to the upper management (Graham et al., 2014; Hippmann & Windsperger, 2013).

In private sector organizations, managers regularly groom their employees, position them for future candidacy and appoint them without the executive board's approval (Afzal, Mahmood, Samreen, Asim, & Sajid, 2013). Afzal et al. added that many managers in the private sector protect the company's profits, products, and reputations by implementing control systems and surveillance with fewer restrictions than imposed by the government. The context of operations is another fundamental difference in the private sector versus public sector (Iossa & Martimort, 2014). Iossa and Martimort stated that managers in the private sector have more leeway to accomplish an organizations' financial sustainability. While in the public sector, managers may be subjected to legislative and regulatory constraints preventing autonomous actions (Iossa & Martimort, 2014).

Private sector managers include a better understanding of the management skills, knowledge, and abilities needed to succeed in generating profits (Hvidman & Andersen, 2014). Managers in the private sector measure the outcomes of performance, increases or decreases in profits, and customer satisfaction (Hvidman & Andersen, 2014). In the public sector, managers require the ability to adapt to expectations and respond to requests where policies, regulations, and bureaucratic inertia often dictate the outcomes (Hvidman & Andersen, 2014). Similarly, Klingebiel and De Meyer (2013) stated that in the private sector, managers require strategic planning to prepare what might be next to stay one step ahead of the changes to ensure sustainability. This strategy can be accomplished by aligning appropriate professionals with skills to take on the work and build a business framework to take action when needed (Klingebiel & De Meyer, 2013).

One other important factor in management differences between private and public sector is the decision-making process. For example, Meier and O'Toole's (2012) analysis suggested that managers in the private and public sector interpret the conflict over strategic decisions differently. In the private sector, conflict in strategic decision-making suggests members of the organization do not believe the conclusions are positive (Meier & O'Toole, 2012). In the public sector, conflict in strategic decision-making suggests positive balance because diversity in stakeholders ensures the final decision will represent their interest and not management alone (Meier & O'Toole, 2012). Reasons for these

differences lie in the managers' social mission and their responsibilities to the respective organizations (Meier & O'Toole, 2012). The ultimate goals of managers in the public sector are to maximize collective value, whereas, in the private sector, goals are to maximize the shareholder's value (Meier & O'Toole, 2012).

Private Sector Governance

Jungwirth and Müller (2014) classified governance as a necessity in public and private sector to balance authority, power, accountability, and responsibilities. Park and Perry (2013) and later Edmans (2014) defined corporate governance as a structure and relationship that establishes corporate direction and overall performance. Adolf Berle and Gardiner Means first introduced the corporate governance in 1932. Berle and Means (1932) first published *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* that delineated the separation of corporate ownership and control. Corporate governance consists of a set of principles and practices, regulations, and institutional and ethical standards set for publicly traded companies (Brickey, 2003; Edmans 2014). According to the Westphal and Zajac (2013), corporate governance ensures boards of directors' accountability for the pursuit of corporate objectives and the corporation complies with laws and regulations.

Brickey (2003) theorized that private companies made governance a priority after the high-profile corporate scandals (i.e., Enron and WorldCom) in

2001 and 2002. Subsequently, private organizations reformed norms of business practices toward a widely collected entrepreneurial culture and practices (Brickey, 2003). In private organizations, the decentralized management is a common business practice where shareholder value is the primary governance (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2011). In good corporate governance, private sectors operate with efficiency, fairness, and accountability (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2011). Shaoul, Stafford, and Stapleton (2012) added that independence, transparency, responsibility to shareholders, and social responsibility also represented good corporate governance.

In general, the private sector governance is a structure of the decision-making processes based on corporate rules applicable to all the executives, directors, and managers (Shaoul et al., 2012). The governance creates balance and fairness between the board of directors, senior management and relationships with executives and their personal interest in the organization (Shaoul et al., 2012). Fukuyama (2013) identified good governance as added value to an organization, reduce risk, strengthen market share, improve customer service, and prevent unethical behavior. The overall governance in private firms serves as the infrastructure for policies and actions taken to adapt proper governance measures (Fukuyama, 2013).

Through good governance, private operations establish well-organized leadership teams, continuous assessment of leadership, direction, authority,

accountability and stewardship (Brammer, Jackson, & Matten, 2012). The corporate principals for good governance are executive board composition, selection of board and committee members, the appointment of directors, and organizational policies and procedures (Brammer et al., 2012). In the private sector, the executive board members primarily focus on the oversight of the organization and strategic direction (McNulty, 2014). Directors and managers handle the strategic planning, operational functions and increase companies' value to shareholders (McNulty, 2014). In the private organizations, executive board members set clear objectives in compliance with governance standards that leaders rely on (McNulty, 2014).

The public and private sectors operate under two different management philosophies. The corporate governance consists of skilled and well-accomplished individuals who make critical decisions on behalf of the company and its stakeholders (McNulty, 2014). In the public sector, managers act as agents for stakeholders such as the general public (McNulty, 2014; Walter et al., 2012). In the private sector, the managers serve as agents for shareholders such as customers, suppliers, creditors, and employees (McNulty, 2014; Walter et al., 2012). In the corporate governance model, the shareholders are the center of corporate governance who appoint the executive leaders, and the executive directors select management as controllers of the corporation who oversee the

management (McNulty, 2014). The senior management handles all the day-to-day business operations (McNulty, 2014).

Since the enactment of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, a chief executive officer (CEO) and chief financial officer (CFO) require to attest to all internal controls and report any deficiencies to independent auditors and board committees. In addition, Section 404 of the SOX requires that all senior management must assess the effectiveness of the internal controls and auditors must attest to their assessment. The SOX and Securities and Exchange Commission regulation counterbalance high power incentives, curtail the power of top corporate executives, and protect investors (Michaely, Rubin, & Vedrashko, 2014).

Private Sector Authoritative Structure

Max Weber (1947) referred to authority theory as a form of power that influenced accountability. Kostadinova and Levitt (2014) identified power as an influence by leaders over individuals' beliefs and actions. Kostadinova and Levitt further explained that the power in public and private organizations was unequal between members and handled continuous challenges in the distribution of their authority. According to Barnard (1962), the nature of power is essential in simple and complex organizations. Further, Barnard explained that the authority consisted of subjectivity and objectivity. In subjective aspects, the authority is understood and accepted by an individual when directions have a purpose,

rationale, and personal interest (Barnard, 1962). In objective aspects, the authority acceptance influence through communication and controlling systems (Barnard, 1962).

Authority and responsibility in government tend to be asymmetric while authority and accountability in the private sector include more precise balance (Kivleniece & Quelin, 2012). Kivleniece and Quelin theorized that the five dimensions of private spheres differentiate from those of the public sector. The dimensions are the purpose, accountability, autonomy, orientation to action, and the business environment (Kivleniece & Quelin, 2012). Michaely and Roberts (2012) suggested that accountability in private firms is to their shareholders. The leaders have the freedom to make decisions as long as they operate within the organization's goals, policies, and objectives (Michaely & Roberts, 2012).

Leaders in the corporate community enjoy the engagement in the empowerment of the organizations as a whole and act in the best interest of their stakeholders (Lee, 2011). Lee identified distinctive levels of authority between executive directors, officers, and shareholders. The shareholders and investors give the authority to the boards of directors to take on the initial steps to direct the corporation's affairs (Schwartz-Ziv & Weisbach, 2013). The primary responsibilities of the board of trustees are to act on behalf of the corporation and in the best interest of their investors (Schwartz-Ziv & Weisbach, 2013). The board of directors has full authority over corporate activities, transactions and change in

corporate bylaws (Schwartz-Ziv & Weisbach, 2013). The corporate officers have the responsibilities of daily operations with full authority to act on the corporation's behalf (Schwartz-Ziv & Weisbach, 2013).

Some of the typical corporate officers include chief executive officer (CEO), chief financial officer (CFO) and chief operating officer (COO). Finally, the shareholders (i.e., investors and owners) have ownership or share a percentage of the corporation by providing capital investments (Chung & Zhang, 2011). Typically these investments include a presentation in stock certificates that specifically state their number of shares, thus representing the percentage ownership of the organization (Chung & Zhang, 2011). Similar to the public sector, the law requires the private sector to hold shareholder meetings, appoint corporate directors and approve significant transactions (Chung & Zhang, 2011). Also, investors and owners in the private sector have the authority to change corporate bylaws such as voting rights and procedures (Chung & Zhang, 2011).

The other critical sphere of a corporation is authoritative power. Castells (2011) identified formal and informal as two types of authoritative power in the corporate community. In an official, authoritative structure, private organizations have a detailed chart that outlines specific authority and responsibilities in various positions and job functions (Gomory & Sylla, 2013; Veldman & Willmott, 2013). In an informal authoritative structure, the power of authority is not always within ranks (Castells, 2011; Veldman & Willmott, 2013). Instead the person with the

most influence, ability to lead, and empower employees to achieve the company's goals may not have the position of authority (Castells, 2011; Veldman & Willmott, 2013).

Another important objective of the private sector is to make profits by maximizing resources (i.e., knowledge, partnerships, and expertise) as suggested by Schwenger et al. (2014). Sutherland and Ladkin (2013) argued that experience and education among executives included the principal welfare of the corporate organization. Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, and Clark (2011) stated that in many complicated spheres of private sector decision-making, there is always one center of authority where the final decisions take place. Castells (2011), and later Gomory and Sylla (2013), identified that two distinctive spheres in power and authority amongst private organizations. Leaders with power have the ability to influence others through their expertise and professional knowledge (Cooren et al., 2011). Leaders with authority include the right to make decisions to meet the organization's objectives through others (Cooren et al., 2011). In addition, the authority can be imposed on individuals in a particular position within private organizations (Castells, 2011; Veldman & Willmott, 2013). Similarly, power is a distinctive ability of personality, interpersonal skills, and possession of knowledge (Castells, 2011; Veldman & Willmott, 2013).

Public Sector's Business Environment

Significant differences exist in the overall organizational performance based on management practices in public and private organizations (McMurray, Sarros, & Pirola-Merlo, 2012). Leaders in government agencies often focus on short-term versus long-term planning because of continuous shifts in the economy and governmental environment (McMurray et al., 2012). In the public sector, managers focus little on long-term planning, innovation, transparencies, and collaboration with a private sector because of their unique differences in the business models (Measham et al., 2011). This section includes a summary of the literature on the governing authority decision-making process in an authoritative and democratic environment relevant to the formation of the PPPs.

The public sector uses political processes to determine how to redistribute funds (Albanese & Modica, 2012). Moreover, government agencies' role is to promote fairness, order, and sound regulations. For instance, Kim and Kim (2012) wrote that public bodies include accountability for the wellbeing of communities and their citizens through efficient decision-making, planning, and utilization of resources, accountability, and stewardship. Last, Kim and Kim added that government agencies include accountability for the quality of services and positive outcomes that make communities respond favorably to government agencies and their leaders.

In the public sector, decision-making involves complex functions. Hyde and Shortell (2012) and Suárez (2011) pointed out that political and social objectives are under the direction of federal, state, local regulation, public policies, and elected officials. The elected officials can range from the U.S. President to the lower level of county elected executive board members and appointed officials alike.

Suárez (2011) highlighted four critical characteristics of the decision-making process in the public sector. In the public sector, decisions constitute coordination and support toward society, authority to regulate and safeguard citizens and stakeholders (Suárez, 2011). In addition, the public-sector seeks quality and fairness balance, fiscal sustainability and power over taxpayers' contributions (Suárez, 2011). Hyde and Shortell (2012) stated that government agencies provide services in a non-competitive environment because of jurisdiction and judicial laws, thus giving consumers limited options in the selection of providers depending on their place of residence. With restricted jurisdictions, leaders include explicit responsibility for administering services and decision-making under the direction of independent and non-dependent members of various subcommittees (Hyde & Shortell, 2012).

Seidmann (2011) added that in governing agencies' business, operations have a two-tier structure where an executive committee has oversight of non-executive committees, thus bringing diverse perspectives to leaders' decision-

making (Seidmann, 2011). Similarly, the multiple tiers of board members ensure efficient operations and create balance in public administration. The board members hold management and other leaders accountable to the public sector to ensure public agencies act in the public's best interest at all times (Seidmann, 2011). Continuous commitment to integrity, compliance with the rule of law, and engagement of the general public and other stakeholders are also public leaders' responsibilities. In addition, the board members hold management accountable for planning and administering services to sustain social welfare and achieve intended outcomes (Seidmann, 2011). Last, the additional accountabilities for public leaders involve the development of a budgetary plan toward fiscal sustainability, increased performance, and improved public services (Seidmann, 2011).

According to Mortensen (2012), public agencies have a broad range of board representatives who handle various aspects of governance. The different elements are (a) setting regulations, (b) making operations decisions, and (c) hiring or appointing county administrators to carry out their decisions (Mortensen, 2012). Depending on the structure of the governance, the board of representatives' roles might fluctuate from full or partial authority (Mortensen, 2012). Likewise, an advisory committee can also grant management full or partial authority to make decisions (Mortensen, 2012).

Wellens and Jegers (2011, 2014) pointed out some concerns exist over the use of elected or appointed board officials in public sector entities. The elected or

appointed officials lack experience, understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and normative guidance of board operations (Wellens & Jergers, 2011, 2014). Equally, Ward and Preece (2012) explained that members of the council did not always feel their advice was necessary because management had sufficient knowledge, experience, and education to make adequate decisions. Ward and Preece concluded that program leaders debated if the board members' diverse backgrounds, personal points of views, and knowledge of programs qualified them to make decisions. However, their existence was necessary to avoid blame (Ward & Preece, 2012).

Seidmann's (2011) argument supports the influence of dependent and independent committee members, and according to Boyd and Coleman (2011) the influence may not always favorable. Boyd and Coleman noted board members' expertise, experience, education, and level of authority posed challenges and scrutiny for management to fulfill their responsibilities. In some cases, board members in the public sector include biased views, lack of experience or influenced by outside forces such as the media and the general public (Boyd & Coleman, 2011).

Public Sector Administrative Management

According to Woods and Woods (2002), Henry Fayol was the earliest researcher of administrative management systems. Woods and Wood stated that knowledge of administration takes higher precedence over technical knowledge in

both public and private organizations. For this reason, many decisions made may not include the necessity for the benefit of the organization, but for the manager's understanding of the organization's structure.

Public administration is a complex decision-making structure that consists of public interest, instruments of federal law, state statutes, protocols, codes, jurisdictions, and ordinances (Christensen & Lægreid, 2011). Public administrators in the leadership capacity are top decision makers who handle the overall success of the government and public agencies. Christensen and Lægreid argued that leaders acting as public administrators handle the execution of policies at the top management down to day-to-day operations. Evans, Pane-Haden, Clayton, and Novicevic (2013) theorized that administrative leadership did not always require adequate credentials. In public administration, include the expectation to have good judgment, common sense, and technical skills to understand complex problems and find solutions (Evans et al., 2013).

Public administrators are under statutory oath to protect and serve the public and obey the federal, state, and local laws (Chanin, 2014). Consequently, the government administrative rules are intended to ensure fairness, integrity, accountability and maintain order (Chanin, 2014). Chanin added that decision-making in the public sector consisted of many contexts. The public administration's decisions materialized from political science and law,

administrative theory, bureaucratic theory, public policies, and ethics (Chanin, 2014).

The public administration has been reforming itself because of ongoing changes in the political environment and continuous shift in elected officials (Berg et al., 2012). Media, generational differences, technology advancement, decreasing revenue sources, and continuous changes in the political climate are also caveats to reformations in public administration (Berg et al., 2012). Moreover, the growth in demand during the 21st-century for better public service delivery requires the leader to be creative and innovative in the rigid bureaucratic culture (Loewenberger, Newton, & Wick, 2014).

In addition, Houston and Harding (2013) theorized that the leadership of public administration has the duty to protect and maintain public institutions by exercising statutory laws, values, and beliefs. To better understand leaders' decision-making process and authority in the public administration, Paine (2012) argued that the general public's perception had a significant influence on how leaders make decisions as a public leader. In addition, Houston and Harding argued that the general public set standards, expectations, and identify what are acceptable decisions and practices of the public administration based on their perception of leadership in governing officials. The more public leaders demonstrate competency and responsiveness in their decision-making role, the more likely the public will have trust in them (Houston & Harding, 2013). When

trust among the general public exists, the role of public leaders becomes more critical because the general public seeks accountability (Houston & Harding, 2013).

Nalbandian, O'Neill, Wilkes, and Kaufman (2013) argued that public needs are also a complex process that requires a public policy in decision-making. Public policy making begins with: (a) agenda, (b) decision or resolution, (c) implementation, (d) evaluation, (e) public opinion, and (f) feedback (Nalbandian et al., 2013; Pawson & Wong, 2013). The external and internal forces influence the basis of a particular cycle of the power in the public policies (Demszky & Nassehi, 2012). Some of the external and internal forces include coalitions, alliances, negotiations, and bargaining that affect the public agencies (Demszky & Nassehi, 2012). Last, public policy dynamics has a hierarchical structure, where bottom management proposes a resolution, board members vote on a resolution, and administrative boards approve and enforce the policy (Gabel & Scott, 2011). Similar to the public policy internal and external influences, public administration encompasses its unique bureaucratic structure because of the power and authority gained by virtue of their public position (Zaharia, 2013).

Public Sector Governance as a Political Authority

Hamlin and Stemplowska (2012) stated that the political system concept originated from social science, justice, equality, ethics, authority and political science (Hamlin & Stemplowska, 2012). The governance by Weber's (1947)

definition was a bureaucratic structure assembled by rules, policies, and procedures dictated by legal authority, logic, and order. In the 21st-century era, Weber's bureaucratic views on the governing body are the concepts of efficiency and power that were in an array of leadership styles. In the political structure, leaders in organizations need hierarchy structure, incentives, and self-transformation through ethical practices in an organization to meet their needs (Kelly, 2013; Morgan, 2012).

Omran (2013) theorized that the lack of governance in the public sector can lead to consequences. These consequences are corruption, mistrust in government, violation of the general public's rights and needs, abuse and waste of valuable resources (Omran, 2013). Effective governance has the resources to sustain public needs. However, Subramaniam, Stewart, and Shulman (2013) stated that the involvement of government leaders equipped with governance thinking and decision-making competencies were essential to public service sustainability. Similarly, lacking public leaders' skills in the political way of thinking and decision-making appears bureaucratic, slow, and results in poor decisions (Subramaniam et al., 2013).

The elected network of leaders (i.e., board members and senior management) influence the governance and political decision-making process that bargain toward consensus through voting. At times when controversial options exist, the decisions are unlikely to occur (Walter et al., 2012). With this type of

political decision-making cycle, leaders face negotiating analogs through interactive networks to build an alliance, lobbying, and advocacy (Walter et al., 2012).

According to Nyhlén and Lidén (2014), use of partnerships can result in a package deal that can become more active as it creates leverage to overcome the controversial opinions of elected or appointed decision makers. Political concept navigates toward goals that achieve significant objectives for efficient public service and improving the economy. Public agents include a critical responsibility that takes the role in policy making and improving society as a whole (Orazi, Turrini, & Valotti, 2013). Government agencies also require unique characteristics of leadership that focus on multiple fundamental problems (Orazi et al., 2013). Keller and Foster (2012), Hyson (2013), and later Orazi et al. provided six unique characteristics of decision-makers in governing institutions. These features include integration of goals, prioritization, adjudication, implementation, risk taking, and accountability (Hyson, 2013; Keller & Foster, 2012; Orazi et al., 2013).

Despite the significant differences between the private and public sector, Abels (2012) empathized that managerial methods in private industries can have greater benefits in the public sector using the same principles. Abels described public sector as complex systems. The public sector is a complex system because they require special laws, regulations, and procedures; however, private

organizations share common challenges to adhere to similar laws and internal policies (Abels, 2012).

Similarly, Scott, Cafaggi, and Senden (2011) stated that private and public agencies are subject to some level of political authority. The level of political authority can influence external governmental identities (e.g., Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Immigration Naturalization Service, and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA; Scott et al., 2011). In contrast, Gudelis and Guogis (2011) dismissed Abels's (2012) argument on mixing public and private sector business models, because the rule of law strictly governs political administration systems. In the private sector, the markets' movements dictate the firm's bottom line profits and market share (Gudelis & Guogis, 2011).

Government entities operate under multifunction dynamics that make them especially vulnerable to criticism especially when leaders face critical decisions to please the general public, elected officials, and organizations' employees (Roiseland, 2011). Organizational theory can be especially crucial in the public sector to merge legal traditions that build on the body of laws and environment that the public demands (Roiseland, 2011). In the public sector, problems and solutions must always be included in a public agenda (Agranoff, 2014; Sangmook, 2012). The elected officials limit who can participate, limit how managers form their opinions, and direct what process management will implement (Agranoff, 2014; Sangmook, 2012).

Public Sector as Authoritative and Democratic Environment

Kort and Klijn (2013) concluded that authority and democracy create collaborative, trusting, and supportive relationships. Reynaers (2014) argued that individuals in power and a deliberative democracy specifically focus on collaboration and alliance toward public value instead of barriers. In essence, authority is a necessary function as one cannot participate in most decisions in the joint ventures between a public and private entity (Hippmann & Windsperger, 2013). Hippmann and Windsperger stated that the trust in authoritative decisions was an assumption that the counterparts followed appropriate standards and procedures to justify their decisions.

In the public sector, the authority is an unbalanced system, whereas, in the private sector, the authority includes more balance. In the public sector business environment, authority by members of the may appear to be ambiguous, unclear, and restricted by regulations, statutes, policies, and laws (Heldeweg & Sanders, 2013). In fact, Thomas (2013) added that the lack of clear definition of authority in the public sector caused an imbalance of power and influence between private-public business endeavors.

Balestri (2014) idealized that the authority in a democracy environment was the accepted method of group decision-making that aimed toward equality, inclusiveness, and unity. Democracy has three dimensions including (a) collective decision, (b) transparency in diverse groups, and (c) alliance building (Altman,

2013). Further, Normann (2013) pointed out that democracy in a public-private environment was a strategic advantage in decision-making by eliminating the aristocracy and monarchy.

Klein, Mahoney, McGahan, and Pitelis (2013) further added that a democratic environment was a favored method amongst private-public leaders of decision-making, because of promoting equal opportunity to discover the right directives or solutions. For instance, in a democratic consensus, management in the PPP take advantage of shared resources to advance their interests and position themselves for better social outcomes (Klein et al., 2013).

