

WHAT'S YOUR CURRENCY AND HOW DO YOU USE IT? EXPLORING THE WAYS
STAFF ON CAMPUS USE NON-MONETARY FORMS OF PAYMENT: A GROUNDED
THEORY STUDY OF NONMATERIAL CULTURE

by

Olivia Rosalind Dodson

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to create a model that illustrates different types of *personal currency* among staff at Freedom One University (a pseudonym) and how that currency is being used, by exploring motives for this behavior and gathering information on awareness of this behavior. A constructivist grounded theory approach was utilized as it allows for the analysis of data to construct what is needed from the next set of gathered data (Cooney, 2011). Through grounded theory, a reason for an event, or possibly the cause for an event will become clear, which a theory will explain (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This research and its findings fill a gap in the literature by way of empirical report of university culture centered on a metaphor of currency. The theories guiding this research are those that have an impact on, what (self-determination theory) (Ryan & Deci, 2000) motivates adults to make decisions within a peer culture, and why an informal rewards system (social learning theory) (Bandura, 1977) contributes to staff using their skills, personality, and influence to persuade the employee's environment. The data analysis strategy used in this study is borrowed from Braun and Clark's thematic analysis which reminds this experimenter to be strict about explaining the reasons for every action performed (Braun & Clark, 2006). A question of this study is, "How is one to influence, compel, be awarded favor, be liked, socially bond with peers, obtain advancement, or receive favors at work, in an environment where money is not a suitable form of exchange?" This research generated a model that shows what types of currency staff are using on campus at Freedom One University and which of their talents and skills are being traded with one another.

Keywords: employee behavior, higher education, staff, human resources, grounded theory, currency, personal currency

Copyright Page

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Dedication

For Timothy Wayne Perry, Jr., my currency sacrificed you, when it could have taught you, helped you, or made your short life quite different.

For Charlie, Charles Everett Thompson, my brother. You helped me develop my currency, so that I became a master of tattling.

For Jirmel “Jay” Johnson, for letting me see on your face, and hear in your voice, every time you were bothered.

For Dr. Mitch Morrison, your personal-experience story and truth-telling, that there are things that I needed to know, that I wasn’t going to know I needed to know, stayed with me.

For Traveler. You will always be my first PHD.

For Dr. Russell Yocum, thank you for the escort through the limbo. Limbo is a euphemism.

For Dr. Chris Taylor, your heartfelt effort was noticed.

For my educated grandparents, Glenn Vernon Glaze and Esther Woodcock Glaze. And for my grandparents who were not, Joseph Warren Thompson and Pauline Gobble Thompson.

For my parents, Gail Glaze Thompson, Everett Warren Thompson, and other brother, Andrew Lewis Thompson, for checking to see if I was still alive, from time to time.

Acknowledgments

“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings,”
Proverbs 25:2 New International Version.

Find the truth. Search ahead of your distance, and the truth will swim before you bringing
you collisions with waves of your choice.

“Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life,” Proverbs 4:13
New International Version.

Position yourself to learn on accident each day. Require yourself to notice of
surroundings and what energy moves people past your sight. Learning comes from what you
notice of others; their neck tilt as they breathe or a stance as a runner’s shoe places on the brick
path with intent. See what is done on purpose and check what happens when careless. Silently
spread what you know like bird seed to make the bird song. Always see, so you can sow.

“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead,
where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom,”
Ecclesiastes 9:10 New International Version.

Find the passion now, because, for passions, which is the art of the soul, there is no later.

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List of Abbreviations

Downstream Indirect Reciprocity (DIR)

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

Victim precipitation theory (VPT)

Social Determination Theory (SDT)

Social learning development (SLD)

Social Learning Theory (SLT)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The topic of personal currency is fundamental to university staff as it impacts how those employees act and react at work and their personal currency choice also reflects their level of maturity and self-awareness. In the material world, when a person wants an object or service, the object or service is usually paid for through cash or credit. However, while at work, if a person has needs, the passing around of cash is frowned upon (Exchange Bank, 2016; Liberty University employee handbook, 2020). Therefore, personal currency is what employees use at work to get what they need or want, and to keep their day or career in order, by using hard or soft methods, without the use of money (Jonason et al., 2012). In this research study, currencies that staff are using in higher education and why they are used were explored because those that use hard tactics like manipulation can be a problem for managers and other employees (Jonason et al., 2012). Creating a research model depicting which currencies are used and how they are used was the goal of this study.

In chapter 1, the reader will find introduction information (Smaldone et al., 2019) on the background of personal currency, including definitions, and social, historical, and theoretical insights, followed by a statement of the problem, and the purpose of this research. The significance of this study as well as my philosophical view will also be considered, as well, and a section on situation to self which explains my experiences and biases (Lenz et al., 2017).

This research study may show how staff at universities choose to interact with each other, creating an environment of give and take, where favors and advancement are paid for by personal currency. The planned outcome of this study is to gather information on the use of non-monetary forms of payment in the higher education staff workforce. These forms of non-

monetary payment, or currency, can be used to get attention (Newland et al., 2018), recognition, friends, advancement, or other motivations which may surface during this research.

Background

Data in this research study is built on the prior investigations of other researchers. The following sections labeled historical, social, and theoretical, describe the literature concerning currency showing what people do to get attention (Newland et al., 2018) or gain leverage in the educational workforce, and to what detriment or benefit (Newland et al., 2018). Attention-seeking behavior is normally thought of as a *problem* and experts say the behavior could inhibit relationships, work, or personal lives (Green, 2018). There is more to know and possibly a better way to view the phenomenon of personal currency usage which is the reason behind this study. In social learning theory (SLT), observing is a mandatory factor that could be used by an employee that watches and learns from more seasoned employees, gaining favor at work by following their co-worker's example, and moving through promotions rapidly (Bandura, 1977).

Historical

Over time, the issue of personal currency has changed to reflect what one was willing to pay for leverage, echoing the saying, *What the market will bear* (Stiving, 2013, para 1-2). This entails asking as much as possible for something while having the price accepted by the buyer. Currency, many years ago, was dealt with in terms of bartering, making a pig farmer just as important as a blacksmith. A lack of currency, or possessions, was associated with not having money or resources. And today, in many countries, currency means USD: The United States dollar. To define currency through history, a longitudinal definition for the word *value* must be given; for value is worth and that is how we trade (Brigham Young University – Idaho, n.d.). In modern times, a quick way of earning personal currency at work was to do whatever managers

asked and volunteer for more. Often referred to as *brown-nosing*, this forward volunteering is a way to gain favor and feel superior over peers (Binns, 2014). When individuals trade personal currency, they need to be aware of the value of that trade so that the most is gained for what one is willing to lose. In a conversation with Dr. Michael of Liberty University, he disclosed that to him, paper money is a promissory note; a promise of exchange (K. Michael, personal communication, October 21, 2021). Personal currency is similar to cash currency, in that reciprocation rules apply (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Rules of reciprocity will be explained more in Chapter two.

All economies are based on some type of exchange. For example, when trying to alter the behavior of children, a token economy can be used (Kazdin & Bootzin, 1972). Children are promised a token of some sort, perhaps a ticket. If the children follow the rules all week, they continue to receive tickets. At the end of the week, the tickets can be exchanged for a prize. The more compliant the children have been, the more tickets they receive, thus the larger the prize in which they can exchange their tickets (Vergason et al., 2020). In the matter of this research study, not all rewards will be tangible.

Social

The people most affected by the process of how people spend personal currency are the people doing the spending without knowing they are involved in any sort of trade. If a person traded or sold a family heirloom, assumed to be costume jewelry, and it was later found to be a rare and expensive piece, their family net worth would be cheated because their ancestor intended to continue to provide after they were gone, but a bad trade was made because of a lack of information. *Selling yourself short* is a phrase that signifies a disinterest in self while exhibiting low self-esteem for the future (Rapoport, 2010). The phrase originally referred to a

specific stock-selling technique. People can believe in their value as a person, but just in case they are wrong, would prepare for limitations. This stratagem is not an act of confidence (Rapoport, 2010).

If an individual's currency is being excessively kind to people and the individual uses this tactic when she is desperate for a promotion or if the tool of kindness is used when she is fearful and wants to stop a sanction, she would need to remind herself that kindness does not always come with a reward. As she could condition herself by performing kindness to get something or save herself from something and noticing that a reward always followed, she would expect those rules to always apply and be waiting for a reward from people that do not know a reward is expected, and she could grow angry with resentment, sadness, or disappointment, which can lead to financial losses (Lerner et al., 2013).

Theoretical

The theoretical framework of a dissertation is the earth from which the ideas must grow. The framework explains, “. . . how you understand and plan to research. . . as well as the concepts and definitions. . .” that will be followed (Grant & Osanloo, 2014, p.13). Theories lend reference and meaning to this study. Social learning theory (SLT) is the mixing of classical conditioning with operant conditioning conjoined with environmental learning and reactions to stimuli (Bandura, 1977). SLT could explain behavior in workforce settings where there has become a culture of dishonesty, manipulation, or a decline in respect (Oravec, 2019). SLT is related to currency being exchanged or given in the workforce because when an employee asks for a favor and it is granted, that person is more likely to ask for another favor, possibly from the same employee in the future. In SLT, once an act is approved of by one's social peer group, the behavior will likely be repeated (McLeod, 2016). The concept of using personal currency which

is the center of this research study is defined by the theoretical framework.

Due to limited past research, there is a narrow base from which to spring. Therefore, primary research of an exploratory nature will be executed (Bredan, 2020). The methodology used will be grounded theory. Methodology is how researchers study a social occurrence and how the social occurrence behavior is interpreted (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Methodology involves the way an actual social subject is thought about (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The type of grounded theory approach to be used in this research study is constructivist grounded theory due to its alignment with coding strategy (Rieger, 2019). Constructivist grounded theory was initiated by sociologist Kathy Charmaz (Charmaz, 2017).

Current literature does not show if a person who chooses one currency finds that it works, then uses it throughout their personal and business career. Habits that have been learned and used for decades take great effort to change. It can take up to 264 days to engage in a new behavior until it becomes a habit (Lally et al., 2010). But SLT gives evidence that if there is a reward that strengthens an individual's behavior, the likelihood of repeating that behavior will be reinforced. These habits could affect goals and behaviors (de Wit et al., 2018).

Current literature also does not show if that currency can be cultured and cultivated to serve the user better. In my situation, I was telling on children. I performed this tattling from childhood to adulthood and would have continued to do so had I not suddenly been self-aware of how I was using the act of tattling for my gain. After my epiphany, if I saw a child commit a wrong, I would view it with greater diplomacy.