Seijts and Roberts (2011) and later Orazi et al. (2013) argued that leaders' decision-making authority was indispensable in the challenged public sectors and their obligations of the public governance subtleties. A study by Blader and Chen (2012) theorized that reinforcement of power systems, status systems, regulatory systems, and statutory systems were the possible issues that contributed toward the leader's decision-making authority. Similarly, a study by Crosby and Robbins (2013) identified internal and external environmental factors that influence decision-makers in the government sector. Some of the internal and external forces were municipality structure (e.g., executive, administrative, or coordinator) and elected supervisors or officials (Crosby & Robbins, 2013). The monitoring systems, such as standing and advisory committees are also some of the other internal and external forces (Crosby & Robbins, 2013).

The public and the private sector have a significant contribution to social welfare, thus understanding the element of a governing body includes considerable importance in the PPPs. The aim of this section was to gain an in-depth understanding of the decision-making process within the governing body in an authoritative and democratic environment relevant to the formation of the PPPs. The next section includes a summary of the literature on the history of PPPs, types of PPPs, advantages and disadvantages of PPPs. The in-depth analysis of PPPs includes significance to the proposed study, because understanding the dynamics of PPPs represents the connection of formation in the public and private partnerships between TPAs and local government agencies in the state of Wisconsin.

Transition and Summary

Section 1 of this qualitative multiple-case study included the foundation for the research design and related concepts associated with the business problem of exploring information on the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs. In this study, I examined the successful formation of the PPP by interviewing the purposive population of leaders from state licensed TPA organizations that provided comprehensive benefits administration and management services located in Wisconsin.

Exploring how leaders understand the complex business partnerships with local government and how leaders within TPAs adapt to a complex local

government environment allows linkage between the contracting process to strengthen partnerships (Simoneaux & Stroud, 2013). I examined peer-reviewed journals, books, expert reports, government websites, dissertations, and census data from the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (2014) to investigate the common themes. Also included was a literature map in Figure 1 outlining a visual summary of the literature used to explore my research question as suggested by Rahmandoust et al. (2011). The literature review included organisations using a concept map with six topic hierarchies: (a) the previous research and findings on PPPs; (b) decision-making process; (c) contract procurement process; (d) history, types, advantages and disadvantages of PPPs; (e) private sector's business environment; (f) and public sector's business environment.

The foundation of the literature review included an in-depth explanation of the organizational decision-making process in real world constraints and limitations in PPPs. Throughout the literature review, Section 1 includes the conceptual framework of Barnard's (1938) decision theory and Buckley's (1967) complex adaptive systems theory to justify and explain other researchers' perspectives on the complex contractual process and decision-making in the formation of PPPs. I explored three of the topics in suborder themes to illuminate the procurement process identifying the Wisconsin legislative contractual provisions, TPA statutes, and the role of TPAs.

Synthesis of the suborder themes then led to consideration of additional elements regarding the history of PPPs, types of PPPs, advantages and disadvantages of forming PPPs. To better understand the existing complex business partnerships between private and public entities, I examined similar and different themes between private and public sector's business environment. Finally, Section 1 included statements and scholarly literature identifying business value and contribution to business practices and social change.

In Section 2, I further corroborate on the groundwork and foundation of this research topic of PPPs between TPAs and local government organizations located in the state of Wisconsin. In Section 2, provided are detailed roles of the researcher and participant population followed by a description of the research method and design. Also included was: (a) data collection instruments and techniques, (b) data analysis techniques, and (c) reliability and validity. Presented in Section 3 were the study results with the application to professional practice and implication for social change, recommendations for action or further research, and personal reflections and experiences with the doctoral study process.

Section 2: The Project

The focus of this qualitative multiple case study was to understand the existing problem concerning complex contracting processes in the formation of PPPs. I collected data from TPA organization currently in executive and senior management positions using open-ended interview questions. I also collected data through the review of contracts and PSA agreements. Understanding the complex contracting process may assist TPA leaders enter contracts to form PPPs with local government agencies in the state of Wisconsin.

Section 2 contains a description of the research design and method selected for the proposed study to explore what information some managers need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs. Section 2 included a restatement of the purpose, roles of the researcher and research study participants. In addition, Section 2 includes the research method and design, population and sampling, and ethical research practices. Last, I present the data collection instruments and techniques, data analysis technique, reliability, and validity. Section 3 includes the research findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the information some managers within TPAs need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs. The study population included experienced leaders who directly participated in the PPPs contracting process. Four leaders

with decision-making authority from three Wisconsin state licensed TPA companies that provide comprehensive benefits administration and management services participated. The TPA leaders with decision-making authority in those three companies met the needs for this study, because of their familiarity with the information necessary regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of PPPs based on real-life experiences. The implications for positive social change included an increased value to employee health care benefits, trustees, beneficiaries, and taxpayer savings in the provision of public services (Simoneaux & Stroud, 2013).

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in qualitative studies is to gather information accurately, report all data collected, and identify shared lived experiences regarding the phenomenon (Cseko & Tremaine, 2013; Yin, 2014). The researcher in a qualitative study is the primary data collection instrument (Eide & Showalter, 2012). In this proposed qualitative study, I played a significant role in data collection by serving as the primary instrument. Kyvik (2013) argued that a researcher's role in qualitative studies is gathering data in an accurate and ethical manner. The roles during data collection included soliciting representatives of organizations to participate voluntarily in the interviews, scheduled and conducted in-depth interviews. Last, as the primary researcher, I compiled, coded, analyzed, and interpreted the data for this for this study.

Krumpal (2013) argued that researchers undertaking qualitative research need to be able to make an assessment of the research relevant to both the participants and themselves. Sergi and Hallin (2011) further stated that a researcher's role often parallels the relevance of their experience and those of the participants. The parallel relevance in qualitative research provides an opportunity for engagement in work reflections and any related experiences with a similar phenomenon under study (Yardley, Watts, Pearson, & Richardson, 2014). This research study was particularly relevant to me as a fiscal administrator in a local government organization and participating in PPPs.

The doctoral study took place in the state where I live, but not at my place of employment. Similarly, selection of participants did not include TPA firms with which my employer had a PPP agreement. Cohen and Arieli (2011) and Yin (2014) theorized that conducting research in a researcher's place of work can jeopardize the integrity of the data collection process. As a local government representative liaison between the decision makers of the PPPs, I had no past interactions with participants from TPA organizations that provided comprehensive benefits services and the public government agencies of this study. Personal background and understanding of TPAs and my position within a local government organization demonstrated credibility with the study participants involved in the PPPs (Rossetto, 2014).

The key principles of ethical research are to protect the rights of the participants by protecting their privacy and from any harm (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). The Belmont Report protocol included the identification of three key principles that require all researchers to treat participants as autonomous agents, impose no beneficence or harm on participants, and treat all participants equally (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). Consequently, I treated all participants as autonomous agents, imposed no harm, and protected their rights during this study as identified by the Belmont Report protocol (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). I collected data in a trustworthy manner and adhered to the protocols as required by the Belmont Report, as well as mitigate potential bias.

An insider status offers a level of increased understanding of the topic being studied, politics of the institution, and trust between the researcher and the participants (Taylor, 2011b). Further, Taylor (2011b) added that the creation of trust between the researcher and the participants facilitates disclosure of facts so as not lose any valuable qualitative data. In this study, I was an insider and clarified my role as a researcher, a local government employee, and my integral part of the PPP contracting process.

Conversely, there are advantages and disadvantages to an insider. The benefit as an insider creates increased familiarity with the topic and intimate knowledge of the group being studied (Blythe, Wilkes, Jackson, & Halcomb,

2013; Rossetto, 2014). The disadvantage to an insider can lead to loss of objectivity and make assumption unconsciously that can lead to bias (Blythe et al., 2013; Rossetto, 2014). Consequently, I developed an explicit awareness of the possible effect of perceived bias and avoided premature assumptions as an insider.

Using the bracketing technique, I outlined any personal qualities, perspectives, and pre-existing thoughts and experiences of the phenomenon under study. Tufford and Newman (2012) defined bracketing as a researcher's reflections on their knowledge, historical experiences, reflexive journals, and personal values about a phenomenon under study. I considered and addressed any issues as an insider at each and every step in the research to ensure compliance of the study and data integrity as recommended by Blythe et al. (2013) and Rossetto (2014).

Researcher bias may occur if a flaw exists in the research design with the influence of personal mindset on the phenomenon of interest (Roulston & Shelton, 2015; Skitka, 2012). Skitka, and later Roulston and Shelton theorized that a researcher's mindset can influence assumptions, research principles, data gathering, and data analysis and interpretations. Consequently, I mitigated bias by identifying and acknowledging any bias that was not voluntarily avoidable. I recognized my personal viewpoints and bias when viewing data better to understand the viewpoints of others as recommended by Roulston and Shelton, and Skitka. Barnard's (1938) decision theory and Buckley's (1967) complex

adaptive systems theory served as the lenses to view and analyze the data on the complex contracting process in the formation of PPPs. I applied the components of these theories in this study to examine the information some managers within TPAs need on the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs. I used the interview questions to document the participants' experiences identifying the complex contract process to understand the formation of PPPs.

The interview protocols allow researchers to structure the interview process (Kisely & Kendall, 2011). Kisely and Kendall stated that the interview protocols include the formation of questions and consistency of interview questions for all participants. Thus, I followed an interview protocol to ensure that I used the same interview questions with each participant, asked all interview questions the same way, and covered the same topics in every interview to mitigate bias as noted by Kyvik (2013). The interview protocol included six steps: (a) reminders of what the research should do to ensure the intent of the phenomena under study, (b) an opening statement as an icebreaker, (c) open-ended face-to-face interview questioning, (d) notation and clarification of any non-verbal communication, (e) probing questions, and (f) recorded reflective notes throughout the entire interview process (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014; Rowley, 2012; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011; see Appendix F).

Participants

Damianakis and Woodford (2012) and Yin (2014) identified that multiple units with various participants within the same setting satisfy the appropriateness of the population for a qualitative research study. I identified and recruited all participants within the guidelines of Walden's institutional review board (IRB) and Belmont Report guidelines and protocols. I did not intentionally recruit members of any vulnerable populations as identified by Belmont Report (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). The study population included three state licensed TPA agencies in Wisconsin that provided comprehensive benefits management services and decision makers within each agency. Each agency employed at least one or two decision makers that I interviewed for this study.

The eligibility criteria for the selection of TPA agencies for this study included state licensure in Wisconsin, participated in PPPs, and had the provision of benefits management services to local government agencies. Study participants included executive personnel and senior management in state licensed TPA organizations that provide comprehensive benefits services to public agencies in the state of Wisconsin, with a minimum of a bachelor's degree, 5 years of experience in the formation of PPPs, and were 18 years of age and older (see Appendix D). Kolb (2012) and Robinson (2014) stated that the intent of deliberate selection of participants targets a population that meets specific criteria to answer

the research question. In nonrandom selection, Yin (2014) required a minimum of one participant for each case.

My solicitation of participants for interviews for this study was deliberate and nonrandom, and based on their detailed knowledge of PPPs. The population size met the needs for this study because the participants represented comparisons and distinctions demonstrating similarities or differences within PPPs. Kolb (2012), Robinson (2014), and Yin (2014) added that the selection of one participant for each case may not be sufficient. Therefore, researchers must compare more cases until little or no change in themes or codes emerges also known as saturation (Kolb, 2012; Robinson, 2014; Yin, 2014). Consequently, I interviewed participants and analyzed the contract and plan service agreements (PSAs) until the data reached saturation.

After receiving approval from the Walden University IRB, I proceeded to request permission to use the membership directory from SPBA (see Appendix A). I contacted TPA organizations through personal contacts and a letter of cooperation from a research partner (see Appendix B). After authorized representatives from the TPA organizations had signed letters of cooperation, I proceeded to recruit study participants through personal contacts and a recruitment letter (see Appendix C).

I used three strategies to identify and gain access to participants. The first strategy included a TPA directory from the SPBA (2014; see Appendix A) with

TPA organizations exclusively in the state of Wisconsin. The second strategy included the contact information for additional participants from experts on PPPs and TPA officials who reviewed the interview questions (see Appendix B and Appendix C). The third strategy was snowball sampling to identify other eligible participants for this study. According to Cohen and Arieli (2011), Hochwarter (2014), and Suri (2011), snowball sampling is appropriate when a researcher interviews one participant and asks the participant if they can recommend other candidates they feel would be willing to participate.

Building a working relationship with participants in a study is essential to successful qualitative research (Hibbert, Sillince, Diefenbach, & Cunliffe, 2014; Swauger, 2011; Yin, 2014). I established professional communication with the selected TPA organizations that provided comprehensive benefits services through: (a) a formal recruitment letter or a recruitment e-mail to the appropriate personnel; (b) an overview and extent of my role in this study; (c) information on organizational approval and a participant's consent to participate in this study; and (d) my contact information if they were willing to participate.

Through the requirements outlined by the Walden IRB, I followed a process designed to ensure adequate ethical research practices (Walden University, 2014). I began to establish an expert and researcher relationship with participants through acknowledgment of the interview process and their contributions as experts to this study. The systematic approach that I used to form

a participant and researcher partnership included: (a) formal letter or e-mail detailing the goals of this research and expectations regarding the participant's commitment and time; (b) assurance of ethical protection of the participants as directed by Walden University; (c) assurance of anonymity and confidentiality of the responses they provided for the study; (d) assurance to participants of my provisions for security for all records generated for the study; (e) and assurance of protecting and securing information after the completion of this study.

Christens and Speer (2015) and Swauger (2011) theorized that intentional connection with participants through consistent communication helps to maintain principles of researcher's responsibility to the participants. In a similar manner, McLevey (2015) argued that adequate strategies with a connection between the researcher and the participants include clear messaging and multipronged communication channels. As a result, I established a purposeful and consistent communication with the participants by telephone and e-mail to develop and maintain a professional relationship with all participants.

Research Method and Design

Ostlund, Kidd, Wengstrom, and Rowa-Dewar (2011) identified quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods as the three types of research methods researchers use when conducting a study. Yin (2014) identified the quantitative and qualitative as the two most common types of research methods. Babbie (2012) asserted that a research design has two levels. The first level is the

mechanics of research (i.e., quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods) concerning a decision on how to collect the data. The second level is the logic or framework of the study (i.e., exploratory, descriptive, experimental, or case-study) concerning the collection of evidence on the phenomena of interest. This section expands on the nature of the study presented in Section 1 of this study.

Method

The research method for this study was qualitative. The selection of a research method is a framework that initiates the relationships between forming objectives of the research and collection of data (Ray, 2015; Yin, 2014).

Conversely, the goal of qualitative research is to examine a complex textual description of social experiences in a given environment or situation (Berger, 2015; Hazzan & Nutov, 2014). This study involved investigating a phenomenon including a presentation of data from multiple sources of evidence using open-ended face-to-face interviews, contracts, and PSA agreements. A qualitative research method was the most appropriate method for this study, allowing participants to express their experiences of the phenomenon in their words as suggested by Berger, and Hazzan and Nutov.

A quantitative methodology meets the needs of a study when a researcher tests relationships between two or more variables using computations and statistical analysis under various circumstances (Plotnikov & Vertakova, 2014; Yin 2014). In a quantitative study, the researcher gathers data from larger samples

to provide high reliability (Yin, 2014). A quantitative methodology also allows a researcher to arrive at an objective conclusion by minimizing the bias of judgment (Yin, 2014). Wong et al. (2011) conducted quantitative research as opposed to qualitative inquiry to quantify frequency and magnitude of occurrences in collaborative decision-making in various circumstances. A quantitative method did not meet the needs for this study, as the intent of this study was not to test hypotheses on the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs (Yin, 2014).

I considered a mixed-method for this study. A mixed-method methodology is a multilevel data analysis based on quantitative and qualitative methods (Ostlund et al., 2011; Yin, 2014). A mixed-method includes the use of statistical data that measure magnitudes and frequencies of hypotheses, and qualitative analysis explores the meaning and understating of hypotheses (Ostlund et al., 2011; Yin, 2014). The mixed-method suits the needs of a study when either quantitative or qualitative alone is not sufficient, and two or more perspectives on a phenomenon are necessary (Mayes, Peterson, & Bonilla, 2013). A mixed-method did not meet the needs for this study because the research question did not require the collection and analysis of quantitative statistical data.

According to Suri (2011), the qualitative researcher investigates a phenomenon to gain explicit translation of experiences, interpretation of actual events and how individuals draw meaning from their surrounding that influence

their behaviors. Qualitative research methods suit the needs of a study when a researcher seeks to collect and analyze data to obtain a realistic perspective on experiences (O’Cathain et al., 2015). Qualitative methods also meet the needs of a study when investigating a holistic view on a phenomenon with subsequent analysis (Wolgemuth et al., 2015). Finally, qualitative research methods enable a researcher to gain insight into social behaviors through interactions in a particular situation when attempting to describe a problem (Suri, 2011).

Mitrega, Forkmann, Ramos, and Henneberg (2012) utilized a qualitative methodology to examine explicit social behaviors in decision-making to recognize patterns and themes among leadership styles in various business partnerships. Similarly, Stadtler and Probst (2012) conducted a qualitative study using interviews to examine benefits of PPPs in broker organizations and how their roles performed. The purpose of this study was to explore the following business research question: What information do some managers within TPAs need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPP? I used the qualitative research method to examine PPPs between TPA organizations and local government agencies, which allowed participants to express their experiences in the complex contracting process.

The purpose of this study was to explore the information some managers within TPAs need regarding the complex contracting process in PPPs; thus the qualitative method was the best suited research methodology as suggested by

O’Cathain et al. (2015), Suri (2011), and Wolgemuth et al. (2015). Similarly, the purpose of this study and a wide-range research on available methodologies related to PPP and the complex contract process justified the selection of a qualitative research method. In addition, review of available literature on PPPs reinforced the conclusion that qualitative methodology was the preferred method for this study to contribute to the existing literature on complex contracting processes when forming PPPs.

Research Design

The research design for this study was a multiple-case study. Yin (2014) identified that research design is a structure or a plan necessary prior to data collection. The primary function of research design is to ensure the researcher can obtain evidence to answer the initial research question or test a theory as explicitly as possible (Houghton, Murphy, Shaw, & Casey, 2015). A research design appropriate meets study needs when researchers use logical methods in collecting data (Houghton et al., 2015; Zivkovic, 2012). These logical methods are the use of a questionnaire, survey, observation, and examination of documents to answer a problem or test theories (Houghton et al., 2015; Yin, 2014; Zivkovic, 2012). A multiple-case study was the most appropriate design for this study, which enabled me to ask how or what systems encompassed the complex process as recommended by Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton (2012), and Reiter, Stewart, and Bruce (2011). The purpose of this study was to explore and conduct a

comprehensive analysis using multiple sources to discover what information some managers need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of a PPP.

I explored five qualitative designs to determine which design best suited for addressing the research question. A researcher can also conduct research using an ethnography, phenomenology, heuristic, narrative inquiry, and case study design. The research design for this study was a multiple-case study. Gioia et al. (2012) and Yin (2014) theorized that a case study in business research allows the researcher to evaluate multiple sources of evidence to examine a phenomenon in a natural setting and determine what has occurred and reasons to support the phenomenon. Sarker, Sarker, Sahaym, and Bjørn-Andersen (2012) further added that case studies are prime designs to examine and interpret data in a subjective manner. Similarly, Moll (2013) argued that a case study approach is a standard research design in exploring issues in the context of work, business-related interactions, and practices.

Kort and Klijn (2011) used a multiple-case study design to investigate why and how coordination of partnerships between public and private sectors addressed practical urban regeneration projects. Kort and Klijn sought to understand the engagement of senior management in PPPs with various social stakeholders, organizational and managerial processes, policies, and economic activities. In a similar manner, Pillay, Watters, and Hoff (2013) utilized a

multiple-case study design to explore PPPs in vocational education in Australia to further provide an understanding of the partnership joint ventures. The multiple-case study by Pillay et al. included an analysis of the Gateway Schools' documents, government policies, and literature. Jefferies, Brewer, and Gajendran (2014) also used a multiple-case study design to understand how PPPs in water/wastewater infrastructure influenced successful implementation using financially feasible approaches. Jefferies et al. examined and compared the Australian Alliance Project documentation and existing literature on Critical Success Factors (CSFs). For this research, a multiple-case study design was the most appropriate as the purpose was to explore complex contractual agreements between private-public partnerships.

I considered each qualitative design's appropriateness and determined that a multiple-case inquiry met the needs of the study. The intent of this case study was to explore the complex contracting process over prolonged periods and provided an opportunity for gathering information about the complex PPP environment. In this study, I sought to explore PPPs through open-ended face-to-face interviews, as well as a review and analysis of TPA contracts and PSA agreements. Using multiple data sources enabled me to gather in-depth information on the complex contracting process in the formation of PPPs between TPAs and local government agencies

Researchers use an ethnographic design to describe a culture's characteristics or relations between groups through direct observations and interactions with participants (Weis & Fine, 2012). Ethnographic inquiry method meets the needs of a study when a researcher absorbs cultural characteristics of a whole group of the daily activities for an extended period (Baskerville & Myers, 2015; Lambert, Glacken, & McCarron, 2013). In the ethnographic research design, the researcher becomes part of the cultural group to study people in their soundings at that culture (Weis & Fine, 2012). Boddy (2011) described that ethnographic research design as a comprehensive evaluation of individuals in a routine manner that required ongoing participant observation of data collection. The intent of the ethnographic research is not to understand the participants' viewpoints, but to understand the behavior of a particular culture (Boddy, 2011; Lambert et al., 2013). The ethnographic research design did not meet study needs because the focus of this study was not to understand the phenomenon of a particular group or culture.

Moustakas (1994) explained that a phenomenological design aims to describe experiences of a phenomenon in a situation that already occurred. I considered a phenomenological research design to capture the experiences of individuals and their perspectives to uncover themes that challenge structural or normative assumptions in the complex procurement process. The phenomenological design may be suitable when the researcher seeks to

understand lived experiences using at least 20 participants without using secondary sources (Bradbury-Jones, Taylor, & Herber, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; McCann et al., 2014; Robertson & Thomson, 2014). The use of a phenomenological design does not include the utilization of the secondary documentation to implement methodological triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; McCann et al., 2014; Robertson & Thomson, 2014). The phenomenological design did not meet the needs of this study to explore a particular and complex phenomenon within its real-world context relevant to the contracting process that leads to the formation of PPPs. The intent of this study was to examine a phenomenon in a natural setting to understand what and why the contracting process in PPPs was a complex process.

The heuristic inquiry design for qualitative research is an exploratory approach concerned directly with human knowledge, self-dialogue, self-search, and self-inquiry (Charmaz, 2008; Haertl, 2014). In the heuristic design, the researcher seeks to find or discover an inner knowledge aimed at the meaning of experience where the researcher becomes involved and becomes the focus of the research (Kenny, 2012; Mulder, Lazonder, & De Jong, 2014). According to Kenny, there are two elements of the heuristic inquiry. First, the researcher has personal experience and interest in the phenomenon (Kenny, 2012). Second, the participants share an intensity of experiences with the researcher and the phenomenon (Kenny, 2012). The heuristic inquiry design did not meet the needs

for this study. The focus of this study was not on exploring a phenomenon where I as the researcher and the participant share significant human experiences, and I was not the primary focus of the research.

Narrative inquiry design in qualitative research is applicable when a researcher focuses on the stories told by the participants (Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2014). Merriam (2014) suggested the narrative design is a spoken or written text providing accounts of events or actions that are chronologically connected. Similarly, the narrative design in the qualitative study focuses on multiple individuals, gathering data through stories, and examines the life course stages of these experiences (Maclean, Harvey, & Chia, 2012). A narrative inquiry meets the needs of a study when a researcher forms a story recorded in an autobiography of individual's entire life, personal experiences, or private situations (Dawson & Hjorth, 2012). The narrative inquiry design did not suit the needs for this study because the focus was not on narrating personal experiences as a biographical study.

The multiple-case design represents replication logic because each case can yield similar or different data, but predictable findings (Yin, 2014). In comparing multiple cases, at least three cases per one subgroup must be selected to reach information redundancy or data saturation (Merriam, 2014). Bernard (2013) recommended that the homogeneous population of six to eight meet the needs in a qualitative research study. In a similar manner, Suri (2011) suggested

at least six participants in a qualitative investigative research met study needs when attempting to understand the essence of their experiences. Rowley (2012) stated that a case study requires between one to 10 participants; however, additional selection of participants may be necessary in a case study to reach data saturation. Kolb (2012) defined data saturation as the point in data collection when a researcher locates little or no change in themes or codes. As a result, I interviewed the targeted population from Wisconsin state licensed TPA agencies and analyzed TPA contracts and PSA agreements until the data reached saturation as recommended by Kolb and Rowley. I coded data, identified themes, and analyzed all data in the study using interview transcripts, journals, and documents related to the contracting process in PPPs until data reached saturation.

Population and Sampling

The population for this study included four executives from three state licensed TPA organizations in Wisconsin. Researchers use purposive sampling that represents the same group when conducting an exploratory multiple case study (Edwards, 2014; Yin, 2014). Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, and LaRossa (2015) added that purposive sampling methods are advantageous when identifying participants with specific knowledge and experiences of the phenomenon. The disadvantage associated with purposive sampling places limitations on a sample size (Roy et al., 2015). I used purposive sampling for this multiple-case study.

I used purposive sampling for this multiple-case study. I purposefully selected participants in each TPA agency for this study. Edwards (2014), Yin (2014), and later Roy et al. (2015) recommended a non-random selection of participants in a qualitative multiple-case study. The selected participants had specific knowledge and experience in PPPs with local government agencies. The goal of purposive selection is to select participants of interest to the research study best suited to answer the research question (Robinson, 2014; Roy et al., 2015).

The primary sampling strategy was to recruit participants through personal contacts and recruitment letters (see Appendix B and Appendix C) from the TPA directory obtained from SPBA (2014). The second strategy was expert contacts and a snowballing sampling strategy to recruit a sufficient number of voluntary participants for this study as suggested by Suri (2011). In a snowball selection of participants, the researcher asks the participants to identify other eligible volunteers to participate in the study (Hochwarter, 2014; Suri, 2011).

In selecting TPAs, I sought out those that limited PPPs to local government entities in the state of Wisconsin. In some PPPs, the selected TPAs provided services to private, non-profit, and public entities; however, this study included limitations to PPPs between TPAs and local government agencies. Many types of TPAs exist to include TPAs that manage property, casualty, and liability claims, as opposed to TPAs that specialize in employee benefits such as pensions, liability, and health coverage (Davis & Pavur, 2014). For the purposeful selection

of participants, I primarily concentrated on state licensed TPA organizations specializing in health benefits claim processing and management in the state of Wisconsin.

Migiro and Magangi (2011) added that non-probability selection was especially useful in the qualitative study when researchers seek to determine if a problem exists using expert and homogeneous population where limited research exists that supports a problem. Wheeler, Shanine, Leon, and Whitman (2014) proposed that strategies for purposeful sampling in the qualitative research be tailored and utilized for different purposes. A research synthesis must carefully be identifiable in sampling strategies that align with the research purpose, to enhance credibility and sufficiently address the research synthesis, to ensure feasibility, efficiency and meeting of ethical standards (Suri 2011). The research synthesis must also define the limitations associated with researcher's sampling strategies and speculate on how these constraints may affect the synthesis findings (Suri, 2011).

Inability to access a wider population of interest and bias can pose weakness of the purposive sampling (Yin, 2014). Wheeler et al. (2014) noted that a researcher's judgment in purposeful sampling alleviates the probability of biases and could be subject to poor selection based on unclear criteria or unsupportable criteria. I selected participants based on specific criteria related to PPPs in state licensed TPA organizations (see Appendix B and Appendix C). The purposive

selection of participants brought credibility to the study and allowed for adequate depth, detail, and richness of the study as suggested by Stuart, Bradshaw, and Leaf (2015). The specific criteria helped to narrow the population of study participants to experienced managers who varied in their perceptions and lived experiences in the contracting process in PPPs.

Data saturation is a criterion to ensure the collection of adequate and quality data to support a study (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Data saturation occurs when the data do not reveal additional new information or identify new themes and codes while analyzing already collected data (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). To satisfy replication in the qualitative multiple-case study, the selection included a sample size appropriate and distinct to the study as addressed by Yin (2014).

Yin (2014) explained that replication logic applies to a multiple-case study when a researcher achieves results through literal and theoretical replication. Literal replication aims at replicating results, whereas the theoretical replication produces contrasting results for predictable reasons (Yin, 2014). This qualitative study does not offer theoretical replication as the study did not include proposed hypotheses.

Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are criteria for judging the qualitative research on a phenomenon under study (Rennie, 2012). Crowe et al. (2011) suggested achieving replication through three cases with three to four participants per case on a related topic. In a similar manner, the six to 10

participants may provide compelling evidence that support the research question (Crowe et al., 2011). To ensure sufficient data for analysis, I interviewed participants from three state licensed TPA organizations in Wisconsin until I determined the data had reached saturation.

As recommended by Crowe et al. (2011) for case studies, I collected secondary data in the form of contracts and PSA agreements to provide compelling evidence that supported the research questions. Data reached saturation in the study because no new information or no new themes emerged, and sufficient information existed to replicate the study. According to O'Reilly and Parker (2012), data reaches saturation when the participants offer no new information after verifying notes from other participants previously interviewed.

To address the research question, I used a nonrandom selection of participants to identify the information some managers need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of PPPs. For this study, I deliberately selected three participants from three state licensed TPA organizations for interviews concerning the contracting process in the formation of the PPPs. The purposeful sample of executives and senior managers met the needs of the study because of their success in forming PPPs. The executive members included the positions of chief executive officer (CEO), vice president (VP), and chief operating officer (COO). Each participant selected for the study: (a) was in an authoritative position and decisions regarding PPPs in the state of

Wisconsin; (b) had extensive knowledge of the private-public climate and stability in the formation of PPPs in the state of Wisconsin; (c) had extensive expertise with contractual agreements between a TPA firm and the public sector in the state of Wisconsin; (d) had a minimum of a bachelor's degree; and (e) was 18 years of age and older.

The TPA organizations and their participants who do not meet all of the criteria in Appendix B and Appendix C did not participate in the study. I collected contracts, PSA agreements, and other relevant documents as second sources of data to identify the complex contracting process in PPPs. According to Yin (2014), documents, archival records, and physical artifacts are some of the second sources of evidence for a case study. The documents were specifically from state-licensed TPA agencies with active contracts with local government agencies in Wisconsin.

As suggested by Yin (2014), the setting for the interviews should be at the convenience of the participants or a secure location of their choice. All scheduled interviews took place in a comfortable and non-threatening environment, enabling participants to be open and honest about their answers as recommended by Javalgi, Granot, and Alejandro (2011). Upon receiving approval from the Walden University IRB, I made an appointment with each participant at a convenient time at a quiet, secure location, date and time. All participants selected for this study

selected a mutually acceptable and secure location outside their work site, on a date and at a time that minimized interruptions.

I reviewed the study protocol, participant's rights, and asked all participants to participate in a one to two hour face-to-face interview. I then conducted an interview if a participant consented to take part in the study as required by the Walden University IRB. All interviews were audio-recorded with each participant's written consent (see Appendix D).

Ethical Research

The researcher's responsibility is to protect all participants' rights and confidentiality and comply with the Belmont Report ethical protocols to strengthen the validity of the study (Cseko & Tremaine, 2013; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). For the ethical protection of all research participants, I obtained approval from the Walden University IRB prior to commencing the proposed research. I informed all the participants that Walden University's IRB process requires IRB's approval and issuance of an IRB approval number prior to recruiting participants and collecting data for the proposed research (Walden University, 2014; see Appendix D).

All human subjects are essential to qualitative research (Kaye et al., 2015). The relationship between the researcher and the participants is critical and should be based on honesty, trust, and respect (Kaye et al., 2015). Each participant must voluntarily consent to participate in the study. I impartially selected each

participant based the same study participation criteria for selecting each participant.

In this study, I did not intentionally target members of any vulnerable populations identified in the Belmont Report (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). Each TPA organization's official with the authority to release documents granted permission to use and reproduce contract and PSA agreements (see Appendix E). The document release form outlined the measures taken to protect the information in those contract and PSA agreements, which were confidential and not to be disclosed (see Appendix E).

I secured a TPA directory from SPBA (see Appendix A) and began selecting TPA organizations for this study. Upon selection of the participating TPA organizations, I secured signed letters of cooperation from each organization to use premises, names, and documents relevant to the study (see Appendix B). Once the TPA organizations granted permission to use premises, names, and documents, each participant within each TPA organization who met the criteria for participation in this study received a letter of inquiry (see Appendix C).

When participants responded with consent agreements to participate, I reviewed the informed consent forms with all the participants and asked if they had questions (see Appendix D). I asked for their consent to audio record the interview and asked them to sign their informed consent to participate in the study (see Appendix D). Once all the organizations and participants signed the consent

agreements, I provided each organization a signed copy of their letter of cooperation and provided each participant a copy of their signed consent form.

I followed the ethical approach as described by Fein and Kulik (2011), which required an explanation of the purpose of the study, my role as the researcher, and my responsibility to the participant. I informed all participants about their voluntary willingness to participate in the study (see Appendix B and Appendix D). I informed all participants that they could withdraw from the study at any point in the research process without penalty or forfeiture of benefits (see Appendix B and Appendix D). I informed all participants that they can withdraw from the study by a telephone call or in writing (e.g., postal mail or e-mail) to me.

Devine et al. (2015) emphasized that researchers must avoid high inducement as compensation to participants for their involvement in the study. The IRB recognizes an appropriate compensation for time and expenses (i.e., travel expense and loss of time at work); however, the compensation must be neither coercive nor inconvenient (Underhill, 2014). I acknowledged that their participation was voluntary and that there was no compensation for their involvement in the study to avoid coercion.

Compensation was not offered to all the participants to avoid influence based on the financial gain as recommended by Fein and Kulik (2011). Upon completion of the study, all participants received a thank you letter (see Appendix D), a \$10 Starbucks gift card and an offer to discuss the outcomes of the study.

Likewise, I explained to all the participants that their participation may increase the understanding of the mindsets and influences that affect the contracting process when forming PPPs.

The IRB requires that researchers not harm the participants and minimize any risks by protecting the participants' identifiable information and their respective organizations (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979; Morse & Coulehan, 2015). I conducted the interviews in a manner that neither the questions nor the responses compromised the professional or personal welfare of the participants as directed by the Walden University IRB. To further ensure ethical protection of the participants, only I had access to the data. Coding and naming file conventions and other identifying personal information ensured anonymity. Fictional company names concealed the identities of all the TPA organizations. I labeled all companies as *Company A*, *Company B*, and *Company C*. I labeled each participant as *P1*, *P2*, *P3*, and *P4* to ensure confidentiality and privacy. I interviewed each of the four participants until data saturation was reached.

I followed all ethical standards and safeguarded all confidential information during the completion of this study as mandated by the U.S. National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical Research Regulations (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). To protect all participants' identifiable information and their organizations, I was the only

person with access to the detailed personal data. Similarly, all signed consent forms, recordings of the interviews, transcripts, interview notes, and personal logs are in a securely locked in a fireproof safe as well as on a password protected flash drive. I am the only person with access to the digital and printed data.

All data collected are securely stored and retained for 5 years before the final destruction of the data. After 5 years, I will shred all interview scripts, written and signed consent forms, notes, and logs. I will destroy and permanently delete all digital data, records (i.e., e-mails and documents), scanned interview notes, and recordings by reformatting the recorder and the flash drive. Lastly, I will permanently delete all information stored including backup files in the NVivo v10 software.

According to the U.S. National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical Research (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979), the researcher is required to have all ethical safeguards in place before, during, and after the participatory research. I ensured social responsibility, no ethical violations of laws occurred, I caused no physical harm to the participants or organizations, and I caused no psychological threat to the participants. I treated all participants equally with respect and integrity. Lastly, I treated all participants as autonomous agents.

I further explained that I will not disclose the names of the individual participants or the names of their respective organizations in this study. I

acknowledged that only I will have knowledge and access to the names of the participants and organizations involved in the study. Lastly, throughout the proposed study, I ensured all the participants of their anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses as recommended by Yin (2014). I selected TPAs from the limited number of TPAs in Wisconsin. Therefore, I do not identify the regional location of each state licensed TPA organization selected for the study to protect the identity of each organization. As suggested by Yin (2014), I did not ask the participants questions that could potentially compromise their personal well-being, professional status, and credibility. I informed all participants they could refuse to answer any questions during the interview that might cause them discomfort.

Data Collection Instruments

The researcher collects data based on the business problem, research question, research design, and information gathering through descriptive and exploratory methods (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) and Petty, Thomson, and Stew (2012) noted that the researcher in qualitative research is the instrument for the data collection and analysis process. As the researcher, I was the primary instrument for data collection in this study.

In a multiple-case study, the data collection contains multiple sources of evidence (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). An advantageous aspect of a multiple-case study is that the researcher conducts multiple cases where large samples of

similar participants are not available in the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). The disadvantage of using multiple-case may conclude findings cannot be necessarily transferable to a wider population because they case study design is believed to be too broad (Radley & Chamberlain, 2012; Yin, 2014). To ensure the trustworthiness of a completed case study, the use of methodological triangulation may provide a complete understanding of the phenomenon under study (Stake, 2014; Yin, 2014).

Marshall and Rossman (2011) identified methods of collecting qualitative data require direct interaction with the participants through open-ended individual interviews, focus groups, observations, archival records, documents, and physical artifacts. In a methodological triangulation, the researcher uses multiple qualitative methods to verify if conclusions from each of the data collection methods through multiple sources are the same to establish validity of the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Stake, 2014; Yin, 2014). Likewise, Yin (2014) recommended triangulating interview data with other data sources. As discussed by Marshall and Rossman, I collected and analyzed data from the open-ended face-to-face interview questions. I triangulated information from contract and PSA agreements as secondary data.

Researchers who refer to an acquaintance for research participation may influence participants' response, commonly known as acquaintance bias (Reysen, Hall, & Puryear, 2014). As discussed by Reysen et al., I mitigated bias by only

interviewing participants with whom I had no professional or personal relationship. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended bracketing as processes to mitigate researcher's bias or preconceptions that may influence the research process and outcome. As discussed by Tufford and Newman (2012), the researcher's awareness of potential biases may allow a new perspective on the phenomenon under study. As a researcher, I bracketed out my personal experiences from the beginning of the research process and continued throughout as a way to mitigate bias and preconceptions (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

Holmes (2015) described journaling as a comprehensive reflective journal to bracket the researcher's reflections especially when the researcher is the research instrument in the entire research process. Journaling is a data collection method that documents the researcher's role, viewpoints, assumptions, and self-reflection on the research that may influence the phenomenon under investigation (Al-karasneh, 2014). Following Al-karasneh's and Holmes' recommendations, I used reflexive journaling as a bracketing technique. In the reflexive journal, I documented my reflections on the research study from the beginning of this research process and throughout the research process to mitigate bias.

In research, the goal of the researcher is to mitigate bias by acknowledging their personal views and self-reflections related to the research phenomenon to ensure truthfulness of research outcomes (Pezalla, Pettigrew, & Miller-Day, 2012). Pezalla et al. suggested that bias in many disciplines is unavoidable. Thus,

researchers must understand the inherent biases and minimize the effects on the research process. What is possible in qualitative research, however, is the researcher is aware of their ideological positioning and their influence on the research study (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

In a similar manner, Gemignani (2011) theorized the researcher must examine and document their presuppositions, personal experiences, and assumptions to mitigate bias through journaling. The reflexive journaling is valuable and results in essential manuscripts that describe the researcher's self-reflections that influence the research process (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Throughout the research, I developed a reflexive journal where I acknowledged and recorded methodological decisions and reasons for them to mitigate bias. The researcher's perceptions and assumption from different perspectives, reflective journaling can be subjective and involves a broad range of concepts and standpoints (Pezalla et al., 2012).

Mertens (2014) identified four methods of collecting qualitative data: (a) focus groups, (b) observations, (c) individual interviews, and (d) documentation. In the face-to-face interview using the open-ended questions, the researcher and participants engage in a formal interview to develop and in-depth understanding of a phenomenon of interest (Ocak, 2011; Rabionet, 2011). As the primary instrument in the data collection process, I used face-to-face interviews with open-ended questions for data collection (see Appendix G). I used an open-ended

questionnaire to probe participants' experiences and document responses to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as suggested by Ocak and Rabionet.

Each face-to-face interview consisted of eight open-ended interview questions covering the fundamental dynamics of the complex contracting process in a successful formation of a PPP in the state of Wisconsin. In this study, I adopted several interview questions with permission from Jenkins (2012; see Appendix J). Jenkins sought to uncover the influencing factors in the PPP decision-making process between county government agencies and private businesses representing the solid waste and recycling industrial sector in the state of Georgia. The open-ended interview questions 1 through 8 aligned with Barnard's (1938) decision theory and Buckley's (1967) complex adaptive systems theory. I designed the eight open-ended interview questions to gather information on the complex contract process in the formation of the PPPs.

An in-depth interview protocol includes creating a qualitative questionnaire or adopting an existing valid and reliable guide for interviews (Englander, 2012; Yin, 2014). Likewise, Kisely and Kendall (2011), and later Rowley (2012), argued that the robustness of the interview questionnaire and the protocols in a qualitative study strengthen the reliability of the research. The objective of the interview questions was to understand the complex contracting process as it exists within TPA organizations in the 2015 business environment. I

followed a protocol that included conducting interviews using the set of questions derived from the literature review and interview questions adapted with permission from Jenkins (2012; see Appendix J).

As suggested by Kisely and Kendall (2011), the protocol also included conducting the interviews using the interview questions and subsequently analyzing the responses to identify patterns, relationships and themes. I did not develop the instrument to allow for the calculation of scores. Instead, the interview instrument facilitated the identification and evaluation of emerging themes (Applebaum, 2012). The collection, review, and analysis of relevant documents served as secondary data for the study. Reviewing contract agreements between TPA organizations that provide comprehensive benefits services to local government agencies allowed me to identify other complex elements of PPPs.

The open-ended interview questions were prepared prior to the interview; however, additional questions evolved from participant responses (Barratt, Choi, & Li, 2011). I did not conduct a pilot test of the interview questions. A researcher conducts a pilot study in advance to test the aspects of the research design and make necessary adjustment prior to the research (Mertens, 2014). I ensured that the research questionnaire was reliable before implementing a full study. To ensure the reliability of the interview questionnaire, I utilized the expert validation strategy after IRB's approval of my proposal. An expert validation strategy includes presenting the interview questions to experts for their views on the

interview questionnaire (Lash et al., 2014). Adams and Wieman (2011) stated that an expert review process is efficient and can provide validity and quality for the interview questions.

An expert review provides an assessment, feedback, and insight based on expertise and familiarity with the phenomenon under study (Goldblatt et al., 2011; Heikkinen, Huttunen, Syrjälä, & Pesonen, 2012). In contrast, a researcher may face challenges with identifying reliable experts, and their expertise may be significantly different than expected (Goldblatt et al., 2011; Heikkinen et al., 2012). Likewise, a field expert's subjectivity and prior experiences may affect the outcome of the expert review process (Goldblatt et al., 2011; Heikkinen et al., 2012). I selected the expert practitioners with extensive expertise in the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs in the state of Wisconsin. The subject experts included a president of a PPP consulting firm, president of the Society of Professional Benefit Administrators, Dr. Jenkins (2012), and a CEO of a TPA firm. Dr. Jenkins is a division director in the public sector and has over 10 years of experience in the contracting process in the formation of PPPs.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection in the qualitative multiple case study design involved in-depth, open-ended interview questions. I collected data from TPA organization by interviewing experienced leaders who directly participated in the PPPs contracting process. Each TPA organization had one individual who directly

participated in the PPPs contracting process. The secondary source of data collection involved examining contracts and PSA agreements as both documents were bondable by the contractual relationship of two PPPs.

Speer and Stokoe (2014) suggested that when utilizing the interview process with participants, trust building becomes an important component when the researcher uses recording devices. The advantages of face-to-face interviews include enhanced accuracy of screening study participants and the capture of verbal and nonverbal cues, emotions, and behaviors during each interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The disadvantages of face-to-face interviews are high cost, a researcher's inexperience in conducting interviews, limited time, and limited sample size (Lindhjem & Navrud, 2011). I used face-to-face interviews to observe participant's enthusiasm or discomfort during the interviewing process as recommended by Rubin and Rubin. In addition, face-to-face interviews can capture extra information that can enhance the verbal answer (Rubin & Rubin, 2011; Speer & Stokoe, 2014).