Situation to Self

The topic of this research started to make me curious 10 years ago. I introduced the phrase *personal currency* when I realized that I was constantly telling my boyfriend of his son's

bad behavior to get attention and feedback. This went on for months, with this naughty teenage boy getting in constant trouble, which kept my relationship with his father in motion. I had no idea I was even participating in a type of exchange. I was creating drama on purpose, but it did not feel intentional. The boy was acting badly on his own; I was not provoking him.

I recall being called a *tattle tale* as a child, as I'm sure others have the same memory. Perhaps tattling led to rewards in childhood and then this method continued to be used through life (Merrill & Reid, 1981), or maybe an individual reverts to their favorite currency when necessary. In moments of desperation, adults can regress to childhood to a more fruitful, calmer, or safer point, and this can occur at any age (Lokko et al., 2015). The exhibited result as seen by an outsider can be a social, behavioral, or emotional change (Lokko et al., 2015).

Each person has a style, a certain way the individual goes about handling stress (Hägg-Martinell, 2020), embarrassment, or a reaction to good or bad news. This showing of personality is fluid and changes with an adult's environment (Albertsen et al., 2001) which would be who the adult is around and where the adult is. If, over the phone, you find out about a stressful event, such as being demoted at work, you will act differently at work than you would at home. The style of stress reaction usually manifests in childhood. To handle that stress better, individuals need to reflect on the current resources available to handle their reaction (Super, et al., 2016). Even if the individual does not realize it, their co-workers and friends will see this style emerge as an individual's behavioral patterns are repeated (Merrill & Reid, 1981).

My go-to behavior was tattling. It was as if I was telling everyone that I was good, by announcing that others were bad. The boyfriend would feel bad because his child was acting naughty, and he would be ingratiated with me. Recently, I was working in a psychiatric residential hospital for children, and I caught myself doing it again. I always worked with the

girls. But, one day, I came in to see I was assigned to the boy's section. This was a different world, full of different rules for the children as well as the employees. The boy's section was ruled by the same people that ran the local detention center. During the day they would be the bosses of detention and for the second shift, they would show up on the boy's side, instilling fear, and respect, and not always following human service regulations. When people worked on this side, they were to keep their mouths shut about what was witnessed. Although I pride myself on diplomacy skills, some of this new job was difficult. As the only woman, I spent a lot of my time performing cleaning duties and other female-sanctioned work instead of using my therapeutic skills to assist struggling preteens. After a week of these boys-side shifts, I noticed that to win the approval of the male staff, I was catching the boys doing bad things. I would catch them with contraband, catch them making phone calls to parents for a second time on the same day, or placing all their dirty laundry back in their drawers so that everything smelled of urine. I was escalating in power and trust as an employee, by doing my job to an extreme. I was tattling. Just as I had done with my boyfriend's son, ten years prior. My *modus operandi* had not changed, and honestly, I was embarrassed by this revelation. And if I was using a specific behavior to advance my place at work and in relationships, were others doing it as well? Were my coworkers even aware they were performing a *quid pro quo*, the give and take that occurs on the job, each time they clocked in? Were their actions always moral or ethical?

After my self-realization, I started to inquire of people, "What's your currency?" They would usually look at me strangely until I elaborated: "How do you pay for things when you're in a situation in which cash is not acceptable? Do you use your personality?" This is usually a topic in which the individual needs to give thought and asks for examples and then they still do not have an answer, telling me it is something he or she has not previously considered.

My Motivation

The result of this study and the application of these results is vital to me because I am curious about my behavior while employed. Being aware that my reaction to stress at work or home repeatedly falls into the same currency (Merrill & Reid, 1981), helps me spot the behavior and modify it if necessary.

Another personal example of seeking feedback: this year, I was working from home, and I found myself using my old currency. This is likely because when an individual gets comfortable in a situation where he or she is using the same currency, in the future, that individual will seek out similar circumstances. After all, he or she will be comfortable in that situation, too, and getting comfortable is a plausible goal (Merrill & Reid, 1981). My job was to edit a document and then discuss the mistakes I found with my manager, then use the software the document described, and discuss more mistakes with my manager so that the document could be edited in concert with using the software. My manager began to be annoyed with me because I was pointing out too many issues with the document. I wanted to call out the mistakes and get my reward of a comment from my manager, such as, “great call” or a comment so powerful that I could share it with my parents. I was not seeking attention as much as approval. My emotion was part of normal work drama. Being able to control how I act in the current workforce is important for my personal reputation and vocational longevity. Being familiar with this research subject improves with each week. Corbin and Strauss (2015) advised that to know what one is seeing in the analysis portion of research one must have a background in the subject or be fully acquainted with the data.

Paradigm

The paradigm, or popular scientific belief (Denzin, 2010), that will guide this study is

qualitative constructivism. Constructivism respects that the researcher is a part of the study (Charmaz, 2017). Each researcher is an individual, and his or her learning style differences will be unique (Christensen, 2007). Each researcher needs to seek out a foundation on which to create his or her discoveries. Researchers are aware their knowledge is based on life experience. Also, researchers realize that social knowing reflects upbringing and personal outlook. This recipe determines how fast and how deeply each learning experience affects each person (Schunk, 2020).