Data collection through the interviewing process is critical in qualitative data (Radley & Chamberlain, 2012). Prior to all the face-to-face interviews, I secured a signature of an authorized organization representative on a letter of cooperation to use the organization's premises, names, and documents relevant to the study (see Appendix B). I also provided each organization representative a copy of the letter of cooperation they signed on behalf of their organization.

Likewise, I secured and provided each participant a copy of their signed consent form in which they agreed to participate in the study (see Appendix D). I verbally summarized what to expect during the interview process, reaffirmed the participant's confidentiality, and rights to withdraw at any time during the research process. I asked all participants if they had any additional questions, and if they consent to the use of a digital voice activated recorder during the interview (see Appendix D) as recommended by Speer and Stokoe (2014). I was prepared to take handwritten notes during the face-to-face interviews in situations where the participants chose not to be recorded (see Appendix D).

I interviewed participants within TPA organizations participating in the formation of the PPPs at a designated date and time selected by the participants. I planned, scheduled, attended, and participated in the application of the interview questionnaire during interviews following the interview protocol. I scheduled all the meetings at a secure location, appropriate dates and times for the face-to-face interviews with all participants. I scheduled each interview session for approximately one to two hours at a date and time at a secure location of the participant's choosing. At any time, the participants had the option to cease their participation in the study. I made every effort to accommodate the participants' time constraints by working with each participant to schedule an interview time that minimized conflicts with their daily tasks.

The advantage of multiple-case studies is the use of multiple sources of data such as interviews, documents, and physical artifacts (Chatfield, Cooper, Holden, & Macias, 2014; Yin, 2014). The criticisms related to the multiple-case study technique are the smaller population size, and findings cannot necessarily be transferable to a wider population because the findings may be too broad (Radley & Chamberlain, 2012). Qualitative data collection techniques are in-depth and detailed recordings of social attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and experiences (Patton, 2012). In-depth interviews encourage participants to expand their responses that a researcher did not initially consider (Patton, 2012). Similarly, the qualitative data collection techniques can provide a more detailed understanding of reasons for individuals' actions and reasoning (Babbie, 2012).

The disadvantages of in-depth qualitative interviews are the data transferability for small groups of participants that require sophisticated statistical techniques to analyze the data (Babbie, 2012). In the qualitative research design, participants who are the product of their experiences, social environments, and beliefs may enhance the researcher's knowledge through objectivity (Babbie, 2012; Sayago, 2014). Qualitative data collection is time-consuming; however, it should yield in-depth data and insight into the research topic (Babbie, 2012; Patton, 2012).

Taking notes during the interview process is important because the researcher may utilize their time by focusing more on synchronous

communication (Doody & Noonan, 2013). A researcher who takes handwritten notes during the interview process must recognize the difficulty in listening, asking questions, and taking notes (Harvey, 2015). The benefit of handwritten note taking encourages increased attention and more elaboration on specific ideas (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The possible disadvantage may be that some information may be lost or inexact (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The disadvantages of voice recording interviews include the possibility of a technical malfunction of recording equipment and the time required to transcribe each voice recording (Hanna, 2012; Redlich-Amirav & Higginbottom, 2014). The advantage of the audio recording is that interview transcripts can be more accurate than writing notes during the interview process (Hanna, 2012; Redlich-Amirav & Higginbottom, 2014).

Prior to each interview, I tested the digital voice activated recorder to ensure its proper functions and replaced the batteries with each use. Also, I had a second voice recorder in case one malfunctioned. I was prepared to take handwritten notes in a situation where participants did not consent to voice recording or when both voice recorders malfunctioned. After each recording, I uploaded the scanned interview notes and digital voice recording file onto a personal computer and used Dragon Speech Recognition software to assist me with transcription.

In utilizing a multiple-case study, the researcher collects detailed secondary data to establish a link between a set of conditions and their effects (Merriam, 2014). A researcher uses a second source of data to compare various units within identifiable cases to understand how a business systems function and why (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2012). Comparing multiple sources such as secondary documents, archived records, or artifacts allows a researcher to obtain detail data not always obtainable by other research designs (Yin, 2011; 2014). I gathered secondary data from the contracts and PSA agreements between TPAs and local government organizations. The contractual arrangements and PSA agreements assisted in identifying the nature of the parties' terms and conditions. The term and conditions included by-laws, the role of authority, service delivery requirements, administrative costs, provisions, and stipulations identified by all partnering parties.

The use of contract agreement between TPA and local government agencies provided a detailed analysis of small units and its relationship to a phenomenon of interest as noted by Zikmund et al. (2012). Despite the advantages of utilizing a group or unit, the data collected from a group or a unit may be difficult to generalize to the wider population (Yin, 2014). A second possible disadvantage of using contract agreement between TPAs and local government agencies was that the contract may not be recent. According to the DOA (2013), Wis. Stats. §§ 16.70-16.78 does not require municipalities to renew the service

contract. The bid specifications and contract agreement include the terms and provisions for renewal or extension of the contract (DOA, 2013).

I developed interviewing techniques suggested by Babbie (2012). Following Babbie's method, I pursued a consistent line of inquiry during the face-to-face interviews using a fluid stream of interview questions rather than rigid questions. To ensure readiness and openness from the interviewees and share their experiences, I reaffirmed my commitment to confidentiality and anonymity with all the participants as suggested by Babbie. I began each interview with an opening statement as an icebreaker. Price and Nicholl (2013) defined icebreaker as a non-judgmental opening method to engage participants on personal aspects of their experiences in a relaxed manner. Likewise, a successful icebreaker should be kept simple with a specific objective to ensure the interview process is appropriate and comfortable (Gillárová, Tejkalová, & Láb, 2014). A possible disadvantage of an icebreaker is that it may require additional time during the interview (Lasater et al., 2014).

I designed the eight open-ended interview questions to gather the critical information needed to understand the complex contracting process in PPPs between TPAs and local government agencies. I used follow-up probes for participants to further clarify their responses as suggested by Bloomberg and Volpe (2012). Through the establishment of an interview protocol in Appendix F, I asked each participant the same interview questions listed in Appendix G. The

open-ended face-to-face interview questions allow the researcher to prepare interview questions ahead of time (Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, & McKinney, 2012). In the face-to-face interviewing process, the participant can elaborate on their responses and the researcher can ask probing questions to further understand the phenomenon of interest (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Whittemore, 2014). The open-ended interview questions can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data (Gubrium et al., 2012). The open-ended questions can be lengthy and, in essence, generate a large amount of data that can be difficult to analyze (Gubrium et al., 2012).

Upon the Walden University IRB approval, I used the following process to conduct the proposed study. I initiated contact with all the participants to gather informed consent forms. I did a follow-up contact with all participants and clarified any questions about the informed consent and the interviewing process. I approached and scheduled interviews with each participant identified in the Population and Sampling section of this study. Prior to the interviews, I sought permission from all participants to use a voice-activated recorder (see Appendix D).

I informed all participants that I will take handwritten notes during the face-to-face interview in situations where they choose not to be recorded. I informed all participants that during the interview process, they can stop the interview at any time. After a verbal summary of the interview process, I provided

copies of an informed consent form for each participant. I used a digital voice recorder and handwritten notes to record all raw data collected using the interview questionnaire. I transcribed each digitally recorded interview and handwritten notes, and coded the identity of each recording by assigning a letter and numeric code to ensure the confidentiality of each respondent as well as the reliability of the data as suggested by Yin (2014).

The participants' perceptions and perspective views of the researcher will aid verification that consistency, validation, and relevance exist in each interview question (Goldblatt et al., 2011; Torrance, 2012). The member checking is a method of testing the researcher's interpretations and conclusions with participants who participated in the proposed qualitative in-depth interviews are accurate and valid (Goldblatt et al., 2011). To ensure the accuracy and mitigate bias in the interpretation of the interview responses, I conducted member checking. Conducting member checking after a significant time lapse can jeopardize a participant's ability to recall their answers and the meaning of their intent during the interview process (Harper & Cole, 2012). Within 5 days after each initial interview, I transcribed and conducted preliminary interpretation of each participant's responses to the interview questions. Following, I coded and analyzed the interview transcripts, contracts, and PSA agreements into themes using Nvivo v10 software.

I conducted member checking after I paraphrased the responses to the interview questions, and TPA contracts and PSA agreement were interpreted accurately as recommended by Goldblatt et al. (2011). Goldblatt et al. stated that asking the participants to review the summaries of the researcher's interpretations of participants' responses to the interview questions can increase the trustworthiness of the finalized analysis and conclusions. To initiate the accuracy, trustworthiness and mitigate bias in the interpretations of the interview responses, I conducted member checking by seeking verification from participants of my interpretations by asking: (a) if the completed transcript accurately interpreted the participant's intent and actions during the interview process, (b) if the entire transcript contained any inaccurate interpretations that required additional clarification, and (c) if there was any other information, the participants wished to share that may provide greater clarity to the interpretations to the original answers as noted by Goldblatt et al. (see Appendix H).

After each participant had verified the accuracy of the interview interpretations, the original summary included changes and additions as requested by any participants who made revisions. Goldblatt et al. (2011) recommended member checking as a way to seek critical feedback on the findings and to incorporate any additional analysis into the initial findings. By providing the participants the opportunity to check for accurate interpretations of the responses ensures that I had captured their intended responses.

As Yin (2014) suggested, I protected and maintained the anonymity of each participant by not including the participant's personal identification together with responses to open-ended interview questions in the study. I used a unique identifier for each organization and participant to conceal personal identity information. I labeled all companies as *Company A*, *Company B*, and *Company C*. I labeled participants as *P1*, *P2*, *P3*, and *P4* to provide a unique identifier for every participant. The raw data from the open-ended interview questions were available on request from the researcher.

Also, I used a unique identifier for each handwritten notes and recorded interviews. I used a letter *h* to identify handwritten notes and a letter *r* to identify response data from recorded interviews. I labeled each contract as *C1*, *C2*, and *C3* and PSA agreements *PSA1*, *PSA2*, and *PSA3*. All raw data obtained from digital recording, interview notes, and other source documents will be securely stored in a locked, fireproof safe for 5 years before the final destruction of the data. I will destroy and permanently delete all digital data, records, and digital recordings by reformatting the recorder and the flash drive. I will shred all physical documents and handwritten notes.

I was prepared to take handwritten notes during the face-to-face interviews in situations where the participants did not consent to be recorded (see Appendix D). A technique for note taking during an interview requires appropriate organization of collected information during the interview process (Gillies, 2014;

Silverman, 2015). Gillies and Silverman recommended keeping the notes using keywords and short sentences, but sufficient information to trigger researcher's recollection at a later time. Johnson et al. (2013) suggested a researcher must establish a plan prior to taking handwritten notes during an interview process. Creating an outline of the interview questions may increase the success in note taking during qualitative data collection (Johnson et al., 2013). Prior to each interview, I confirmed a participant's consent to voice recording during the interview. If a participant did not consent to be audio recorded, I was prepared an interview journal log for each interview listing all questions in chronological order as noted by Johnson et al. (see Appendix L).

Within 5 days following each interview, I transcribed all audio recordings and handwritten notes taken during the face-to-face interviews and began paraphrasing, coding common themes, conducting preliminary analyses, and member checking of the data collected as mentioned by Goldblatt et al. (2011), and Thomas and Magilvy (2011). Member checking is a process of asking participants to assess what the participants intended to convey in their statements (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). The member checking in qualitative research is appropriate after a researcher submits an account of their findings using a short report to the participants who participated in the interview process (Sorsa, Kiikkala, & Åstedt-Kurki, 2015).

I conducted member checking with all the participants who were the source of the data as suggested by Thomas and Magilvy (2011), and Sorsa et al. (2015). Following Thomas' and Magilvy's, and Sorsa's et al. recommendation, I conducted member checking after I paraphrased the participants statements, identified reoccurring themes, coded, and conducted a preliminary data analysis of the transcripts and collected documents. The member checking will allow the opportunity for all the participants to verify the accuracy of my interpretations, correct errors and make changes to any inaccuracies (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Subsequently, participants had the opportunity to affirm all revision and additions during the member checking using secure and encrypted e-mail (Goldblatt et al., 2011; Torrance, 2012).

Member checking is crucial to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ocak, 2011; Rabionet, 2011; Rennie, 2012). Therefore, the member checking is a time sensitive process, and is best done within a reasonable time following the interviews as noted by Goldblatt et al. (2011), and Torrance (2012). When too much time pass between the data collection, data interpretation, and member checking process, the participants may have forgotten their statements or unable to recall or validate crucial information (Goldblatt et al., 2011; Torrance, 2012). To ensure credibility and accuracy of the data, I conducted member checking within 5 days following the transcription of each interview and completion of document interpretations. Following all the

interviews and member checking, each participant received a thank you letter for their participation in the study by e-mail (see Appendix I).

Data Organization Techniques

The data organization techniques are critical in maintaining the integrity of the transcribed recorded interviews, audio recordings, and physical documents (Anyan, 2013). I compiled the data, disassembled, reassembled, interpreted the meaning of the data and summarized conclusions as suggested by Yin (2014). I organized all data collected for further analysis of common themes. Nvivo can be used as a tool for a researcher to organize interviews, field notes, handwritten interview notes, audio recordings, and journals (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). The Nvivo software in qualitative research assists with coding themes, evaluation, and interpreting a phenomenon under study (Hoover & Koerber, 2011). Computer software can add consistency to qualitative research by enhancing data accuracy, transparency, and audit analysis (Fielding, 2012; Rowley, 2012).

I utilized computer software applications (i.e., Nvivo v10, Microsoft Excel 2010 and Microsoft Word 2010) to organize all data collected through the interviews. I used NVivo v10 software to upload and organize all data collected for further analysis of common themes. The NVivo v10 software enabled me to organize the raw data into themes identified through my literature review and conceptual framework. Using the NVivo v10 software, I coded words, phrases, and similar themes of trends identified in the transcripts, documents, and reflexive

journal that contributed to the formation of the PPPs (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Hoover & Koerber, 2011).

In the qualitative inquiry, the coding process is a method to assign a word or a short phrase that symbolizes and captures a particular category for a portion of the data content (Pierre & Jackson, 2014). I began organizing the data by using two coding methods as noted by Hammer and Berland (2014). As suggested by Hammer and Berland, I coded data using multiple ranges of single words from full sentences to an entire page using interview scripts and notes, reflexive journal, and physical documents. In the second method, I further configured the existing codes and expended on developing additional categories identified by the interview questions, the literature, and conceptual framework as recommended by Hammer and Berland. Lastly, I organized coding in the second method by further identified similarities, differences, frequencies, correspondence, and common themes as proposed by Lee and Chavis (2012). The coding process is advantageous because the researcher can identify each subject as described by the participants and their common perspectives on a phenomenon of interest (Da Mota Pedrosa, Näslund, & Jasmand, 2012; Hammer & Berland, 2014; Pierre & Jackson, 2014).

With the permission of the participants, I used a digital recorder to document all face-to-face interviews. During the interview process, I organized the collected data using: (a) a log for every interview noting specific findings and

remarks pertinent to the study, (b) handwritten notes during the face-to-face interviews as a backup to the voice recording, (c) a record of each interview in the same format using the same research questions (see Appendix G), and (d) a record of separate questions follow-up questions by the interviewer (Babbie, 2012).

I transcribed each digital interview recording and handwritten notes within 5 days following each face-to-face interview. I stored each digital recording and transcripts in a secure and encrypted database. Likewise, I transcribed and saved all handwritten notes and reflections with each interview session file.

Kapiszewski and Kirilova (2014) pointed out that data security ensures that valuable data is secure during the research process. The researcher maintains anonymity through data security measures (Cox & Pinfield, 2014). I implemented data security measures to protect the human subject's identity and all record keeping relevant in the proposed study as required by the Belmont Report protocol (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979).

Each participant and organization had a sequential two letter/number ID. I maintained a journal with my personal observations and notes for each interview as suggested by Yin (2014). I stored all data files for 5 years in a securely locked, fireproof safe before the final destruction of the data. I protected the anonymity and privacy by coding each participant and contract with a unique identification number assigned to them. I locked all recordings, documents, interview notes, journals, and passwords in a waterproof safe for 5 years that is only accessible by

me. As a backup mechanism, all digital recordings, documents, interview notes, journals, and letters of consent were scanned and stored on a portable external hard drive in a password protected environment. After 5 years, I will shred all physical materials and destroy the digital data by reformatting the portable external hard drive.

I organized emerging themes from the data collected to allow for cross-case analysis of the multiple cases by coding each TPA organization and participant using a unique identifier. When examining the documents, I carefully identified each contract and PSA agreements followed by document analysis criteria. The study criteria included by-laws, the role of authority, TPA's and local government agencies obligations, administrative costs, and stipulations. I organized all public contracts and PSA agreements obtained from each TPA organization for this qualitative study. I also coded my reflexive journal as a technique to mitigate any bias and tracked the codes in NVivo v10. The reflexive journal was organized by grouping common perspectives on all interviews in the proposed study.

To ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of all the participants, only I have access to the raw data. The identity of each TPA organization and participant was coded to ensure anonymity. I organized interview notes, recordings, transcripts, a reflexive journal and documents using the following unique coding identifiers: (a) Identifier *Company A*, *Company B*, and *Company C* represented

each TPA organization; (b) Identifier *P1*, *P2*, *P3*, and *P4* represented each participant from TPA organizations; (c) Identifier *C1*, *C2*, and *C3* represented each contract agreement obtained from TPA organization; (d) Identifier *PSA1*, *PSA2*, and *PSA3* represented each PSA agreements obtained from TPA organization; (e) Identifier *h* represented handwritten interview notes, and identifier *r* represented an audio-recorded interviews; and (f) Identifier *RJ* represented reflexive journal.

I identified the eight open-ended interview questions by using a unique identifier *IQ1*, *IQ2*, *IQ3*, *IQ4*, *IQ5*, *IQ6*, *IQ7*, and *IQ8*. I assembled all interview transcripts, interview notes, contracts and PSA agreements information, and reflexive journals systematically, in one location as one master file. I scanned all documents and uploaded into Nvivo v10 for coding and data analysis. Anyan (2013), Corley (2011) and Malterud (2012) stated that organizing interview transcripts, field notes, and documents systematically in the same location can increase accuracy, credibility and trustworthiness in the data.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis in the proposed qualitative multiple-case study is integral to the complete process of making plausible conclusions of the open-ended data collection using in-depth interviews (Yin, 2014). The data analysis of this case study was a repetitive and dynamic method to identify unique emerging themes to improve subsequent phenomenon (Smith & Firth, 2011). The research design was

a multiple-case study, and the central research question was: What information do some managers need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of PPPs?

Data analysis involves discovering themes, identify and selecting relevant themes, organizing themes in hierarchical order, coding, and linking themes into the phenomenon under study (Silverman, 2013). The conceptual framework was the connection between the literature, methodology, and results of the study (Gough, Thomas, & Oliver, 2012). The conceptual framework for a qualitative study has a significant relationship to the development of a research question, the approach to the literature review, design, and analysis (Smith & Firth, 2011). I analyzed the data through the lens of Barnard's (1938) decision theory and Buckley's (1967) complex adaptive systems theory. Through the prism of these theories, I analyzed and interpreted the meaning of the data related to the complex contract processes in the formation of the PPPs between TPAs and local government agencies.

Data analysis of case studies requires protocols to ensure accuracy and explanations known as triangulation (Stake, 2014; Yin, 2014). Bekhet and Zauszniewski (2012) stated that triangulation enhances the confidence of findings when the researcher uses more than one approach to investigative phenomena. Bekhet and Zauszniewski added that much of research relied on the use of single research method. Triangulation offers the prospect of enhanced confidence by the

use of several rationales for multiple method studies. In a similar manner, Hoque, Covaleski, and Gooneratne (2013) theorized that data confirmed by two or more independent measurement methods reduces the uncertainty of its interpretation. In contrast, the two sets of measurement methods may result in inconsistent conclusions that may suggest the data are flawed, or the data could suggest that the findings are indisputable.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) identified four forms of triangulation: (a) data triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theoretical triangulation, and (e) methodological triangulation. Data triangulation entails gathering data through several sampling strategies at different times and social situations with a variety of participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012). The investigator triangulation uses more than one researcher to collect and interpret data (Guion et al., 2011).

The theoretical triangulation uses more than one theoretical position in interpreting data (Guion et al., 2011). The data, investigator, and theoretical forms of triangulation were not suited for this study because I was the sole researcher using one sampling strategy, and I interpreted the data. Methodological triangulation uses more than one method for gathering data (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Guion et al., 2011). Methodological triangulation was appropriate for this study, as I used multiple data sources.

In this qualitative multiple case study, methodological triangulation was appropriate because I used various data sources to examine themes between public and private setting (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Guion et al., 2011). The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the information some managers within TPAs need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs. As part of the methodological triangulation using multiple data sources, I analyzed data collected through interviews and analysis of PPP contracts and PSA agreements with local government agencies as a secondary data source. I contrasted and compared the partnership terms and conditions, by-laws, the role of authority, obligations, service delivery requirements, administrative costs, and provisions and stipulations relevant to PPP in the state of Wisconsin.

Silverman (2013) and Yin (2014) suggested conducting data analysis instantaneously to ensure validity and accuracy of the inscription, description, and transcription. As suggested by Silverman and Yin (2014), I conducted data analysis by organizing data using recordings, handwritten notes, and transcripts. In addition, I summarized, categorized, and identified linking patterns and themes in the data as proposed by Silverman and Yin (2014). Smith and Firth (2014) suggested that data analysis is an inductive process where strong evidence supports the data collected. The data analysis in this study was an inductive process in which I identified themes and patterns to provide strong evidence of

findings from the interview transcripts and documents. In a deductive analysis process, the premises of data analysis are assumed to be true (Smith & Firth, 2011).

Data analysis includes the use of sorting, diagramming, and integrating different participant and documented processes into a cohesive, logical narrative outline of the phenomenon of interest (Cosentino, Adornetti, & Ferretti, 2013; Reese et al., 2011). I used data compiling, conducted sorting, diagrammed, and integrated different participant and documented processes into cohesive, logical narratives outlining the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs. The cohesive and logical narratives are bound together through the content of the narrative, categories, and themes (Cosentino et al., 2013; Reese et al., 2011).

Yin (2011) introduced a five steps approach for data analysis. According to Yin (2014), the five steps approach to analyzing textual data are (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpretation, and (e) narration. In this qualitative multiple-case study, I used Yin's (2011) data analysis approach. After I transcribed all audio recorded interviews and completed member checking, I uploaded the textual transcripts into NVivo v10 software from Microsoft Word to organize the data into groups and themes.