Interpretive frameworks and philosophical assumptions are vital pieces of any qualitative research. This researcher must figure out where her assumptions fit into the experiment process. In research, there are conceptual ideas accessible while the researcher is researching. Personal biases are a constant as well (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Biases can be used positively, as a strategy, but they must be presented and not buried. A solid analytical perspective can interpret the research data if the researcher recognizes his or her assumptions (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Methodological assumptions are respected in this research study as they have the researcher continuously reevaluating the research and rewriting follow-up questions as more information is acquired through data gathering (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A researcher must continually inquire of oneself why he or she believes oneself to be correct.

Problem Statement

How university employees use *personal currency* on campus was explored in this research study. The problem is employees use the non-monetary personal currency to buy things at work such as popularity, promotions, and other intangibles. To buy these items employees use gossip, favors, food, and more tactics which were explored in this research study. When this act of using personal currency occurs it could create an unfair work environment. Fairness at work is

the give and take between employer and employee that makes the relationship work (Alotaibi & Muramalla, 2018). This subject was chosen to investigate because there is a lack of literature in the field concerning currency, favors, and compliance among university staff which could have the ability to alter the budget, ethics, objectivity, and legitimacy of a school or business (Alotaibi & Muramalla, 2018).

Self-awareness of university employees is crucial to the maturity and effectiveness of the university workforce. Self-awareness about personal currency among employees could change how they act and react at work, therefore defining the work culture at universities. Being self-aware can benefit staff on an individual level, as it is an indicator of better life success (Sutton et al., 2015). Trust is a top contributing factor to how employees in higher education spend their personal currency (Phillips et al., 2014). I used a qualitative grounded theory design to gain more information on this topic. This theory design was used so that researcher subconscious manipulation of data are not an issue. This could happen in other designs when the theory is proposed before the data are collected. In grounded theory the theory comes afterward (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Open-ended questions which bring out more truthful answers in participant interviews were used so that the most could be gained from the interview process (Lamb & Fauchier, 2001). Also, a benefit of grounded theory is the closing theory comes directly from the data gained from the study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Mindful employees who are self-aware are better equipped to spot personal biases and adjust their reactions (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012). According to Peters, author of *The Chimp Paradox*, employees are better able to conduct themselves with strong, ethical character if aware of their own integrity flaws and personal ability to be genuine. Employees who stop and realize which part of themselves is in control of their current behavior have better control over that

behavior (Peters, 2013). At Brigham and Women's Hospital a study was performed on meditation, finding links between those that have self-awareness to those that can practice self-regulation (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this grounded theory study is to create a model that shows how the practice of spending *personal currency* among employees at Freedom One University (a pseudonym) is manifested, by exploring motives for this specific behavioral characteristic (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and gathering information on awareness of this behavior, thus figuring the different types of personal currency and how they are used by staff at Freedom One University. A constructivist grounded theory approach, first used by sociologist Kathy Charmaz (Charmaz, 2017), was used in a method of analysis which is repeated until a pattern or an answer to the research surfaces as new information fails to be produced (Cooney, 2011). This lack of new information is called theoretical saturation (Charmaz, 2006). This research and its findings fill a gap in the literature (Kearney, 2017) by way of empirical report, meaning actual data were gathered by this researcher (Craft, 2013), concerning university culture centered on a metaphor of currency. The theories guiding this research are those that influence why people make certain choices (self-determination theory; Ryan & Deci, 2000) and why these decisions are repeated when the outcome is positive (social learning theory; Bandura, 1977).

Significance of the Study

At this time, the research concerning the issue of why tasks get accomplished using personal currency at work is minimal. Everything is paid for: sometimes with money or bartering, sometimes through friendship or generosity, and many times under pressure. The pressure felt while at work, to comply with peers, is a valid concern. The atmosphere that mandates

agreement at work to a degree that an individual feels they cannot object or else their livelihood or reputation would be threatened does exist (Samnani & Singh, 2016). The data gathered in this study hopes to answer why employees are using non-monetary means at work. If the results of this study do have a negative tone, then more self-awareness is needed. Through self-awareness, employees can keep from creating negative interactions at work, unless that is their desired intention.

Being liked in the workforce is important because otherwise there can be daily friction in the lives of employees and when higher education is the hub, this would add to a negative university climate (Barile, n.d.). It would be likely for a professional to spend personal currency in situations to manipulate and increase their chances of being liked because it increases the chances they will succeed at their job (Covin, 2011). And succeeding at work means being about to pay for a home and food. When planning to keep employees liked and happy, it is best not only to study the individual and see what motivates that person but to analyze the group as well (Tirole, 1993). Even if managers are not in teaching positions, they are always in a position to teach by example. My objective for this study is to examine university staff on an individual level while viewing the data together as a whole, to look for comparisons and commonalities.

The pragmatic usage of these results is a fairer work environment. Some employees are innately more skilled at manipulation than others and the efforts of this study aim to level the field by way of education and awareness. Hard and soft methods are used by employees who are controlling (Jonason et al., 2012). Soft methods would be disguised as reasoning behavior. “The Dark Triad at Work” (2012) investigative study found that hard methods such as violence and threats are more often used by men (Jonason et al., 2012). A reason employees use personal

currency to manipulate in the workforce is because they are goal driven (Hyde et al., 2020).

Therefore, passive personalities lose out in the workplace.