I scanned each contract and SPA agreements and uploaded into NVivo v10. I used the NVivo v10 software to compile, disassemble, and reassemble the data from transcripts and documents into a formal procedure for coding until

emerging themes were satisfactory. Once I identified and coded the emerging themes, I analyzed and interpreted the data. Yin (2011) noted that interpreting the data allows the research to assign their meaning to the data. The researcher's ability to understand and critically analyze the information is critical for data interpreting (Carcary, 2011; Finfgeld-Connett, 2014).

Digital technology enhances the ways researchers collect and analyze data (Rademaker, Grace, & Curda, 2012). The disadvantages of using computer assisted qualitative data analysis software are quality of analyses, security, researcher's unfamiliarity, and complexity in navigation of the application (Gilbert, Jackson, & Di Gregorio, 2014; Zhang, 2014). NVivo is comprehensive qualitative data analysis software that can be used to organize, code, and analyze interviews, notes, textual sources, digital images, audio, and video files (Bergin, 2011).

In addition, Nvivo is a tool for researchers to interpret the meaning of the data collected (Hoover & Koerber, 2011). I utilized the NVivo v10 software for coding words and phrases from primary interviews, notes, and documents obtained through data collection process. My intent for this study was to identify trends, patterns, and themes that may contribute to the information needed during the complex contracting process when forming PPPs with local government agencies.

My focus on the key themes consisted of coding types to define a structure that was appropriate to the identified themes and groups as advised by Lauckner, Paterson, and Krupa (2012). Likewise, I conducted data analysis that consisted of detailed exploration and comparison of the key concepts, frequency and saliency of particular themes implied by (Malterud, 2012). As suggested by Pierre and Jackson (2014), I outlined themes by core categories across cases and compared instances of the same general phenomena. I derived my conclusions from the analysis of data from the case studies to gain insight of a phenomenon to uncover themes, patterns, concepts, insights, and understanding of the phenomenon. The identification of themes and patterns assisted in understanding what key information is critical to the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs.

During the data collection and the analysis process, I continued to correlate the key themes of the newly published literature, the conceptual framework, and studies to locate any additional relevant sources as directed by Yin (2014). As suggested by Yin (2014), I matched key themes both in the data analysis and existing or newly obtained literature on the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs. Qualitative case studies involve researcher's expertise and knowledge of their perceptions and perspectives of identifying significant patterns and themes in the data (Mayes et al., 2013).

The intensity of case studies is a cyclical process (Mayes et al., 2013). The process is dependent on the amount of details, contextualization, and researcher's ability to provide comprehensive, appropriate, compelling, and engaging analysis to a particular phenomenon (Mayes et al., 2013). As a researcher, I acknowledged my perceptions and perspectives and conducted the data analysis objectively using my personal knowledge and experiences as a tool to make sense of the data collected.

Yin (2014) contended that a researcher can use five techniques for analyzing case studies: (a) pattern matching, (b) explanation building, (c) time-series analysis, (d) logic models, and (e) cross-case synthesis. Pattern matching is appropriate when a researcher compares two patterns to determine whether they are same or if they differ (Yin, 2014). The pattern matching technique is not suitable for the proposed study as the intent is not to test an observed pattern with the expected pattern. The explanation building technique is appropriate when a researcher is seeking to build an explanation in the case (Yin, 2014).

The explanation building technique was not suitable for the proposed study because I was not seeking to provide an explanation about a case. Instead, the intent was to identify what information some managers need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of a PPP. In time-series analysis, the researcher matches the observed trends of data using either a theoretically significant trend or a rival trend (Yin, 2014). The time-series analysis was not

appropriate because this study did not compare existing trends. The cross-case synthesis was the best suited technique for analyzing data for the proposed study.

The cross-case synthesis applies to the analysis of two or more cases (Yin, 2014). According to Yin (2014), each case in the cross-case synthesis accounts for a separate case, but a synthesis of the data of each case strengthens the case study data. The cross-case analysis is also a replication sampling logic where additional cases are chosen to yield similar findings or predictable findings (Cousins & Bourgeois, 2014). The cross-case analysis involves identifying patterns occurring across some cases identifying similarities, differences, frequencies, correspondence, and common themes (Lee & Chavis, 2012). I used the cross-case synthesis technique when examining multiple cases using interviews with participants from state licensed TPA organizations. I examined contracts and PSA agreements between each TPA and local government agency. In using the cross-case synthesis technique, I connected how and why the PPP is a complex contracting process between TPAs and local government agencies.

Reliability and Validity

The reliability in research suggests consistency in data exists, and validity suggests the data measured what was intended to measure (Scholtes, Terwee, & Poolman, 2011; Yin, 2014). Many scholars from various disciplines judge the reliability and validity in empirical social research (Gunnell et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). Reliability and validity are an imperative concept in quantitative scholarly

research and are not appropriate to use in describing qualitative research reliability and validity (Yin, 2014). In qualitative research, Ali and Yusof (2011) identified credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to support the trustworthiness of the data.

Adams and Wieman (2011) added that logical tests using one or more instruments to measure outcomes are critical to establishing reliability and validity in quantitative and qualitative research, case studies, and experimental research. When a qualitative multiple-case study research is reliable, the results will reveal similar findings and conclusions using a similar methodology (Yin, 2014; Grosseohme, 2014). The validity occurs when the data reveal results that are replicable and the means of measurement are accurate and show results that the interview guide was intended to measure (Yin, 2014). In the next section, I discuss the research steps I took to ensure reliability and validity in the proposed multiple-case study.

Reliability

Qualitative reliability refers to consistency and replicability in data collection (Yin, 2014). Poortman and Schildkamp (2012) added that reliability in qualitative research derives from congruent interpretations based on sufficient interview questions, field notes, and transcriptions from narrative data. Similarly, reliability indicates that the original researcher's approach used by other researchers performing similar observations and analysis from narrative data will

conclude similar interpretations and results (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). In qualitative research, reliability can also depend on researcher's careful documentation or an audit trail of the research design, methods, and interpretations involved (Åkerlind, 2012). For example, Åkerlind stated that the verification trail provides a basis for checking if researcher's methods and interpretations can be dependable when used by other researchers.

Yin (2014) pointed out that responses to research questions derived from existing literature reviews can demonstrate reliability and consistency across different researchers. To ensure reliability, I ensured all data were collected in a sequential order and analysis and interpretations using logical and sequential data analysis protocol as recommended by Ali and Yusof (2011). As suggested by Ali and Yusof, I documented the review process and procedural approach to the data collection.

To demonstrate the reliability, I interviewed experts within the PPPs, developed a case study protocol, defined it, and followed it as proposed by Yin (2014). Yin (2014) stated that parallelism and clarity in data collection enhance truthfulness in data collection when a researcher uses multiple sources of data. I recorded and accurately transcribed the in-depth interviews, and achieved meaningful parallelism and clarity of findings with each case across multiple cases. Also, as recommended by Yin (2014), the case study protocol included

consistent documentation of the procedures used in the proposed case study and provided detail documentation of each step taking place.

Validity

Yin (2014) pointed out that the validity is the primary strength of the qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria for judging qualitative research: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. The primary goal of qualitative research is to convey an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon through rich credible descriptions, accurate details, triangulations, and member reflections (Yin, 2013, 2014). Credibility establishes trustworthiness and demonstrates an accurate picture of a phenomenon is being presented (Noble & Smith, 2015).

Goldblatt et al. (2011) added that when using the member checking technique, the research might add further credibility to the proposed study. I pursued all participants to review interpretations of their transcripts and confirmed the accuracy of captured data. As suggested by Stake (2014) and Yin (2014), I achieved additional credibility through the data triangulation used to examine themes using multiple data sources comparing diverse leaders' viewpoint in PPPs and the complex contracting process.

Stake (2014) and Yin (2014) suggested that each case study is unique and specific to a particular group; however, it can be transferable to a broader population or similar situations described by other researchers. I assured the

transferability of my study methods by carefully documenting and describing them during the entire research process. I prepared and presented a detailed outline of the specific number of participants, sessions, time and date of data collection.

Also, I presented a detailed outline of locations where I collected the data and data collection methods. Similarly, to achieve dependability, I articulated a detailed method that will allow future researchers to replicate the process to obtain similar results. The complete process included: (a) the clear purpose of the proposed study, (b) research design and implementation, (c) sample selection, (d) data collection techniques, (e) coding and analysis, and (f) techniques to establish reliability and validity (Stake, 2014; Yin, 2014).

In the qualitative study, the intrusion of the researcher's biases is inevitable (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Thomas and Magilvy added that interview questionnaires cannot ensure real objectivity since they are designed based on individual experiences and ideas of informants. To achieve confirmability, I conducted member checking and documented procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the data collection process as advised by Thomas and Magilvy. I outlined this reflective practice in Section 3 of this study document.

Saturation is achievable when relevant data replicates or demonstrates redundancy in emerging data with no new emerging information (O'Reilly &

Parker, 2013). Chenail (2011) stated that the sample size is critical to reaching data saturation. Using the study sample recommended by Sirriyeh, Lawton, Gardner, and Armitage (2012), I conducted an in-depth examination of the variations and how they can explain the emerging theory. Saturation is attainable through (a) cohesive sample, (b) theoretical sampling, and (c) researcher's engagement in the field being studied (Sirriyeh et al., 2012). The data achieved data saturation by selecting a purposeful sample and conducting multiple interviews with participants from TPA organizations that engaged in PPPs with local government agencies in the state of Wisconsin. I examined contracts and PSA agreements between TPAs and local government agencies participating in PPPs in the state of Wisconsin as secondary sources.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 included the specifics of the proposed study. In Section 2, the areas addressed were the role of the researcher, participant criteria, research method and design, population and sampling. In Section 2, I also discussed ethical research, data collection, data analysis technique, and reliability and validity. In Section 2, I provided an explanation of how I intend to establish credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and methodological triangulation. I developed the outline of the research method, design, and analysis for the proposed study based on the central research question: What decision-making

dynamics leads to the formation of the PPPs between TPA organizations and local government agencies?

This case study research involved examination and analysis of an existing set of events, experiences, and circumstances from the participants or experts involved in the PPPs in the state of Wisconsin (Yin, 2014). The primary data collection method was built on in-depth interviews using a purposeful sampling of PPP decision makers within TPAs in the state of Wisconsin. I validated the interview question with expert practitioners who have extensive expertise in the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs in the state of Wisconsin. All interviews were transcribed, validated, analyzed using a cross-case analysis approach, and saturation.

In Section 2, I outlined what measures I took to ensure reliability, credibility, validity, transferability, and confirmability as recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Lastly, in Section 2, I discussed the methodological frameworks derived from the foundation in Section 1 of this study. In Section 3, I presented the research results with applications to professional practices and implications for change. My intent of this study provides results that may be appropriate for developing or improving existing PPPs between TPAs and local government agencies in the state of Wisconsin.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

In Section 3, I present the finding of the research study. Section 3 contains (a) an overview of the study, (b) presentation of the findings, (c) application to professional practice, (d) implication for social change, (e) recommendations for action, (f) recommendations for further study, (g) reflections, and (h) summary and study conclusions. I present the finding of the study by main themes.

Introduction

The purpose of the proposed qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the information some managers within TPAs need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs. Previous scholars conducted thorough research on TPAs; however, this study focused on TPAs that provide comprehensive benefits administrative and management services specifically for local government agencies in the state of Wisconsin. I collected data using eight open-ended interview questions with three leaders from different TPA organizations in Wisconsin. As a secondary data source, I reviewed the contract and PSA agreements correlated with data obtained from the interviews. I analyzed all the data and identified 12 emergent themes. I grouped the 12 emergent themes into four main themes. The four main themes encompass (a) complex contracting process in the formation of PPPs, (b) contract provisions in the formation of PPPs, (c) contract stipulations in the formation of PPPs, and (d) public and private business environment influencing decision to form PPPs.

Presentation of the Findings

In the problem statement, I stated that some TPAs lack information on the complex contracting process in the formation of PPPs. The purpose of this study was to explore the information some managers within TPAs need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of PPPs. I designed the conceptual framework of the study to align with the following central research question: What information do some managers within TPAs need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of a PPP? I administered the interview questions to the participants in the real-world environment to examine a phenomenon in a natural setting to understand what and why the contracting process in PPPs was a complex process. The findings revealed how the complex contracting process fit the converging components of the conceptual framework that included real-world constraints and limitations of the TPAs, decision theory, and complex adaptive systems theory.

To mitigate research bias and the inclusion of opinion in this study, I connected the findings to the existing literature and two theories as the personal lenses to explore and conduct a comprehensive analysis using multiple data sources. Yin (2014) noted researchers use conceptual frameworks to connect literature, theories, and results of the study to mitigate research bias. The findings of this study were congruent with existing literature on the complex contracting process during the formation of PPPs. As a researcher, I used a bracketing

technique through reflexive journaling technique to mitigate bias to view data to better understand the viewpoints of others as recommended by Roulston and Shelton (2015) and Skitka (2012).

When discussing public sector organizations, the general perceptions are strongly opinioned regarding their performance, lack of efficiency, and resistance to change (Smirti, Evans, Gougherty, & Morris, 2015). Likewise, the common opinions of public organizations are virtually inconceivable to the modern structure of management methods (Stoutenborough & Vedlitz, 2014). Clearly, the general public generalized these common perceptions from (a) comments in the media, (b) personal experiences, (c) statistics supporting the increase in the public spending, (d) reports of misuse in government funding, and (e) the growing government deficit (Clemente & Roulet, 2015; Oberfield, 2014). I, therefore, acknowledged the personal views and self-reflections related to the research phenomenon to examine the study in an objective way. I based the findings on the data available in the (a) abundant scientific literature, (b) neutral observations, (c) participants' responses to the interview questions, and (d) reviews of documents as suggested by Pezalla et al. (2012).

The sample size was four leaders from three state licensed TPA organizations in Wisconsin. The sample size for Case 1 was one participant comprised of chief executive officer (CEO) representing Company A. The sample size for Case 2 was two participants comprised of a vice president (VP) and

director of operations representing Company B. The sample size for Case 3 was one participant comprised of chief operating officer (COO) representing Company C. I obtained copies of all three contracts from TPA organizations. The PSA provisions and stipulations were in the contracts' contents. I obtained contract C1-PSA1 from Company A, contract C2-PSA2 from Company B and contract C3-PSA3 from Company C. I used the qualitative multiple-case study design to address the research question because it was integral to the complete process of making plausible conclusions of the open-ended data collection using in-depth interviews as suggested by Yin (2014).

I scheduled all face-to-face interviews at an offsite location near Company A, Company B, and Company C in a private meeting room. At the beginning of data collection, I presented a consent form to each participant. Each participant signed the consent form and agreed to have the interview recorded. Each participant in this study responded to all eight open-ended interview questions during the face-to-face interviews (see Appendix F). I completed each interview within 2 hours, and I completed all four interviews within a 1-week period. In addition to the face-to-face interviews, I also reviewed three contracts and PSA agreement as a second source of data. I incorporated replication logic into the multiple-case study design for data to achieve saturation through literal replication where the data yielded similar information with no new emerging themes. I

interviewed one participant per case and examined three contracts and PSA agreements that allowed for methodological triangulation of the data.

I classified the conclusive themes as primary themes. Primary themes were coded based on patterns where a majority of the respondents offered similar responses to the eight interview questions shown in Appendix F. The subthemes were coded based on patterns where participants offered similar responses related to the primary themes. The study results did not reveal why the formation of a PPP is a complex process and why TPAs make a decision to form a PPP. Instead, my intention for this study was to understand how leaders within TPAs are implementing the decision theory to form a PPP. Likewise, my intention was to identify a connection between what constitutes a complex process in the formation of a PPP by implementing the complex adaptive systems theory.

Following the collection and analysis of data collected from the open-ended interview questions, a review of contracts, and a review of PSA agreements between the TPA organizations and local government agencies, 12 themes emerged. I grouped into four main themes during data analysis. The four main themes are (a) critical factors for TPA leaders to consider during the complex contracting process in the formation of PPPs, (b) critical information on contract provisions in the formation of PPPs, (c) critical information on contract stipulations in the formation of PPPs, and (d) critical information on public and private business environment influencing the decision to form PPPs.

The first main theme related to critical factors for TPA leaders to consider during the complex contracting process in the formation of PPPs. The critical subthemes were (a) collaborative leadership, (b) partners and key players, (c) roles and responsibilities, and (d) specialized services. The second main theme related to critical information on contract provisions in the formation of PPPs. The critical information on TPA capabilities and contract provisions subthemes were (a) change and transfer of controlling interest, (b) contract provisions that strengthen a PPP, and (c) contract provisions that weaken a PPP.

The third main theme related to critical information on contract stipulations in the formation of PPPs. The critical information on influences of contract stipulations in the formation of PPPs subthemes were ERISA (1974) and compliance with applicable federal and state laws. The fourth main theme related to critical information on the public and private business environment influencing the decision to form PPPs. The critical information on public and private business environment influencing the decision to form PPPs were (a) market assessment, (b) health care reform, and (c) transparency.

Conceptual Framework Link

The conceptual frameworks for this research project were Barnard's (1938) decision theory and Buckley's (1967) complex adaptive systems theory. I used the two theories as the personal lenses to explore and conduct a comprehensive analysis using multiple data sources to discover what information

some managers need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of a PPP. A qualitative multiple-case study served as an effective way to ask *how* or *what* encompassed a complex process when forming PPPs between TPA organizations and local government agencies in Wisconsin.

Decision theory. The decision theory provided the specific theoretical support for this study as any important decision with a PPP involves multiple decision makers. The public and private partners of a PPP are each complex systems where both partners' constituencies may be for and against the decision to form a shared business venture. The organizations' components, their separate functions, and roles were critical to making a formal decision to form PPPs. The decision theory applies to management practices when making business decisions using a rational process and practical course of action to maximize the attainment of their goals and objectives (Barnard, 1938; Betsch & Haberstroh, 2014; Bouyssou et al., 2013).

Relative to the formation of PPPs, the rational and practical assessment to form PPPs in a bureaucratic environment were (a) collaborative leadership, (b) organizations' key partners and players involvement, (c) adequately identified required roles and responsibilities, and (d) ability to provide specialized services. The findings were in line with Barnard's (1938) decision theory, and later in the research of Edward (1954), Simon (1960), and Janis and Mann (1977), who noted

that leaders make decisions based on guidelines that require multiple levels of assessments to analyze the benefits and risks.

Complex adaptive systems theory. The complex adaptive theory provided the specific theoretical support for this study. The complex adaptive systems theory applies to management practices acting as autonomous agents to manage complex and interconnected systems to form PPPs with existing constraints and limitations in an authoritative and democratic environment. The findings of this study show an evolving political environment, diverse business governance, and authoritative political structure to be a complex system where TPA leaders must have the ability to respond and adapt a large number of diverse interacting parts.

As noted by the Hammer et al. (2012) and Briciu et al. (2014), complex adaptive systems consists of many partners working collaboratively, yet having their unique responsibilities and making decisions based on independent systems. In a similar manner, DeRue (2011), Paina and Peters (2012) examined complex adaptive systems and concluded as one system changes, the environment changes thus requiring independent agents to adapt. With respect to the conceptual framework, this study provides the additional research that may contribute to the understanding of the complex contracting process in a decision to form PPPs between TPAs and local government agencies in the state of Wisconsin.

Barnard's (1938) decision theory and Buckley's (1967) complex adaptive systems theory were relevant in business practice to research the complex contracting process. Many of the responses by the participants supported the decision theory and complex adaptive systems theory. In the following section, I define the emerged themes and present the finding related the research question.

Emergent Theme: Critical Factors for TPA Leaders to Consider During the Complex Contracting Process in the Formation of PPPs.

The critical factors for TPA leaders to consider during the complex contracting process in the formation of PPPs were the first main theme. I identified critical information some managers within TPAs need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of a PPP through my interpretations of participants' responses and company documents. Table 2 displays the emerged subthemes from the data analysis based on participant responses to interview questions and a review of documents, which provided evidence that aligns with the decision theory specifically related to the complex contracting process in the formation of a PPP.

The critical factors for TPA leaders to consider during the complex contracting process in the formation of a PPP were (a) collaborative leadership, (b) identifying key players, (c) roles and responsibilities, and (d) specialized services. Table 2 displays the frequency of occurrence of core themes that affirmed the information TPA leaders should consider during the complex

contracting process that may result in a successful procurement process in the formation of PPPs.

Table 2

Frequency of Themes for Critical Factors for TPA Leaders to Consider During the Complex Contracting Process in the Formation of PPPs

Theme	<i>n</i>	% of frequency of occurrence
Collaborative leadership	4	22.2%
Partner and key players	6	33.3%
Roles and responsibilities	3	16.7%
Specialized services	5	27.8%

Note. *n* = frequency.

The formation of PPPs in the 21st-century business environment is a complex and challenging endeavor under the best of circumstances (Albanese & Modica, 2012; Thomas, 2013). PPPs are creative alliances between the public and private partners to achieve a single purpose (Appleton-Dyer et al., 2012; Landow & Ebdon, 2012). According to Zou, Kumaraswamy, Chung, and Wong (2014), the main factors to consider in the formation of a PPP are (a) a common goal, (b) partners' full commitment, and (c) maximizing resources in specialized skills. Findings for this study were consistent with the research of Zou et al., as participants agreed TPA leaders must have a clear understanding of their shared goals and work collaboratively to deliver quality of service. Participants also

reached a consensus that success of a PPP depends on key partners, leaders' commitment, and engagement.

When leaders apply the decision theory in the formation of a PPP, the leaders will make decisions based on a rational process and practical course of action that will maximize the attainment of their goals and objectives (Bouyssou et al., 2013). The unique roles and responsibilities that align with levels of authority in decision making are also important information to consider during the contracting process when forming a PPP. The additional key information participants identified that TPA leaders must consider in the procurement process are the ability to tailor services to meet the clients' needs and flexibility to adapt to ongoing changes in the public environment. Likewise, participants stated that TPA leaders must understand and accept the bureaucratic business environment when dealing with PPPs, weigh the risks, and assess the unpredictable and unstable function of the authority of a political business environment.

Collaborative partnership. A collaborative partnership in decision making involves (a) recognizing opportunities for change, (b) developing shared visions, (c) involving from diverse partners, and (e) accomplishing common goals as an individual group (Jiahuan, 2013; Siemiatycki, 2011; York et al., 2013). Information from the literature was supportive of integrated PPPs as a collaborative environment where public and private organizations share operations and responsibilities to achieve a common goal. Participant responses to

interview questions suggested that a collaborative partnership in the decision to form PPPs was critical; however, all participants reached a consensus regarding the lack of public partners' full engagement during the contracting process.