In theory, higher education institutions (HEIs), where all employees are treated fairly and with consistency, create an atmosphere where goals can be shared and accomplished for the good of the students and the system of higher education as a universal whole (Klemchuk LLP., 2014). If employees are treated fairly, they are less likely to quit. For human resources to retain employees is important to any industry, as it can save money on training (Henry, 2018). HEIs' administrations, their human resources departments, and policy makers can profit from this study as it aligns the field of education with new best practices in ethics. Transparency is the new ethics-checker of today's social media and has even been added to corporation policy to ensure public trust (Smith, 2018). This was needed as standards in our society have dropped since the 2010s (Norman, 2017). This research will continue with the trend of the current era by being honest with all findings.

Research Questions

This grounded theory research study explores commonalities among those interviewed so that more can be learned about personal currency in the workforce of higher education. Motivation among staff will be better understood by applying self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) to give direction and meaning to the model created. Additionally, the rewards system that exists in families and among co-workers, as an informal unwritten rule, will also be acknowledged by way of social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). The central question and sub-questions are offered to support this grounded theory research study.

Central Question 1: How do employees leverage human capital for their benefit in higher education workforce settings?

Employees of human resources and university administration could benefit from better understanding how employees use their personalities as a skill to negotiate while working. Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and the undocumented rewards system that exists at Freedom One University, was viewed (Bandura, 1977). The current theories that help with understanding motivation that were used in this study are self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). Peer culture decision making and the rewards system that is built into making the correct decision is behind the formulation of this question. The rewards system which is based on a barter system relying on each employee having a unique skillset that is worthy of trade. Bandura's work with social learning theory showed how an individual's influence can change work environment (Bandura, 1977).

Currently, a theory does not exist that shows how or why the phenomenon of spending personal currency occurs. Therefore, through grounded theory, this study will seek to create a theory which could be based on more than one previously developed theory and to create a model of how or why personal currency is used (Creswell, 2013), hoping that employees of human resources and university administration might benefit from a model or new theory.

Sub-Question 1: How is one to influence, compel, be awarded favor, be liked, obtain advancement, or receive favors at work without the use of monetary currency?

One way to influence one's own position in the workplace is the use of gossip. The role of employees and their actions while with their employer is important to understand because a role defines what an employee should be doing while clocked in. Gossip is defined as talking about an employee while that employee is not present (Kurland & Pelled, 2000). Gossip is traded at every employer and accounts for over half of all employee communication (Beersna & Van Kleef, 2012). Other forms of influence should appear in the data gathering process.

Theory can be generated by doubt (Locke et al., 2008). The constructivist grounded theory invites that questions be asked, using a word such as: *how*. Questions are not just asked of the data but of the research process and the researchers as well (Charmaz, 2017). When this level of questioning takes place, the questions of how we view the data, the research process, and ourselves, is initiated which allows researchers to ask even deeper questions (Charmaz, 2017). Therefore, asking the question of how a concept occurs, then investigating through grounded theory means, is acceptable.

Sub-Question 2: What personal tools are being used by employees at Freedom One University to make their day easier? Examples of tools could be kindness, tone of voice, smiles, small gifts, performing favors, sharing gossip, or anything else used as leverage to obtain a similar or different act or gift in return.

Actions, like favors in the workforce, are a tool that almost everyone knows how to use. For, even if an employee is unaware of manipulative tactics, one usually learns how to gain leverage at work. An employee could always do small favors when asked of another employee knowing that one day, he or she might need a similar favor. However, SLT shows another side. If a coworker asks a favor of another employee, and the employee being asked does not want to comply but feels uncomfortable saying no, then he or she may agree to the favor. This could allow the favor-asking employee to take advantage of the coworker and keep asking for favors if he or she is always greeted with a positive response (Merrill & Reid, 1981). Making jokes, sharing of an individual's personal life, favor exchange, or being indebted to co-workers are types of work interests that could be used as a personal currency to fulfill work demands (Jonason et al., 2012).

Definitions

1. *Favor* - a task being asked of by another, outside normal parameters, in a way which can be declined, to be agreed upon and completed without remuneration of any type.
2. *Non-monetary forms of payment* – actions that could be intentionally or unknowingly exchanged in the workforce for favors, advancement, compliance, leverage, liability, and other positive initiatives.
3. *Qualitative description, (QD)* – A qualitative description or descriptive study is one “...focused on discovering the who, what, and where of events or experiences and gaining insights ...” from that discovery (Kim et al., 2017, p. 2). The researcher is not committed to a guiding theory or design framework, as they may need to change as more data are analyzed (Kim et al., 2017).
4. *Self-awareness* – seeing yourself as others see you. Understanding the reasons behind your actions. Mental training, such as being mindful, that leads to meta-awareness (Vago, & Silbersweig, 2012).
5. *Indirect reciprocity* – The concept that adults are kind to one another because they understand the benefits and consequences of consideration. The consequences are that an unkind aggression performed towards a co-worker could be repaid by that co-worker’s cousin who works in upper management (Ingram, 2014).
6. *Common neural currency* – This phrase describes how people instinctively put all rewards on a comparative scale that they can refer to quickly in order to gauge the value of that reward (Levy & Glimcher, 2012).