P1 noted the public sector partners are not always multidimensional in the decision-making process; thus private sector partners are reluctant to form collaborative partnerships. P4 reflected P1's statement by adding, public partners traditionally approach decision making on a single level and may not consider the need to increase engagement of private sector partners (i.e., health care provider networks) related to health care claims administration. P2 and P3 supported P1's argument by stating reluctance to form a PPP was due to significant risks as public leaders make decisions based on rules and regulations, and are more pessimistic in assessing risks from several viewpoints. Political leadership has a significant influence, and a PPP can be successful if management from the public and private organization makes a full commitment (Appleton-Dyer et al., 2012; Velotti et al., 2012). Consistent with the complex adaptive systems theory, the dynamic and unpredictable changes in the public environment unfold events that are often unique in a PPP (Hammer et al., 2012).

P4 added that political leaders must be supportive of the shared ventures in a PPP and actively take part in developing a collaborative partnership. Meier and O'Toole (2012) were consistent with P4's statement, which described that each partner in PPPs plays a different role with major differences. Nonetheless, all

participants agreed the public and private sector must work together to provide quality specialized services. According to Schwenger et al. (2014), private organizations focus on profits and shareholder value in an entrepreneurial framework. The public organizations focus on regulatory implementation of legislation and service delivery based on the constitutional framework and broader constituencies (Schwenger et al., 2014).

P2 discussed having a two-tiered approach to shared goals are authority and responsibility that help partners balance the broad oversight and respond quickly to concerns about the day-to-day operations and decision making. P3 explained getting the right skillful leaders from the private and public sectors facilitates the success of the PPP and the achievement of a collective outcome. Siemiatycki (2011) denoted a similar finding and emphasized that in collaborative leadership, leaders collaboratively made decisions that required knowledge, skill, and similar mindsets that enabled them to carry out their shared common goal. Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff (2011) recognized that public leaders require a different way of thinking and new skills to be successful in the procurement process.

Participants' responses to interview questions also explained the collaborative partnership in decision making is not a means of leveraging shared resources. Instead, it consists of (a) a firm policy foundation, (b) political commitment, and (c) a sound and predictable regulatory environment. The

participants' statements were supported by findings of Koliba et al. (2014), and Siemiatycki and Farooqi (2012) who recognized that established comprehensive policies were a framework of a PPP. In addition, participants argued leaders within TPA organizations understand this and will recognize these factors when deciding whether or not to form a partnership with local government agencies. Consistent with the decision theory, leaders make decisions based on screening and eliminating alternatives through assessment of benefits and risks (Edwards, 1954).

Partners and key players. A successful PPP requires all prospective partners to invest time and effort to achieve common goals (Koliba et al., 2014). Roehrich et al. (2014) argued the leadership styles between private and public partners were not always parallel and operated under differing decision making models. Literature was supportive of the findings that identified the differences in the private and public sector's business environments and their connection to the formation of PPPs. Researchers suggested that the bureaucratic and the stringent political business environment were critical to the decision making process when forming PPPs (Hvidman & Andersen, 2014; Jurisch et al., 2013; Kertesz, 2012). Participant responses to interview questions suggested that key partners, their commitment, and full engagement must occur when forming a PPP.

Within the first main theme, the partners and key players subtheme identified through interviews with P1, P2, P3, and P4 confirmed that

understanding diversity in partners and knowing their key players were critical to a successful PPP between TPA organizations and their public partners. P2 stated that understanding the political environment and ability to adapt is challenging; however, public partners do not always recognize the need to appreciate the operation of a private business. Participants confirmed Zaharia's (2013) argument that TPA leaders' experiences with local government agencies led them to be cautious of the opportunities due to uncertainty in officials' agendas that pose high risks to sustain operations. All participants demonstrated a strong understanding of the influences political officials have in the PPPs and the potential risks in the contracting process, which Zaharia also noted.

P2 revealed that policy makers developed an array of policies that articulate the complex concept of PPPs, and these policies often reflect the different dispositions of responsibilities. Likewise, P2 further explained the set policies pose challenges during the RFP process that ultimately influence the decisions to form a shared partnership between TPAs and public entities. Participant P1 and P3 mentioned four disciplinary mechanisms within a public environment that pose risks to TPAs. P1 and P4 mentioned the four risks are (a) shared roles, (b) leadership profiles, (c) the public business environment, and (d) subsequent exposure to bureaucratic. Jurisch et al. (2013) denoted a similar argument and emphasized that diverse stakeholders and their roles dominate the authoritative decision making process in the formation of a PPP.

P4 stated that public leaders focused more on policy making, monitoring rules and regulations, and had less interest in relationships and networks outside their judicial environment, which is also consistent with the research study of Jurisch et al. (2013). In a similar manner, Savikhin and Sheremeta (2013), and Thiel et al. (2012), recognized that private leaders proved to be more results oriented and more inclined to build relationship and facilitate the project. In other words, public leaders were more focused on process, and private sector leaders were more focused on results or outcomes (Thiel et al., 2012; Savikhin & Sheremeta, 2013).

In this study, I concluded partners and key players are critical factors in the procurement process to form a PPP between the TPA organizations and the local government entities. All participants reach consensus by indicating public sector partners' contractual laws and regulations that make the contracting process a complex endeavor. Liu (2013) also supported the findings by defending PPPs operate in a complex environment where the frequent changes in public policy create a high degree of need for constant solutions and adaptations as they occur. This is also consistent with the complex adaptive systems theory that identified the private and public leaders as autonomous agents making decisions and acting on them based on information in their existing business environment (Hammer et al., 2012).

Roles and responsibilities. In the complex adaptive systems theory, Buckley (1967) explained this system as operational characteristics of sociocultural systems that focus on the organization and its changing aspects based entirely on intercommunication of information. Researchers suggested that a successful PPP requires identification of key functions and responsibilities of each partner best suited to accomplish their common purpose (Goldman et al., 2013; Hoppe & Schmitz, 2013; York et al., 2013).

Participant responses to interview questions suggested that understanding the unique roles and responsibilities that align with levels of authority in decision making must be considered when forming a PPP. The findings of this study suggested that TPA leaders understood the diverse business environment and their unique roles and cooperative responsibilities toward successful partnerships. Likewise, the analysis of contracts, PSA agreements, and participants' answers demonstrated that TPA leaders had clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and accountability between the private and public partners during the formation of a PPP.

The findings confirmed Gudelis's and Guogis's (2011), and Melnika's (2013) argument, who recognized leaders in the private and public organizations as separate active partners in the operations of a partnership; however, both parties do not always operate collaboratively and communicate with each other. P3 explained the obvious differences between the private and public sector rests

in the rational process they use in the decision making process. P3 further explained that political restrictions set by legislatures pose risks for TPAs, and thus influence the decision making process, which Simon (1960, 1997) also noted.

P1 identified TPAs as acting consultants that may act in a similar manner as CPAs and law firms representing their clients. P2 and P3 stated that since the local government agencies are the primary holder of the employee health benefits plans, the insurance risk mainly remains with the public sector and not with the TPA firm. Also noted by P4, while TPAs do not assume insurance risks, leaders within TPAs must possess (a) the quality of skill in the workforce, (b) understanding of the market, (c) understanding medical cost inflation, and (b) understand the reforms in state laws. P2 added that TPA organizations act on behalf of their clients as the facilitators to create a broader network of (a) PPOs (Preferred Provider Organizations), (b) EPO (Exclusive Provider Organizations), (c) POS (Point of Service) plans, (d) stop-loss writers, (e) underwriters, and (f) other ancillary providers. All participants reached a consensus stating their contracts were service agreements with local government entities to provide specific services. The statement from each participant confirmed the identified responsibilities in contract and PSA agreements from Company A, Company B, and Company C.

Specialized services. The private sector driven by markets and profits possesses greater efficiency, flexibility, and expertise than the government

(Gudelis & Guogis, 2011). While TPA organizations provide a broad range of services, each organization applies their unique practices and procedures for service delivery (Biermann et al., 2014; Melnikas, 2013). As related to specialized services, P1 stated, while TPAs are different across industries, the uniqueness of TPAs depends on their nature and terms of services.

The participants' responses and the contract agreements show TPAs as designated facilitators who create and define the specialized services, and the local government agencies place special funds exclusively for paying claims, which Keck (2013) also noted. P2 and P3 confirmed the thoughts of Wheeler et al. (2014), who mentioned that the TPAs individually tailor specialized services for each client. My findings indicated that TPA leaders should create competitive and individualized services that favor the demands of its unique public market.

In response to interview questions, all participants illustrated their organizations' capacity to provide specialized service were considered when deciding to proceed with the procurement process to form a PPP. P4 described their organization as acting consultants, and administrators of self-funded benefits on behalf of their clients were the focal point regarding the decision to form a PPP. P4 explained the unique individualized services and professional level of expertise in health insurance laws and regulations were what differentiate the various types of TPAs. As related to insurance laws and regulations, P2 referred to their specialized services as "CPA advisers who must adhere to the

Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASP)” (personal communication, September 15, 2015) in regards to ERISA (1974) and the ACA (2010).

According to SPBA (2014), TPAs that specialize in unique services will attract potential clients. The SPBA also suggested companies who self-insure their benefits outsource to TPA organizations because of the complexity of the plan compliance. The unique services with TPAs range from specific knowledge of proper administration of self-funded health plans, access to computer technology, and experience in human resource (HR) laws to create a high level efficiency in plan management (Butcher, 2013; Taylor, 2011a).

P3 implied that TPAs may play dual roles acting as administrators and consultants to assist their client in designing the self-funded plan that is suitable for their organization. Research conducted on PPPs by Butcher (2013), and Keck (2013) suggested the health care industry is a complex environment and at times unpredictable. The complex adaptive systems theory is used to help evaluate complex organizations with diverse and interconnected elements of a PPP as the shared partnerships are increasingly interdependent (Butcher, 2013).

Emergent Theme: Critical Information on Contract Provisions in the Formation of PPPs.

Contracts in PPPs serve as a tangible distribution of arrangements between the private and public partners (Zangouinezhad & Azar, 2014). The contract provisions ensure that participating parties perform by the terms, conditions, and

scope of services specified in the contract (May & Koski, 2013). The critical information on contract provisions in the formation of PPPs was the second main theme identified through data analysis.

Table 3 shows the emerged subthemes from the data analysis. The critical information on contract provisions in the formation of PPPs subthemes were (a) change and transfer of controlling interest, (b) contract provisions that strengthen a PPP, and (c) contract provisions that weaken a PPP. Table 3 displays the frequency of occurrence of core themes that affirmed the successful procurement process is critical in the formation of PPPs.

Table 3

Frequency of Themes for Critical Information on TPA Capabilities and Contract Provisions in the Formation of PPPs

Theme	<i>n</i>	% of frequency of occurrence
Change and transfer of controlling Interest	2	18.2%
Contract provisions that strengthen a PPP	4	36.4%
Contract provisions that weaken a PPP	5	45.5%

Note. *n* = frequency

The decisions theory and complex adaptive systems theory provide the specific theoretical support in the second theme. Based on the data collected, I determined the change and transfer of controlling interest, and contract provisions are complex business systems that influence the decision to form a PPP. As noted

by Simon (1960, 1997), in the political decision model, the public environment creates uncertainty in contract negotiations to form decisions.

Within this theme, there were several contract provisions mentioned by all participants, and analysis of contracts and PSA agreements confirmed the previous research on the role of PPPs. Participant responses to interview questions and examination of contracts and PSA agreements identified the three critical contract provisions that affect the formation of PPPs with local government agencies.

Change and transfer of controlling interest. The State of Wisconsin has not specifically created state legislative authority to implement PPPs; however, the Wisconsin legislature adopted procurement laws identifying contractual purchasing provisions (DOA, 2013). Sáez and Gutiérrez (2015) identified controlling interest as a model used to designate an authority to one party with significant decision making that affects the profitability of the organization. In a controlling interest within a PPP, the public partners control all public assets throughout the term of the contract (Geddes & Wagner, 2013). The participants argued the state's contract provisions do affect TPA capabilities as the local government agencies often dictate the manner in which a TPA administers certain public services.

P2 explained the transfer of controlling interest in the contract provisions transfer a majority of the risk to the public partner as they have the most control

over the sources of potential liability, which Iossa and Martimor (2015) also noted. All participants stated their organizations handle designing the service, maintaining, and operations regarding claims processing and administration on behalf of the local government agencies that self-fund their health insurance benefits. The responses from participants concurred with Keck's (2013) and Simoneaux and Stroud's (2013) arguments by identifying TPAs as acting agents who maintain and operate specific services on behalf of their clients and the public partners have full ownership of all assets. The contract agreements obtained from Company A, Company B, and Company C show that local government agencies had the sole responsibility for compliance with applicable laws and regulations about the health plans during the term of the contract.

In reviewing the contracts and PSA agreement, all three contracts were named as administration agreements. Upon further review of the administration agreements, the local government agencies are the holder of all the health plans, and TPA organizations act as the facilitators to administer services. P2 and P3 did not recognize their partnerships with public entities as PPPs; instead, they identified the partnerships as service agreements. P2 further added that TPAs are the prominent players in the health care claims processing where public entities have no control over their assets and vice versa. P3 supported P2's explanation by identifying their TPA organization as an independent privately owned company

where the public partners have no invested capital in order for TPA organizations to provide the services.

All contracts and PSA agreements obtained from all TPA organizations were consistent with an OM type PPP and its provisions. In the OM type PPP, the public sector, in this case the local government agencies, award the contract to a TPA firm that will process and pay health care claims, and provide administrative assistance on behalf of the local government agency. These findings are supported by NCPPP (2014) as well as Yescombe (2011). No transfer of public assets to the private sector takes place with an OM type PPP (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011).

The DBM type PPP is also consistent with a TPA partnership model. In a DBM type partnership, the TPA organizations handle the design, implementation, and maintenance of the services, and the local government agencies have ownership of the assets and are accountable for health care plans (NCPPP, 2014; Yescombe, 2011). In examining of the TPA contracts and PSA agreements, I identified the following: (a) the public agencies have sole responsibility to establish and maintain the employee health plans; (b) TPAs are responsible for the operations and administration of the plans; and (c) the public agencies transferred full authority to Company A, Company B, and Company C to make initial eligibility and health care coverage determinations by the terms of the plans set by the local government entities.

The literature was supportive of contractual provisions and intent to create a framework to balance the interest of the public and private sectors (Geddes & Wagner, 2013; Iossa & Martimor, 2015; Keck, 2013; Sáez & Gutiérrez, 2015; Simoneaux & Stroud, 2013). P4 indicated contract provisions could not possibly account for every potential contingency due to the uncertainty in the public environment; thus TPA leaders need to understand the landscape of controlling interests before forming a PPP. The roles and responsibilities identified in each contract and PSA agreement aligned with the OM and DBM type of PPPs and their provisions.

Contract provisions that strengthen PPP. McCann et al. (2014)

identified contract provisions as binding conditions identifying specific requirements for a project or service. Klepper (2013) added contract provisions serve as a practical and legal guide regarding important aspects of the service deliverable. Butcher (2013) described contract provisions as a safety net in business contracts. P1 and P3 voiced that public contracts may be similar to those of commercial contracts; however, there are many contract provisions that contain unique specifications tailored to statutory or regulatory requirements applicable to local government agencies, as also noted by Klepper and later McCann et al.

Regarding the short-term nature of the contracts, P1 stated that annual renewal provisions allow TPAs to renegotiate terms and administrative fees based on changing markets and health care inflation costs. P3 explained the contract

provisions do not restrict their ability to handle claims effectively, maximize their revenue, and apply business strategies to gain market advantage. In fact, P3 indicated their duties in the contract provisions include the establishment of provider networks relevant to medical specialties in the geographic areas or jurisdiction described in the contract.

In reviewing contract documents obtained from Company B, the contract provisions confirmed P3's statement with providing that TPAs shall establish provider contracts, rate negotiations, and implementation of technology allowing consumers access to carrier networks and preferred providers, and an explanation of benefits at full capacity. P3 went further to explain that the broader the network they establish, the more marketable their organizations become; thus, the health care recipients benefit from a larger network of preferred providers and quality of health care.

Regarding contract provisions, P4 explained their organizational strengths lie within what the provisions do not control. For example, P4 further added, their status as an independent private company gives TPAs the advantage to establish sophisticated comprehensive benefits administrative and management services, implement best practices, and ability to price their services competitively while making reasonable profits. P4's response aligned with P3 where they expressed the Company B revenues depend on their high-end experienced staff (i.e., claims adjusters), the timely disposition of claims, and experienced claim adjusters.

Improper claims handling could lead to problems ranging from costly claim appeals, underwriting authority issues, and potential litigation (Vukadin, 2010).

Contract provisions that weaken PPP. Company contracts, PSA agreements, and participants' responses contained information on the contract provisions regarding comprehensive benefits administration and claim management services. Participants noted that contract provisions are seldom a problem; however, the potential weakness lies within the conditions governing the partnership, which Jungwirth and Müller (2014) also noted. P1 stated that in general, the provisions in contract agreements outline specific requirements for both parties, in turn, holding parties accountable for their roles on the scope of the project, which also aligned with Schwenger et al. (2014), and Westphal and Zajac (2013).

Findings of this study indicated the public sector's lack of in-depth understanding of the administration of health care plans, and strong reliance on independent consultants and public corporate counsel pose risks in setting contract provisions. P2 and P3 explained contract provisions address many possible situations and ensure there are no ambiguities, yet the RPF process to enter a contract agreement typically contains vague language triggering uncertainties and risks for TPAs. Clark and Monk (2014) recently found that language in contracts should be clear and unambiguous, thus decreasing any

uncertainties in the interpretation of the intended contract provisions, which aligned with the statement of P2 and P3.

In many cases, P4 framed the contracting process as one-sided putting private sector partners at a disadvantage. Specifically, P4 exemplified that in the RFP process, public partners are dependent on the assistance of independent consultants and corporate counsel regarding RPF preparation, setting provisions and contract negotiations. However, P4 expressed concerns that their lack of adequate knowledge and attention to health care plans administration specifically may have an adverse effect on the contract provisions for TPAs. P4's concerns aligned with findings by Kuipers et al. (2014). Kuipers et al. explained that independent consultants work at their capacity and may not always be compatible with the organization's ultimate perspective. An advantage of external consultants may benefit the public sector because of their objective analysis and possible experience working with other government agencies on similar projects (Subramaniam, Collier, Phang, & Burke, 2011).

The few contract provisions that weaken a PPP and pose potential risks for a TPA organization regarding contract provisions are (a) changes in law during the contract term (P1, P2, P4), (b) liability and indemnification (P2, P4), and (c) early termination (P1, P3, P4). P1 described the local government's contract provisions as a barrier that establish limitations allowing less flexibility to amend specific provisions when changes in law occur. P1's statement is consistent with

the findings of Avraham, Dafny, and Schanzenbach (2012). According to Avraham et al., legal contracts include provisions that are permitted by existing laws at the time of the execution of the contract and may not be changed pursuant to changes in the law made after the execution of the contract.

P1 argued changes in law transfer the risks to TPAs that may incur additional costs to comply with the requirements of the changed laws. P1 also expressed the importance of contract provisions and suggested careful consideration regarding unforeseeable changes in the law that they cannot control. P1 further explained that local government agencies might have limited influence over certain categories of legislation. P2 and P4 supported P1's illustration by mentioning unforeseeable changes in the law may not contractually protect TPAs during the term of the contract.

Given the short-term nature of the contracts, P2 and P4 explained that TPAs may not be capable of predicting the unforeseeable changes in law; however, in many cases, the anticipated costs may be incorporated in the administrative service fees that may arise from such changes. In reviewing the TPA contracts and PSA agreements, the payment of administrative services fees provision permits TPAs to adjust the service fees upon each effective anniversary date or a 30 day written notice of any administrative service fee adjustments. Further examination of C1-PSA1, C2-PSA2, and C3-PSA3 revealed the contracts will terminate effective immediately if parties cannot agree on administrative fee

adjustments requested. Given the arguments by P1, P2 and P4, they provided clear evidence for alignment with the complex adaptive systems theory, expressly endorsed by Marion's (1999) definition of complex systems as various agents interacting and adapting components governed by rules in a sensitive environment.

Interview questions three and five related to contract provisions that affect and weaken TPA capabilities in the formation of PPPs. P2 and P4 reached a consensus regarding limitation of liability and indemnity. P2 expressed that general indemnity allocated the risks between TPAs and their public partners. For instance, P2 exemplified that Company B agrees to indemnify their public partners against any losses if Company B is negligent in their performance or non-performance of services; thus Company B is assuming the risks.

To indemnify a party, Reid (2015) explained that one party will absorb the losses instead of seeking compensation from their partnering party if that one party caused any harm that resulted in losses. A review of C2-PSA2 from Company B confirmed P2's explanation. C2-PSA2 contract provisions included an indemnity clause where Company B agreed to indemnify, defend, and hold the county harmless from any losses, including reasonable attorney's fees incurred by the public partner as a result of Company B's willful misconduct or breach of the service agreement.

P4 went further to explain TPAs in most cases waive rights to take any legal action against the public partner' breach of contract or negligence. Williams' (2014) findings aligned with P4's conclusion. Indemnities are complex and may have liability implications; thus, they require an appropriate language with respect to the law and the government jurisdiction (Williams, 2014). P4 explained Company C agrees to mutual indemnity with all their public partners, where each party indemnifies the other. However, P4 clarified that risk remains as the mutual indemnity limited to each party's negligent acts only. P4's statement was consistent with the TPA contracts and PSA agreements, which stated the employers (i.e., government entities) and TPA companies will hold each other harmless of any deliberate misconduct; however, the indemnity clauses limit negligent, fraudulent, and criminal conduct or breach of the contract.

P2 described situations where the public partner is the authoritative party, the contract may include indemnity clauses where the TPA agrees not to seek compensation for losses from the public partners when the third party finds TPAs negligent regarding the benefits administration and management on behalf of the public partner. Likewise, P2 emphasized the indemnity clauses may include a provision that the local government agency agrees not to seek compensation for damages that resulted from the TPA's negligence; thus the burden remains on TPAs.

P4 asserted that in many instances, TPAs may often sign contracts that make them assume a larger portion of the risks in regards to benefits administration and management, and significant increases in liability are typically uninsurable because of the assumed contractual indemnity. Aylward and Masters (2014) explained uninsurable contractual liability include one party (e.g., TPA) agreeing to ensure another party (e.g., the public partner) for losses not caused by the one party. Also, uninsurable liability includes one party (e.g., TPA) to ensure the other party (e.g., the public partner) for one party's negligence (Aylward & Masters, 2014).