7. *Gossip* – Negative banter discussing the appearance, social standing, or personal achievements of another employee (Nevo et al., 1993). The language could be positive, fiction, or negative.
8. *Internal validity* – The confidence with which a study is performed (Cuncic, 2021)
9. *External validity* – How well a study's results hold up to current real-world circumstances (Cuncic, 2021).
10. *Token economy*- A system where a desired behavior is controlled by bribing the members with a symbolic or actual token that can later be traded for treats (Kazdin & Bootzin, 1972).
11. *Market behavior*- An example of market behavior is when a new employee is needed and an employee search leads inside and outside the firm for the best candidate (Bramoullé & Goyal, 2016).
12. *Favoritism*-An example of favoritism is when a new employee is needed and an employer searches inside the firm, and even inside the hiring manager's own family, to find a candidate (Bramoullé & Goyal, 2016).
13. *Relationship equity*- In a relationship, participants will try to keep the relationship equal. (Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1978).
14. *Machiavellian*- These employees have a worldview so negative that it could affect those who work near them. A Machiavellian employee is goal oriented to such a degree that it makes no difference to them who must be lied to, controlled, or used, to complete the steps to have the goal completed (Belschak et al., 2018).
15. *Personality maturation*: A naturally occurring organic process that occurs in humans that allows for learning from one's mistakes (Asselmann & Specht, 2021).

Summary

By utilizing solid theories that have been applied repeatedly to measure and determine human behavior, social science theories, SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and SLT (Bandura, 1977), was used as a standard to focus this grounded research study concerning non-monetary currency and its usage in the setting of Freedom One University by exploring the behavior of university employees. The results of this study aim to prove insightful to those researching employee decision making at the university level. An objective of this research study is to search the data and fill a knowledge gap that provides human resources, managers, and university employees with an optimum example of what the appropriate contemporary employee should behave like in higher education. The grounded theory approach to investigation uses the researcher as a tool that collects and analyzes data until a theory is presented (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A goal of this research is to have the results easily replicated, externally applied, and therefore, transferable to other circumstances and fields of study (Misco, 2007). External validity is a priority of this study. Therefore, the language of the results will be written so that the results can be applied successfully to other circumstances (Cuncic, 2021).

In the next chapter, literature in the fields of human resources, human behavior, and higher education has been reviewed to enable the reader to better understand the place and time that this research was accomplished. A gap in the literature will be explained, while a need for the answers to this research will be made clear.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Gaining favor at work has been a goal of employees since work first began. It is a goal of employees to be treated well, respected, and appreciated while performing their work duties (Ng, 2016). Literature in the field of higher education and human behavior was searched to look for different forms of capital that are used on campus and in work situations, because ethically, people cannot pay cash for their next promotion or financially induce their manager to give them Friday off work. The literature was also investigated for reasons why employees choose a specific currency and how those employees utilize the currency they have earned. This study is performed to find out how employees pay for things in an environment where cash is not suitable. This review of literature was completed to unite modern and past theories that would inform this study and to extend those theories. Literature from current sources was reviewed, as it pertains to the definition of currency and favors, while exploring how adults in the workforce of higher education accomplish influencing peers, compelling others, or obtaining advancement which the employee handbook of Freedom One University states that department has much to do with whether an employee receives that advancement (Liberty University employee handbook, 2020).

Individuals use personal currency to pay for things that they want or need. Current literature does not show if a person chooses one currency, finds that it works, then uses it throughout their personal and business career or if a person changes their currency style throughout a lifetime. Trending literature has not said if employees have a specific choice of currency. Current literature also has not proven if the selected currency can be cultured and cultivated to serve the user better. People may have charm and elegant flirting skills, but if they have not learned when to use those skills to best serve themselves, their currency could be

wasted, just as some people choose to waste currency when it comes in cash form. A gap in the literature leaves room for a study that has not been performed on an issue that has not been well documented. Advances in science cannot be made if students are researching repetitive information which is why finding and researching the *gap* is a dissertation mandate (SOE dissertation handbook, 20-21). Otherwise, it would be like giving plant food to an unpruned tomato plant that caused it to grow horizontally, instead of vertically, forcing constant and excessive growth but giving no energy for the support of growing fruit. More of the same data are not going to help humans make important advances and be fruitful. Scholarly society needs no repetitive data. Instead, quality and a level of uniqueness is required. Researchers add to the knowledge field of data that will assist in developing new best practices in the field of higher education and beyond (Gall et al, 2007). The research obtained from this study's interviews and interpretations could fill this gap.

Current hiring practices by human resources sometimes involve tests to assess math, psychological, and communication skills (Assessment evaluates employee potential, 2010), but mostly intuition on the part of the person doing the hiring is what gets a new employee directed to the onboarding process, which could be a mistake (Hallenbeck, 2017). Often, when a small human resources group is hiring, the event comes down to *wasta* (Alwerthan et al., 2018). In some societies, who you know, and the favors given because of your connections is what gets someone an opportunity, and it is called *wasta*. Favors and who an individual and their family has connections with can make a big difference in who gets hired (Alwerthan et al., 2018).

At this time not enough research has been completed on personal currency and its usage during employment to root out negative or detrimental currency spending. If there was a way to spot new hires who seek out drama; those that prioritize excitement over workload, these people

could be allocated to a department on campus where their personalities could do the least damage. Or perhaps, depending on the economy, they do not need to be hired at all. The New Hampshire Business Review advises that asking better questions during the interview is key to gaining better employees (Hallenbeck, 2017). This study hopes to insert itself into best hiring practices by finding out what those questions might be in higher education, because the personality-in-action of an employee reflects on the institution, bringing this person within its walls should be completed with discernment. The employee handbook of Freedom One University repeatedly mentions how the actions and choices of an employee reflect on the university, to the point it asks the reader to imagine how their actions would be written in a news article if they were caught performing an impulsive behavior (Liberty University employee handbook, 2020).