Interview question three and five also addressed termination of the contract as a potential weakness in the formation of a PPP. P1 explained that some termination provisions are obvious (i.e., federal bankruptcy, loss of TPA state licenses, or voluntary withdrawal from the contract; however, some termination provisions deserve attention that present risks to TPAs. P1 stated that TPAs or the public partners may terminate the services if the public partner fails to deposit the necessary funds to pay for claims. P1 asserted public partners must provide a written notice of termination, but that is not always required. In examining the C1-PSA1 from Company A, the contract will immediately terminate for failure to fund the payment account or the trust account set by the local government agency. The examination of the contracts also included provisions that public partners will provide 10 business days written notice of

termination and shall be retroactive if appropriate depending on reasons to terminate.

Likewise, P2 argued TPA organizations are under no obligation to continue services or be held accountable for any unpaid claims in the event local government agencies fail to provide appropriate funds to cover the plan, which was also discussed by P1. P4 considered recognizing the concerns of contract termination with public partners during contract negotiations to include additional compensations. P4 indicated that Company C typically will agree to termination provisions that include (a) a fixed termination fee, (b) incurred fees resulting from the termination of the contract, and (c) one to two months of administrative service fees.

Contracts should always include provisions for terminating the contract; however, P4 claimed TPA leaders must think through the effects such clauses will have on the organizations. For example, how will TPAs be compensated should there be an early termination that may result in losses (P4)? Ariño, Reuer, Mayer, and Jané (2014) noted the subject matter of contract provisions are critical to consider and necessary to decide what risks are present and ways to reduce these risks.

Emergent Theme: Critical Information on Contract Stipulations in the Formation of PPPs.

The critical information on contract stipulation in the formation of PPPs was the third main theme. Participant responses and review of the contracts and PSA agreement identified two critical contract stipulations that affect the formation of PPPs with local government agencies. The critical information on contract stipulations in the formation of PPPs subthemes were ERISA (1974) and compliance with applicable federal and state laws. Table 4 displays the frequency of occurrence of core themes that affirmed the successful procurement process is critical in the formation of PPPs.

Table 4

Frequency of Themes for Critical Information on Contract Stipulations in the Formation of PPPs

Theme	<i>n</i>	% of frequency of occurrence
ERISA (1974)	5	62.5%
Compliance with applicable federal and state laws	3	37.5%

Note. *n* = frequency

Further, the complex adaptive systems theory also relates to contract stipulations found in the main theme three. Participants demonstrated contractual stipulations as complex systems regarding constitutional and statutory obligations in a PPP. In a PPP, parties may stipulate to any matters regarding their rights or obligations of the individual party (Monterrey et al., 2013). Dosi and Moretto (2015) identified contract stipulations as voluntary and do not affirm the constitutionality of statutes as those are determined by the courts. As the findings

indicated, TPA leaders should understand their positions and control over the plan, operations, and terms. Skillful professionals within TPAs should control and limit their ERISA (1974) liability by educating their public partners regarding plan administration and unrestricted decisions (Tacchino, 2014).

ERISA (1974). As the findings indicated, ERISA has oversight for health maintenance organizations and provider networks as part of the health care systems (Pozen & Vinjamoori, 2015). P2 supported Pozen and Vinjamoori's statement by illustrating the role of TPAs is to advise the public sector regarding administration of health plans, assist in the plan administration, eligibility and compliance of health benefits with ERISA and state laws. Also, P2 explained most public local agencies are not familiar with the rules and regulations to administer employee funded benefits plans. P2 added that public sectors agencies retain TPAs to ensure their clients' compliance with the numerous employee benefits plan laws including ERISA. Therefore, P2 stated that a TPA's function is imperative because if a county does not comply with the laws, they may be subject to plan's fiduciaries to personal liability, which Cohen et al. (2014) also noted.

As identified in the first theme regarding roles and responsibilities, TPAs provide important assistance in plan administration; however, the responsibility falls on the plan administrator or public partners. Depending on the established service relationships, P3 explained the plan administrators are subject to fiduciary

liability under ERISA (1974); consequently, TPAs must work with the public partners to maintain the health plans to ensure compliance with federal and state laws. In a similar manner, P2 and P3 implied that TPAs provide options and advice on the new changes in the law that may affect the plan, and not make any discretionary decisions about the plan's operations as also noted by Verno (2014).

P2 and P3 further explained that TPAs are not a plan fiduciary. P4 pointed out this was a critical part of the fiduciary liability under ERISA's (1974) regulations. P2 explained there was a significant difference between plan fiduciary and claim fiduciary, which all TPA leaders should understand. P2 went further to explain that in many cases, public partners will name TPAs as the claimed fiduciary allowing TPAs authority and responsibility to adjudicate claims in accordance with the stipulations of the plan, which is also consistent with Maatman's (2015) findings. Maatman asserted that a named fiduciary party handles a final determination whether the claims are covered and the plan administrator may overrule this determination. Likewise, P4 added that the named claim fiduciary may defend their discretionary decisions; however, the party will bear any legal costs of the defense.

P1 was critical of risks and benefits of claim fiduciary. P1 pointed out that TPAs operate in a very competitive market, and the incentive is to keep claims low to attract potential clients, although this incentive comes with potential risks. For instance, P1 asserted that TPAs exercise discretionary decisions virtually

every day with every claim either to pay or deny a claim that must align with ERISA's stipulations to avoid violations regarding conflict of interest, which was also consistent with the argument by Conrad et al. (2014).

According to ERISA (1974), Section 3(14), the definition of party of interest includes that a fiduciary shall discharge his duties with respect to a plan solely in the interest of the participants and beneficiary. P1 was insistent any decisions TPA leaders make regarding claim approval or denial must be "extremely knowledgeable" (personal communication, September 14, 2015) of ERISA stipulations. P1 acknowledged that TPAs with discretionary authority, either direct or indirect, with the administration of plans had a fiduciary duty, thus posing a possible liability.

In reviewing all contracts and PSA agreements from all three TPAs in this study, the contract provisions did not name the TPA as fiduciary or plan administrator. Instead the public partners were named the plan administrators and are therefore required to comply with the ERISA (1974) regulations.

Alternatively, the contracts from all TPAs stated the local government agencies delegated the authority to TPAs to make the initial eligibility and coverage determinations. The contracts and PSA agreements identified the public partners had full authority and responsibility in reviewing appeals and making the final decisions for claim payments.

P4 argued that a TPA may have to make decisions in regards to eligibility; however, under legal precedent and contract stipulations, TPAs may be held liable. Similar to P1's argument, P4 recognized that any routine claim administration in regards to discretionary decisions was a weakness when public and private partners do not appropriately exercise discretion in decisions. P4 further recommended TPA leaders must consider negotiating contracts that include discretionary decisions to avoid any violations of ERISA (1974). P4's recommendation is consistent with Maatman (2015) who acclaimed the identified discretion stipulations in ERISA plans, their administrators, and TPAs may decrease a TPA's liability for benefits decisions and potential ERISA lawsuits.

Compliance with applicable federal and state laws. Participants' comments revealed their perceptions regarding the critical factors influencing decisions to form a PPP under TPA applicable federal and state laws. P1 discussed the value of TPA professionals and their knowledge of federal and state laws, and having the appropriate resources to handle all jurisdictions applicable to public partners. P2 explained federal and state regulation are the key factor because certain contract stipulations will cross authoritative bodies within legislative rules and regulation. P2 further explained that TPAs are under strict ERISA (1974) fiduciary and operational transparency rules and enforcement. The public sector has fiduciary responsibilities at different levels such as elected officials in their municipalities (P2). P2's response is supported by Kertesz (2012)

who noted that particular violations of federal and state stipulations in providing comprehensive benefits administration and management services have considerable risks for TPA organizations.

P1 also mentioned there are various authoritative entities that a TPA must follow, specifically ERISA (1974), the United State Department of Labor (DOL), Wisconsin Bureau of Financial Analysis and Examinations, and Office of the Commissioners of Insurance (OCI) in Wisconsin, for example. P2 explained the DOL provides oversight of the fundamental fiduciary responsibilities applicable to plans under ERISA. As such, TPAs are subject to certain responsibilities in regards to (a) ERISA, (b) the DOL, (c) and National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC; P2). ERISA, DOL, and NAIC have oversight on TPA licensing, quality controls, policies and procedures, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA), and fee charges that were also noted by P3 and P4. Abels (2012) emphasized that a TPA's role is critical for self-insurers as there are some complex systems and legislative forms governed by special laws, regulations, and procedures.

The TPA statute was first adopted by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC, 2011) in 1977 and later amended in 1990 and 2001. According to the NAIC model, entities adjusting life and health claims must be licensed as TPAs. Likewise, NAIC, Section 2, states that no entity should assume the role of a TPA unless the entity is a state licensed TPA. Participants in this

study agreed their organizations were state licensed TPA organizations that provide comprehensive benefits services to public agencies in the state of Wisconsin. In a review of the contracts and PSA agreements, the documents did not specifically identify the TPA organizations as state licensed firms. Instead, all contracts included provisions that required TPAs to be state licensed and hold appropriate licensure during the contract term.

The regulations identified by NAIC (2011) are also consistent with those regulations addressed by ERISA (1974) as well as the TPA contracts and PSA agreements from all three cases examined for this study. The requirements of ERISA and NAIC, provide that all TPA entities must maintain all payers' (i.e., public partners) complete records of all transactions performed on behalf of the payer. Likewise, payers must provide the right and sufficient access to information permitting TPAs to fulfill their contractual obligations (ERISA, 1974; NAIC, 2011).

All participants agreed that contract stipulations regarding ERISA (1974) require (a) disclosure of reports to their public partners to ensure all fees are reasonable, (b) public partners' regular review of plan records to ensure proper records are being maintained, (c) public partners analyze all reports specified in the contracts provided by TPAs, and (d) monitoring quality of services. As part of the ERISA's and NAIC's (2011) established uniform administration of employee

benefits plans, the statute includes reporting, disclosure, and fiduciary responsibilities of plan administrators (ERISA, 1974; Feuer, 2014; NAIC, 2011).

Emergent Theme: Critical Information on Public and Private Business

Environment Influencing the Decision to Form PPPs.

The fourth main theme relates to market assessment, health care reform, and transparency influencing the decisions to form a PPP (see Table 5). Interview questions one, two, and eight revealed that health care reform and the need for transparency have a significant influence on TPAs when forming PPPs with local government agencies. Table 5 displays the frequency of occurrence of core themes affirmed that a successful procurement process is critical in the formation of PPPs.

Table 5

Frequency of Themes for Critical Information on Public and Private Business Environment Influencing the Decision to Form PPPs

Theme	<i>n</i>	% of frequency of occurrence
Market assessment	3	37.5%
Health care reform	2	25.0%
Transparency	3	37.5%

Note. *n* = frequency

Given the emergent themes from the 21st-century market, the health care reform and transparency between private and public partners suggested clear alignment with the decision theory and complex adaptive systems theory. As the

findings indicated, the business environment has a positive and negative influence that affects the decision to form a PPP. Consistent with Kertesz's (2012) findings, participants reach a consensus agreeing that TPAs may fail to remain profitable when leaders within TPA organizations lack understanding of the inflexibility in the bureaucratic environment.

Market assessment. With the increasing need to outsource claim handling because of the complex health care industry, the market for TPA services is a growing need (Simoneaux & Stroud, 2013). P1 recognized the increasing need for TPA services created more competitive markets than ever before. P3 also recognized TPAs are competing for the quality of service, experienced and qualified professionals, reasonableness of fees, and technology. Pozen and Vinjamoori (2015) denoted similar findings and emphasized TPAs must have the infrastructure in place in systems, resources, and experienced personnel.

P1 and P3 confirmed Scialabba's (2012) argument and explained that TPAs do not assume insurance risk, but their lack of abilities to measure the risks are potential threats. P1 and P3 added that ability to measure and manage risks in a changing market affect their revenue stream, health care needs, pricing, estimating claims count, and cost per claim. P4 further noted that medical inflation has a significant effect on assessing claims, stop loss coverage, and retention of low handling expenses. The pressures from market driven changes

and reforms in state laws are affecting TPAs and their ability to compete and overcome these challenges (Atlas & Sobotka, 2013; Kautter et al., 2014).

The findings of this study indicate TPA leaders should understand the factors that influence PPPs. The inability to understand the public market may represent a significant barrier to a TPA's ability to remain competitive and profitable. Therefore, TPA leaders should ensure the availability of sufficient resources before beginning a shared business venture with local government agencies. Also, the ability to operate within restrictive and bureaucratic rules and procedures influences the decision to form a PPP, as also noted by Kivleniece and Quelin (2012), and later by Jurisch et al. (2013).

P4 discussed that TPAs have competitive advantage in the health care market regarding comprehensive benefits administration and management services, which require access to a broad range of resources (e.i., capital investment, health care network, and high quality of services). P4 asserted that since the enactment of the ACA in 2010, the unprecedented new administrative compliance requirements overwhelmed TPAs with yet fully implemented new laws and regulations. The growing market is dependent on highly technical and challenging employee benefits, which provides an opportunity for TPA to penetrate the new market as also noted by Pozen and Vinjamoori (2015).

Health care reform. P1 and P3 noted that the uncertainties in the economy and the changing political environment were likely to affect how leaders

within TPA organizations make decisions. The participants also discussed TPA organizations behave according to the contingencies of the market. P2 indicated the shared partnerships create an exposure to the unstable environment, and the conflicting stakeholders presumably affect the way key plays in organizations make decisions. The participants' comments were confirmed by Ferreira et al. (2014) and Vecchiato (2012) who identified the business environment in terms of market forces, exposure to legislation, legislatures, and service rules as significant differences between the public and private business climate.

Participant P1 implied the changing political environment also changes the landscape of TPAs. For example, P1 explained TPAs continuously adapt to accommodate each plan with unique and specialized services. P1 also exemplified that self-funded plans gained momentum amongst TPAs because of the enactment of ACA in 2010. Consistent with P1's explanation, P4 distinguished their Company C from other TPAs as a "sophisticated organization" that easily adapts to new demands and legislative changes as opposed to a "one-size-fits-all" business philosophy (personal communication, September 17, 2015).

Blavin, Shartzter, Long, and Holahan (2015) referred to ACA (2010) changes in health care as complex systems shifting the premium and coverage paradigm for independent TPAs. P1 explained the ACA imposes challenges for self-funded plans, thus creating an opportunity to penetrate a greater market as TPAs are the "experts" (personal communication, September 14, 2015) at self-

funded plans. P1 argued that as regulators formulate and implement the ACA, Company B needed to adapt and design high quality plans that are ACA compliant.

In a similar manner, P4 expressed concerns as federal and state regulations prompted changes to how TPAs provide comprehensive benefits administration and management services. P4 went further to explain the new permissible responsibilities in plans left many TPAs dealing with intense regulations to remain in compliance. Volland (2014) and later Blavin et al. (2015) noted that since 2010, changes in health care within the United States changed the landscape of how carriers and preferred providers, and claim administrators navigate through the complex health care systems.

Transparency. The more transparent the objectives of the PPP, the more efficient the partnership will be (Wibowo & Alfen, 2015). P2 discussed that lack of transparency might quickly diminish trust in a PPP, the uncertainty of public sector's agendas, conditions of a PPP, and availability of full information needed for collaboration and collectively making a decision. P2 stated that an exchange of information is critical in the formation PPPs whereby the rules and regulatory measures are fair and clear to all participating partners.

The study findings were consistent with the research of Melnikas (2013) and Velotti et al. (2012), who asserted that transparency in PPPs was a form of assurance to build trust and a positive reputation that added value to the delivery

of services. Given the risks and complexity of managing health plans, P4 explained transparency in the public procurement process may create a competitive and fair procurement environment. In many cases, P2 explained, the RFP process excludes key participants to ensure mutual understanding regarding the details of health plans, federal and state regulations, and oversight of the services claim processing and plan administration.

P2 contended that TPAs believe in promoting transparency at all levels of business. As related to decision theory, P2 demonstrated TPAs make decisions on an ongoing basis by setting rates as well as evaluating and establishing preferred provider networks necessary, which Bouyssou et al. (2013) also noted. P4 supported P2's explanation of transparency by adding TPAs do not depend on preferred provider organizations (PPOs) to set rates. Instead, P4 explained TPAs partner with medical professionals to gain knowledge of best practices in medical treatments, thus creating transparency and promoting education for public partners on how to create self-funded plans. The findings indicated that TPA leaders and public partners must interact frequently and focus collaborative networks on facilitating quality of services.

Applications to Professional Practice

The work of Melnikas (2013), and Geddes and Wagner (2013) provided that PPPs between private and public management could generate opportunities to capture market share and sustain profitability through competitive pricing and

services. Several states passed legislation that permits the formation of PPPs to improve efficiency through collaborative and innovative partnerships, increase cost-effectiveness in government spending, and enhance public service, yet in the last 25 years private companies show reluctance in forming PPPs in the United States (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2011; Liu et al., 2014; Tsamboulas, Verma, & Moraiti, 2013).

Siemiatycki (2011) concluded that tensions and drawbacks in collaborations derived from different organizational goals and objectives between public and private organization. Velotti et al. (2012) asserted that lack of transparency between private-public organizations created uncertainties, and obscure legitimacy resulted in low sustainability. Appleton-Dyer et al. (2012) discussed that the public sector operated under a specific policy environment and the magnitude of a complex procurement system between private-public sectors was a poorly understood process. The findings of this study include several aspects relevant to forming successful PPPs. The public and private organization can make better decisions when forming PPPs to (a) improve the collaborative relationship, (b) enrich transparency, (c) provide and exchange knowledge to strengthen working partnerships, and (d) leverage resources to their mutual advantage.

Private Sectors

I anticipate the current study filled some gaps in business knowledge that

will allow a better understanding of the complex procurement process and guide TPA managers to form successful PPPs with local government agencies in Wisconsin. The multiple case study analysis of the three TPA organizations offers tangible source material that TPA decision makers can reference to identify the key information needed to form PPPs and can aid the development of new specialized services through PPPs. The results of the current study add to the body of knowledge that may influence private organizations to form successful PPPs and provide an opportunity to capture market share through competitive pricing and services, generate profits, and added value through the integration of expertise, skills, and knowledge.

Specifically, I identified four main themes with TPA organizations that contribute key information that may form successful PPPs. Based on the specific characteristics of the PPP, leaders within TPAs can utilize the factors identified in these findings to assess the procurement process to (a) become more inclined to form PPPs, (b) establish successful PPPs, and (c) maintain long-term PPPs with local government agencies in Wisconsin. Leaders within TPA organizations may take the results of this study to identify key strategies to mitigate the complex contracting process in the bureaucratic environment within the local government agencies.

For established PPPs between TPAs and local government agencies in Wisconsin, the findings strongly suggest that the state's contract provisions and

stipulations affect the leaders' decisions to form PPPs. Similarly, results show that established PPPs between TPAs and local government agencies are the key factors to a successful partnership were to understand the motivations of the each partner and understand the need for compromises, transparency, and establish a common goal to increase the willingness to acquire joint ventures through PPPs.

Public Sectors

The results of the current study will also add value to government agencies, as successful PPPs can create efficiency in government operations, increase cost-effectiveness in government spending, and improve public services. The leaders of government agencies could use the findings to stimulate cost efficiency achieved through PPPs. Through analysis of the findings, I suggest that public government agencies in the state of Wisconsin create a clear, competitive, and transparent process that encourages private organizations to form PPPs. Reciprocally, public leaders can use the study results to better understand the implications of PPPS from the standpoint of TPAs that are affected by strict government oversight and regulations that cause reluctance amongst private organizations to form PPPs. The analysis of the contracts and PSA agreements identified that public government agencies remain accountable to the taxpayers regardless of the PPP contractual terms.

Implications for Social Change

With continuous decreases in federal and local funding, the need for cost-

effectiveness in government spending and improvement of public services are a priority for many local government agencies across the United States. Albanese and Modica (2012) stated that PPPs play a significant role in improving social conditions through the efficient use of taxpayers' contributions. The formation of PPPs between public and private sectors has become a valuable business endeavor to ensure the continuance of government service provisions (Albanese & Modica, 2012).

The results of this study may benefit society by revealing the value of shared partnerships to improve service delivery and reduce costs. The results of this study may also benefit the public sector as PPPs may influence fiscal sustainability and efficiency by utilizing shared resources and technology to reduce waste. Through efficient use of taxpayers' contributions, the public leaders may regain the public's faith and trust in governing bodies, making the right decisions in the best interest of the public that may positively affect the communities and invest in social change (Brewer & Brewer, 2011).

Private organizations of all sizes and specialized services seek to collaborate with government agencies to provide quality services that taxpayers depend on (Alm et al., 2011) and provide lasting solutions to community problems (Melnikas, 2013). The study findings could also benefit any public and the private organization currently partnered in PPPs, pursuing PPPs, or exploring a possible partnering venture with a public and private organization. The study

can also serve as an educational mechanism to promote a learning environment beneficial to the general public and leaders within private and public agencies. Researchers could utilize the finding of this study to better understand the information some managers within TPAs need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of PPPs.

Recommendations for Action

Through PPPs, private and public organizations may effectively address the challenges of entering into joint ventures to provide quality services and reduce government spending. The PPPs also provide an opportunity for private organizations to gain a greater market share that has been unapproachable for the last 25 years in the United States (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2011; Osei-Kyei & Chan, 2015). Many private organizations are reluctant to enter joint partnerships with local government agencies because of the stringent and political environment, the state's strict contract provisions and stipulations, and the public sector's mindset to promote the use of PPPs (Durant, 2014; May & Koski, 2013; Nisar, 2013).

State legislators provided a framework for development of PPPs driven by limitations in public budgets and the growing need for quality services (Hvidman & Andersen, 2014; Nissen et al., 2014; Roehrich et al., 2014). Many government agencies throughout the United States turned to private organizations with intent to improve required services at lower cost and at the desired level of quality

(Goldman et al., 2013; Holdman et al., 2013; York et al., 2013). Despite the benefits of PPPs, the partnerships are complex adaptive systems and typically require in-depth knowledge of PPPs' procurement process, local government statutes on procurements, and the federal and state governments' unique provisions and stipulations.