I researched how much of a personal investment you would need to put forward to initiate a promotion. I was hoping to find an article that nodded toward spending money on clothing, picking up the tab at lunch for management, or perhaps the salaried (but not paid) additional work hours spent on projects after normal work hours. However, I could not find any helpful research to this cause. Until a source is found I will attribute this loss of time and funds to *the cost of doing business*.

In the section labeled, *Theoretical Framework*, the concepts and theories that influence how (self-determination theory) and why (social justice theory) employees choose to make decisions within a peer culture, and what situations could escalate (social learning theory) into a negative event are recognized. Next, read a concise arrangement of trending and developed literature concerning methods of favoritism, unjustified pressure, ethics, setting boundaries, and fairness in higher education. Finally, scholarly opinions and research that are highest held in the

field of higher education will be discussed to show a gap in the information about currency in higher education. But first, it is necessary to look to past scholars and their research concerning personal currency and to place this study in a theoretical framework so that it may be completely understood.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework, which is a theory or a problem and how that problem is to be solved (Lederman & Lederman, 2015), lends reference and meaning to this qualitative study. Stories and experiences will be gathered from research interviews and themes will be identified from the data, once coded (Patton, 2015). The theories pertaining to this subject were researched to see which ones could be helpfully applied. The theories and related ideas are diplomatically listed for the reader to gauge from his or her viewpoint. Qualitative work demands a strong framework to base all inquiry on past theory (Patton, 2015). Research on currency spending by employees in higher education will be grounded in prior knowledge and research (Grant & Osanloo, 2014).

Related Literature

Rich, research-supported theories lend researchers a firm base to extend the original theories with which the researcher's work bounds (Hudson, 2020). This base starts with theories and then gives reasoning research data which explain how personal currency is prevalent in the workplace. This section provides an illumination of literature related to personal currency and ideas related to payment and reciprocity in the workforce of higher education.

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory (SLT) is the mixing of classical conditioning with operant conditioning alongside environmental learning while noting reactions to stimuli (Bandura, 1977).

SLT is related to favors and currency usage in the workforce because when an employee asks for a favor and it is granted, that person is more likely to ask for another favor in the future (Merrill & Reid, 1981). Also, in SLT, once an act is approved of by one's social peer group, the behavior will most likely be repeated (McLeod, 2016). Individuals learn their behavior from others. The fallout from this type of learning depends on how often one is exposed to those they might mimic and if the witnessed behavior is considered normal by current society (Pratt et al., 2010). Watching others take risks and seeing them accept consequences or deny their role, plays a part in whether an employee will adopt that type of behavior for their own (Myers, 2018). However, a new employee may not initially grasp all negative effects of risky behavior because they have not been there long enough to see the negative repercussions (Liu et al., 2020).

In SLT, observing is how an employee witnesses and then follows the example of another employee; figuring from others how to master the maze of success at work (Bandura, 1977). This could be how some people manipulate their currency. Employees learn by watching peers and adapting those witnessed skills and applying them to their own lives. As children age, they watch their parents. When those children are grown, they have the capacity to do as their parents did. As adults, the earlier actions of their parents have more effect than the actions of teachers, aunts, uncles, and any that attempted to mentor the child (Basow & Howe, 1979). The parental example is the strongest mold of character and behavior for children as they grow. If a parent uses a distinctive currency, such as flirting as they ask for something that is needed in their department of another department, a child may learn and later use this currency themselves.

Ronald Akers, known for being a criminologist who studies behavior, thinks that behavior is committed not solely by watching others as demonstrated by SLT, but determined by the feedback of peers and consequences (Akers, 2001). This would mean that a child's core

reactions are not formed by watching and mimicking a parent but by the acceptance of the peer group who witnesses the new behavior. Most healthy individuals would enjoy more rewards and do what they can to avoid being punished. Akers' opinion was that an individual may mimic the behavior of another, but whether it is repeated, to later become a part of the individual's *repertoire* and their personal behavior pattern, determines if there was a reward or punishment after that behavior (Akers, 2001). This analysis is consistent with Skinner's theories on behaviorism. He theorized that behavior cannot be understood without also understanding its background and consequences (Skinner, 1984).

Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT) contains a view to what motivates individuals and how one absorbs their social environment, and what is and is not acceptable to the peers in their culture. Adults can make this theory a basis for their goals, values, and character (Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT stresses the motives behind behavior by showing the steps toward healthy life maintenance. People should feel like they are useful, feel a connection to the universe or those around them, and feel like they have control of their destiny. If an individual falls short in any of these areas that person will probably feel a need to restore order in his or her life. This is the motive that is behind behavior. Individuals have the psychological need to have influence over their own lives while feeling free and independent. At work, employees crave choices and do not want to feel pressured (Ng et al., 2021). Using personal currency at work could be a way for employees to feel in control when they may feel helpless because they must work to pay bills. Choosing to get ahead by being assertive or summoning the courage to ask for a promotion would go toward self-confidence and feeling in charge of one's own life path.

Self-determination theory can be used with motivation in the workforce. The theory of self-determination solidifies the difference between performing an activity for enjoyment, by choice, or performing an activity which could bring enjoyment if the task is anticipated to be praised. However, this only applies if praise qualifies as a motivation for that particular employee. Employees perform better when their personal worldview is aligned with their work choices. It gives those employees a sense of freedom (Gagné & Deci, 2005) from regret or doubting their choices. For example, if you are religious in nature and habit, and your employer is a Christian counseling service, you would feel an acceptance and not have the bitterness that could accompany an employee that worked in the textile business where it is suspected small children are being used by employees for larger profits.