Leaders within TPA organizations demand the understanding of the complexity of the factors involved in the PPP decision-making process. To address these concerns, I recommend that TPAs use the results of this study to assist in understanding the political environment to have a successful working relationship with their clients. Executive and senior managers within TPAs need to begin establishing transparent partnerships with public partners to attain the desired outcomes.

TPA leaders may use this study to promote effective business practices to form PPPs, assist with the understanding of how to assess the complex characteristics of a PPP, and negotiate the PPP conditions most favorable for their organization. TPAs considering whether or not to form a PPP may use this study to understand the implication of public governance in the authoritative landscape and the effect PPP formation will have on their organization. The study may also be helpful for public and private leaders to guide the complex contracting process, assess the potential risks, and eliminate any existing misconceptions regarding a PPP.

The findings from this study are important to TPA executive personnel and senior managers with the authority to form PPPs. Understanding the results of this study may benefit existing TPA professionals by exposing some of the information managers within TPAs may need on the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs. The study may apply to a variety of TPA organizations that are currently in PPPs and exploring ways to improve efficiency. Likewise, the study may also apply to organizations that are exploring ways to enhance partnership development.

The dissemination of findings in this study to local government publications, academic research journals, professional conferences, business journals, and private-private partnership publications could broaden the reach of this study. I will disseminate the findings of this study to (a) TPA professionals, (b) TPA consultants, (c) management consultants involved in PPPs, and (d) training and coaching TPA firms and local government agencies. Further, I may distribute the results of this study through training and seminars regarding the complex procurement process in the formation of PPPs.

Recommendations for Further Study

I based this research on a qualitative multiple-case study design to examine the information some managers within TPAs need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of PPPs. The findings from this study warrant exploration regarding what information some managers within TPAs

need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of a PPP and not those in the local government agencies. Researchers should conduct further studies to explore what information local government leaders need when forming PPPs. Also, since this study focused on state licensed TPA organizations that provide comprehensive benefits administration and management services located in Wisconsin, I recommend exploring TPA agencies within different municipalities outside of Wisconsin. I also suggest conducting a study to examine the procurement process of government agencies versus the private sector. A comparison between the two sectors could uncover procurement decision-making strategies that may benefit both sectors.

The formations of PPPs are intended to lower local government agencies' administrative costs through innovative operational efficiencies. I further suggest a study to investigate the financial effects of PPPs in specialized administrative service delivery. This study did not focus on TPAs that provide comprehensive benefits administration and management services for private organizations. I recommend further study on the contracting process between TPAs and the private sector to examine and compare similarities and differences to contracting process with the public sector.

Reflections

During the research process, I was able to reach a diverse executive and senior population in the PPP decision making process. In this research, I had no

influence over any of the participants and the multiple forms of data collection allowed me to capture the information some leaders within TPAs need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs. Utilizing the research methods in this study allowed the participants and myself to communicate in a face-to-face setting where I was able to separate my preconceptions and bias of the political environment from the research process.

Prior to collecting data for this study, my understanding and background in PPPs, and my position within a local government agency had provided me with predetermined concepts concerning the importance of the influence that the political environment has on decisions to form a PPP. I also believed that political influence had significant influence on PPPs and as the doctoral study progressed, the data revealed findings similar to my experiences as an employee at a local government agency.

In this study, I was able to identify some differences and similarities with each participant's perspective regarding the complex contracting process between the private and public sector. The ideas discovered in this study encouraged me to develop a different position and worldview of the PPP phenomenon. The findings of this study provided me additional information on the functions of TPAs, their role as comprehensive benefits administrators, and their claims management services. Last, this study allowed me to contribute toward the advanced

understanding of PPPs and decision making through applying the theoretical lens to view the data.

Conclusion

The understanding of what factors constitute existing relationships to connect PPPs and the complex contracting process in the successful formation of PPP is vital for the public sector (Siemiatycki, 2011; Velotti et al., 2012). The specific business problem for this research project was that some TPAs lack information regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs. Therefore, using the decision making theory and complex adaptive systems theory, the purpose of the qualitative multiple-case study was to answer the following research questions: What information do some managers within TPAs need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPP? Four executive leaders from three different Wisconsin state licensed TPA organizations that provide comprehensive benefits administration and management services participated in open-ended face-to-face interviews. Contracts and PSA agreements were reviewed as a second source.

After collecting and analyzing data, four main themes emerged from the data include (a) critical factors for TPA leaders to consider during the complex contracting process in the formation of PPPs, (b) critical information on contract provisions in the formation of PPPs, (c) critical information on contract stipulations in the formation of PPPs, and (d) critical information on public and

private business environment influencing the decision to form PPPs. Kertesz (2012) theorized that the TPAs that did not understand how to deal with the rigidities of the bureaucratic environment failed to remain profitable. The findings indicated that TPA leaders must consider (a) collaborative leadership, (b) understanding partners and key players, (c) role and responsibilities, and (e) ability to provide unique services as critical factors in the formation of PPP.

The findings of this study implied that leaders within TPAs must understand the complex public business environment, the contract provisions and stipulations that affects the formation of PPP. The critical information regarding contract provisions are (a) change and transfer of controlling interest, (b) contract provisions that strengthen PPP, (c) contract provisions that weaken PPP, (d) ERISA stipulations, and (e) compliance with applicable federal and state laws. Kertesz (2012) asserted that TPA firms that do not abide by government compliance responsibilities may face heavy penalties and lawsuits depleting their assets (Kertesz, 2012).

The public and private companies are facing similar challenges and threats to those confronting local government due to an unstable and uncertain economic environment (Kamal, 2012). It is important to mention that the critical factors that contribute toward a successful PPP within TPAs and local government agencies are ability to understand the landscape of the public market, the economy, and health care inflations. In addition, the results of this study revealed that

improvement in transparency may build trust, and establish a positive reputation, and strengthen the formation of PPP. Business entities, public and private, are experiencing higher demand for quality services, which they must address with innovation and increased efficiency (Kamal, 2012).

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Appendix A: E-mail Requesting Access and Use of Membership Directory

**TO OBTAIN APPROVAL TO ACCESS AND USE OF MEMBERSHIP
DIRECTORY TO CONTACT MEMBERS**

Dear [name of the requested party],

I am a student at Walden University seeking a Doctorate of Business Administration with a specialization in Leadership. I am conducting a research study entitled Third Party Administrators in Public-Private Partnerships: A Multiple Case Study. The purpose of the research study is to explore what information some managers need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs in the state of Wisconsin.

I am requesting permission to use of the first party administrators (TPAs) directory listing and their key personnel contact information you have in your possession to contact potential study participants under the following conditions:

- I will use the directory for the sole purpose of recruiting for my research study and I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
- I will not sell or publicize the directory information.
- I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
- I agree that my obligations under this approval to use the directory will continue in perpetuity after the completion of my study.
- I understand that any violation of this use agreement may have legal implications.

If these are acceptable terms and conditions, please indicate so by emailing a written approval by replying to this email and giving your written permission to use the membership directory for recruitment of study participants. Once I receive your permission, I will forward your approval email to the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) committee, which will include you. The purpose of this committee is to ensure I followed all federal, institutional, and ethical guideline while conducting my research.

Sincerely,

Beata E. Haug
DBA Candidate
Walden University

Appendix B: Sample Letter of Cooperation from a Research Partner

**STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING FOR PERMISSION TO USE
PREMISES, NAMES, AND DOCUMENTS**

Dear [name of the requested party],

I am a student at Walden University seeking a Doctorate of Business Administration with a specialization in Leadership. I am conducting a research study entitled Third Party Administrators in Public-Private Partnerships: A Multiple Case Study. The purpose of the research study is to explore what information some managers need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs in the state of Wisconsin.

I am seeking third party administrator (TPA) agencies that meet the following criteria:

- TPA agency is state-licensed in Wisconsin.
- Currently participate in a public-private partnership in Wisconsin.
- Provide comprehensive benefits management services to local government agencies in Wisconsin.

Likewise, I am seeking face-to-face interviews with executive personnel and senior managers who meet the following criteria:

- Executive and management leaders must be employed by state licensed TPA organization that provide comprehensive benefits services to public agencies in the state of Wisconsin.
- Executive and management leaders must have the authority to form PPPs in the state of Wisconsin.
- Executive and management leaders must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree.
- Executive and management leaders must have a minimum 5 years of experience in PPPs in the state of Wisconsin.
- Executive and management leaders must be 18 years of age and older.

I developed the study selection criteria to assure that TPA agencies are in PPPs with local government agencies in the state of Wisconsin and to assure that participants are likely to possess knowledge and information that are relevant to the purpose of this study.

The researcher will request voluntary participation from participants within your organization. This requested participation will involve answering open-ended

questions in face-to-face interviews. The participants may choose not to participate or to withdraw from participating in this study at any time without penalty or forfeiture of benefit to the individuals. The results of this research study may be published, but neither the organization's and participant's name nor position will be used or will the identity of the participants be compromised by the participant's responses. To ensure the confidentiality and anonymity, the participant responses will be assigned a letter and numeric code to protect their identity, and I will maintain the master transcript in confidence.

In this research, the only foreseeable risk to the participants includes personal sensitivity, heightened awareness, or emotional responses related to a participant talking about their past and current experiences regarding the formation of the PPPs.

There are no direct benefits to the participants for participating in this study. By taking part in this study, the participants may increase their understanding of the mindsets and influences that affect the contracting process when forming PPPs and thereby enhance the body of knowledge concerning the complexity of PPPs.

I included cooperation from a research partner form granting the permission to use premises, name, and subjects with this informed consent statement of understanding.

I included a letter of cooperation from a research partner granting permission to use premises, name, and subjects with this informed consent statement of understanding. The return of the completed permission to use premises, name and subjects form will be considered as your organization's consent to participate.

Please contact me should you have questions concerning this research study. You can contact me via telephone at XXX-XXX-XXXX or XXXX.XXXX@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. XXXXX. Dr. XXXXX is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Please print or save this letter of cooperation from a research partner for your records.

Sincerely,

Beata E. Haug, DBA Candidate
Walden University

**LETTER OF COOPERATION FROM A RESEARCH PARTNER:
PERMISSION TO USE PREMISES, NAME, AND SUBJECTS**

Community Research Partner Name: _____

Official's Name and Position: _____

Contact Information: _____

Date

Dear [Researcher Name],

Based on my review of your research proposal, I hereby authorize Beata Ewa Haug, a doctoral student at Walden University, to use the premises, names and subjects requested within the _____ [Name of TPA firm] to conduct a study entitled Third Party Administrators in Public-Private Partnerships: A Multiple Case Study.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include:

- Executive personnel and senior management participating in one to two hours face-to-face interviews.
- Providing copies of contract agreements and plan service agreements (PSAs) between _____ [name of the TPA organization] and any local government agencies in Wisconsin that the organization is willing to share.
- Participating in validating the accuracy of researcher's interpretations and conclusions with participants who participated in the face-to-face interviews that may require an additional one to two hours.

We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

As part of this study, I authorize you to recruit individuals in this organization to participate. I will provide you a list of names of individuals that meet your inclusion criteria and you may contact them directly or I may forward an invitation to employees directing them to contact you directly if they are interested in participation. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their discretion.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Signature of Authorization Official

Date

Title

Organization

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email, or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).

Appendix C: Recruitment Letter for Study Participants

WALDEN UNIVERSITY

[Date]

Re: Doctoral Candidate - Research Study

Dear [Name]:

My name is Beata Haug, and I am a student at Walden University seeking a Doctorate of Business Administration with a specialization in Leadership. I am conducting a research study entitled: "Third Party Administrators in Public-Private Partnerships: A Multiple Case Study." I am interested in conducting this study to explore what information some managers need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs in the state of Wisconsin.

I am seeking face-to-face interviews with executive personnel and senior managers who meet the following criteria:

- Executive and management leaders must be employed by state licensed TPA organization that provide comprehensive benefits services to public agencies in the state of Wisconsin.
- Executive and management leaders must have the authority to form PPPs in the state of Wisconsin.
- Executive and management leaders must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree.
- Executive and management leaders must have a minimum 5 years of experience in PPPs in the state of Wisconsin.
- Executive and management leaders must be 18 years of age and older.

I developed the study selection criteria to assure that participants are likely to possess knowledge and information that are relevant to the purpose of this study. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time, even after I have completed data collection for the study. I will protect your identity, and your individual responses to interview questions will not be published or disclosed.

All of your individual answers to questions will be recorded for analysis and reported in the study with no information that identifies you or your organization. However, I will be asking for an organizational representative to share company documents and artifacts regarding the contracting process in the formation of PPPs in the State of Wisconsin. At

that time I will disclose that you are participating in my study. I will share the findings from the study with each participant individually, other scholars and the leaders within the participants' organizations.

I am requesting that you participate in my study. You can contact me via telephone at XXX-XXX-XXXX or XXX.XXXX@waldenu.edu if you are interested in participating. I will also contact you within the next 10 days to answer any questions that you may have and to ask for your participation. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Beata E. Haug, DBA Candidate
Walden University

Appendix D: Sample of Informed Consent – Adult Participants 18 Years
of Age and Older

**INFORMED CONSENT: ADULT PARTICIPANTS 18 YEARS OF AGE
AND OLDER**

You are invited to take part in a research study of exploring third party administrators (TPA) in a public-private partnership (PPP). The researcher is inviting executive personnel and senior management who meet the following criteria:

- Executive and management leaders employed by state licensed TPA organization that provide comprehensive benefits services to public agencies in the state of Wisconsin.
- Executive and management leaders that have the authority to form PPPs in the state of Wisconsin.
- Executive and management leaders have a minimum of a bachelor's degree and 5 years of experience in PPPs.
- Executive and management leaders who are 18 years of age and older.

This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Beata Ewa Haug, a doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of the research study is to explore what information some managers within TPAs need regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPPs in the state of Wisconsin.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Voluntarily participate in one private face-to-face interview scheduled to last approximately one to two hours at date and time of the participant's choosing.
- The interview will be audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy of the data collected.
- In a situation where you choose not to be recorded, handwritten notes will be taken during the interview.

- Review and validation of paraphrased and interpreted responses to the interview questions to ensure completeness and accuracy that may require an additional one to two hours.

Here are some sample questions:

1. What information do managers within TPAs need on the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPP?
2. What critical information did you consider during the contracting process when forming the PPPs?
3. What TPA capabilities did the state's contract provisions affect in the formation of the PPPs?
4. What TPA capabilities did the state's contract provisions strengthen in the formation of the PPPs?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at your organization or Walden University will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You can withdraw from the study at any time by notifying me by telephone or in writing (e.g., postal mail or e-mail).

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that may be encountered in daily life, such as stress, uneasiness, and becoming uncomfortable. Being in this study would not pose a risk to your safety or well-being.

Taking part in this study, you may increase the understanding of the mindsets and influences that affect decision makers relative to the formation of the PPPs and thereby enhance the body of knowledge concerning the complexity of PPP decision making.

Payment:

You acknowledge that their participation is voluntary and that there is no compensation for your participation. Upon completion of the study, you will receive a thank you letter, \$10 Starbucks gift card with accompanied copy of the study and offer to discuss the outcomes of the study.

Privacy:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by creating electronic files that will only be accessible by a password only known by the researcher. The researcher will keep the data secure by assigning a letter and numeric code to protect your identity, and the master transcript will be maintained in confidence. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university. After the 5 year period, the data will be destroyed.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Alternatively, if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via telephone at XXX-XXX-XXXX or XXXX.XXXX@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. XXXXX. Dr. XXXXX is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is XXX-XXX-XXXX. Walden University's approval number for this study is 09-04-15-0401128, and it expires on September 3, 2016.

Please print or save this consent form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information, and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing, I understand that I agree to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of Consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Appendix E: Document Release Form

**TO OBTAIN APPROVAL FOR DOCUMENTS/ARTIFACTS TO BE
RELEASED**

Dear Organization Representative:

My name is Beata Haug, and I am a student at Walden University seeking a Doctorate of Business Administration with a specialization in Leadership. I am conducting a research study entitled: "Third Party Administrators in Public-Private Partnerships: A Multiple Case Study." An executive or management professional from your organization has agreed to participate in my doctoral study.

I am requesting your permission to use and reproduce contract agreements and plan service agreements (PSAs) between your organization and any local government agencies in Wisconsin that are related to my study. As the official with the authority to grant permission to release company documents, I am requesting release of documents subject to the following conditions:

- I will use all company documents released to me exclusively for my research and not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
- I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as authorized by you as the official company representative.
- I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.
- I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
- I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue in perpetuity after the completion of my study.
- I understand that any violation of this agreement may have legal implications.

By signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and that I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Beata E. Haug, DBA Candidate
Walden University

Date

I, _____ (print name), in my official capacity as

_____ (title) of _____

(company), hereby release the documents listed by title below to Beata E. Haug for her sole and exclusive use in her Doctor of Business Administration research study at Walden University subject to the above agreement signed by Mrs. Haug.

Signed this _____ day of _____ (month), 2015

_____ (Signature)

_____ (Name Printed)

_____ (Title)

_____ (Name of Organization)

Documents released for use by Beata E. Haug

Contract Agreements and Plan Service Agreement (PSA)

If these are acceptable terms and conditions, please print and sign your name, title, organization, date your signature, and list the titles of the documents you are releasing for my use.

Sincerely,

Beata E. Haug
Doctoral Candidate
Walden University

Appendix F: Open-Ended Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. What information do managers within TPAs need on the complex contracting process in the formation of the PPP?
2. What critical information did you consider during the contracting process when forming the PPPs?
3. What TPA capabilities did the state's contract provisions affect in the formation of the PPPs?
4. What TPA capabilities did the state's contract provisions strengthen in the formation of the PPPs?
5. What TPA capabilities did the state's contract provisions weaken in the formation of the PPPs?
6. What contract stipulations did you consider as a benefit to your organization when forming the PPPs? Why did you consider these to be a benefit to your organization?
7. What state's contract stipulations did you consider a risk to your organization when forming the PPPs? Why did you consider these to be a risk to your organization?
8. What other information would you like to provide regarding contracting for PPPs?

Appendix G: Interview Protocol

Six step interview protocol:

1. I will prepare notes with reminders of what the research should do to ensure the intent of the phenomena under study.
2. I will begin each interview with an opening statement as an icebreaker to engage participants in a relaxed manner.
3. I will ask open-ended face-to-face interview questions with each participant in the same order using the same interview questions.
4. I will note and clarify any non-verbal communication such as tone of voice, eye contact, facial expressions, proxemic behavior, gestures and posture as needed.
5. I will ask probing questions as a continuum to help each participant think more thoroughly about the issue at hand and gather additional clarification.
6. I will record reflective notes throughout the entire interview process.

Appendix H: Request E-mail for Member Checking

Dear [name of the requested party],

Thank you for participating in the study titled Third Party Administrators in Public-Private Partnerships: A Multiple Case Study. I very much appreciate the time you provided, and your participation was very valuable to this study.

In this stage of my research study, I paraphrased, coded, and analyzed the data using the transcripts and company documents collected pertaining to the procurement process when forming a PPP. The attached document contains a preliminary analysis of the findings.

I am emailing you to request your assistance in verifying the accuracy of my interpretation of your responses to interview questions and company contract agreements in the attached document. The intent of the preliminary findings verification is to increase the trustworthiness of the finalized analysis and conclusions in my research study. In the event that you notice any inaccuracies in my interpretations, please provide clarity where you feel is needed. Also, feel free to add any other information that you wish to share that will provide greater clarity to my interpretations of your original answers.

I will contact you within two business days to inquire if you have any questions regarding the verification of my preliminary findings for my research study. Should this time frame not work for you, please e-mail me times that are more convenient for you in the reply to this e-mail. In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, you may contact me at XXX-XXX-XXXX or XXXX-XXXX@waldenu.edu. When you verified the preliminary narrative, you can e-mail the document to my attention using the e-mail address shown above.

Thank you again for your valuable time and participation!

Sincerely,

Beata E. Haug, DBA Candidate
Walden University

Appendix I: Thank You for Participation Letter

Dear [name of the requested party],

Thank you for participating in the study titled Case-Study on Third Party Administrators in Public-Private Partnerships: A Multiple Case Study. I very much appreciate the time you provided, and your participation was very valuable to this study.

I appreciate your help and candidness in answering questions regarding the complex contracting process in the formation of public-private partnerships. Your contribution to this important research is instrumental that may increase the understanding of the mindsets and influences that affect the contracting process when forming PPPs between TPAs and local government agencies in Wisconsin.

I appreciate your willingness to assist with this important research. Once the study is completed and approved by the Walden University Chief Academic Officer (CAO), as my token of appreciation, I will provide you with an official copy of the study, extend my offer to discuss the outcomes of the study, and provide a \$10 gift card to Starbucks. In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, you may contact me at XXX-XXX-XXXX or XXXX.XXXX@waldenu.edu.

Thank you again for your participation!

Sincerely,

Beata E. Haug, DBA Candidate
Walden University

Appendix J: Informal Consent to Use and Reproduce

InMail | Maven

RE: Request for Permission

Dr. Jonathan A. Jenkins, DBA, CSSBB, MSQA, Micro Consultant at
Maven
December 8, 2014 1:10 PM

Dr. Jonathan A. Jenkins, DBA, CSSBB, MSQA has accepted your InMail:

Beata,

Thanks for reaching out and for your interest in using my questionnaire! I authorize your use and modification of the qualitative questionnaire named Jenkins PPP Decision Making Assessment that I developed and used in my pilot and primary study. Let me know how your doctoral journey progresses. Have a wonderful week!!

Jonathan

Dr. Jonathan A. Jenkins, DBA, CSSBB, MSQA
Sent via my Samsung GALAXY S™4, an AT&T 4G LTE smartphone. Please excuse the brevity of this message & any grammatical errors.

On 12/7/14 12:18 AM, Beata E Haug, MBA wrote:

Dr Jenkins,

I am currently pursuing on my D.B.A. at Walden University and I am in process of drafting my proposal. My current topic focuses on how Third Party Administrators (TPA) industries manage complex relationship with local government entities. During my literature review, I came across your dissertation and your qualitative questionnaire tool fits my research topic on public-private partnership. With your permission, I would like to use your interview questionnaire named Jenkins PPP Decision Making Assessment and apply minor modifications to specifically fit my research topic.

In event that you would like to further discuss my topic and how your instrument fits my proposal, I will be delighted to discuss that with you.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best Regards,
Beata E. Haug

[Reply](#)

[Not Interested](#)

Appendix K: National Institutes of Health Certificate of Completion for
Protecting Health Research Subjects

Protecting Human Subject Research Participants

<http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/cert.php?c=1322613>