Success Causing Corruption

In the research study, *Buying Bad Behavior* (2016), a correlation was found between the pay gap of CEOs and the company's top manager. When the comparison of the two salaries was large, corruption within the company was found at greater rates. Companies justify that a large paycheck for a CEO will make everyone in the company more productive, as all employees strive for a job promotion to the top (Shi et al., 2016). But with high corruption rates, the fight to reach the top is likely an expensive and competitive proposition. This may be one of the few situations in which promotions are bought with cash, which counters my problem statement.

In a competitive corporate environment, cash or favors with heavy worth would be more likely to change hands than in a community college or other educational employee setting. In higher education, different types of stakeholders and boards approve the HEIs' president's salary, than those of a large corporation. For the majority of HEIs, the taxpayers and students are the parties that are paying the president's salary (Risler & Harrison, 2014). Higher education

stakeholders want a strong academic setting that is civically minded with an air of community responsibility (Mourad, 2017). Because of this point of view, they do not want a corrupted climb to the top for their presidents. Many details may contribute to the university president's salary. The size of the college or university, the research ranking, and anything that gives way to a larger budget for a school may change funding for a president's salary. A conflict of interest is found in many HEIs that have presidential salaries that go up as the spending budget goes up. For those HEIs, if the president is a big spender, he gets paid more (Risler & Harrison, 2014). Again, this information refutes my problem statement as money, funding, salaries, and corruption are present in businesses, it is still my thought that personal currency is used far more than USD currency to win promotions.

Although the work by Shi, Connelly, and Sanders (2016), which insists a corporate leader has a high salary to keep the employees motivated, gives circumstances in which a promotion could be paid for because it would be considered an investment (Shi et al., 2016). It is still my opinion that in higher education, an urgency to this level does not exist. Competing for the position of HEI president is an honor and not something an applicant would choose to risk their reputation for by trying to pay their way into the position, as they have likely spent their life in service. Therefore, I stand by my problem statement that only personal currency can buy promotions in higher education.

Self-Esteem, Likability, and Control

Some adults at work start using because of low self-esteem, loneliness, or jealousy issues (Dumas et al., 2020; McAndrew et al., 2007). In much the same way, online gamers have been found to troll the Internet because they get acceptance from others that are not available to them in their real-life world (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2014). Trolling is a behavior that is abhorrent to

most and seems pointless, but it fills the need of a specific group. When they are mean to people in a public but slightly anonymous setting, other people have been known to think they are funny. Whether they get praise for being entertained or they get defensive comments fighting back in defense from those they offended, the troll won. They win because it is their job to take peace from others to give themselves that acceptance.

Being complimentary to others, or using one's charm, is a Machiavellian way to control those by which one is surrounded (Jonason et al., 2012). This charm is usually used as part of a plan to manipulate coworkers. However, Machiavellian tendencies can also exhibit in employees as bold, big-talking, and self-confident. These people want to be liked, but this personality trait is seldom found attractive to other employees (Wyer et al., 1994). Therefore, talking well of oneself is not a mature move for any employee. No currency can be obtained from bragging unless the target audience is far beneath them and easily impressed, which would have no benefit other than to the ego of the braggart.

Over half of the information an employee is relaying when they are speaking at work is gossip-related (Beersna & Van Kleef, 2012). And while all gossip has the potential to hurt feelings while disturbing the work environment, negative talk is more valuable for currency, and it is also more damaging to work culture (Chandra & Robinson, 2010). Social identity theory explains that people connect to a group that they identify with, such as co-workers. When this group is disloyal there is damage as the person feels abandoned, the individual's self-esteem plummets, and performing a job as the individual had once done is no longer the same (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tagfel, 1978). Gossip starts early in our lives, in another form. Children tattle to highlight that they are behaving or to point out that another is not behaving. Gaining approval

from a teacher or parent is important to a child. In later years this level of trade is enhanced and will change to gossip (Engelmann et al., 2012).

According to the 1985 work of Deci and Ryan, part of self-determination theory describes different manners in which a person's behavior is controlled. Autonomy orientation would consist of acting in a way that aligned with that individual's worldview and ethics. The individual has chosen his or her beliefs ahead of time and chooses to abide by that rule and make all life decisions concurrent with that worldview. Differently, a controlled orientation would allow external forces to contribute to behavior, such as a boss, government, or laws. Impersonal orientation is a circumstance that occurs outside the limitations of an individual's influence (Deci & Ryan, 1985). When a person has lost faith in themselves, he or she might escape to impersonal orientation, believing that all good that happens is a matter of luck and that no one can truly control their destiny. Those employees that choose to live a life that promotes positive performance and health are given more control over their lives by society (Ryan et al., 2008). Self-determination theory allows the self to determine who an individual becomes by the choices that are made (Ryan et al, 2008).

Those that have improved their lives through favors granted because they belonged to an affluent family or were related to powerful government employees show significant levels of stress because they are living a life dependent on others and because their competency is questioned (Alwerthan et al., 2018). Wasta is a type of cultural favoritism (Alwerthan et al., 2018). Alwerthan, Swanson, and Rogge's (2018) *wasta* study focused not on job satisfaction or measurements of life success as other studies have done, but on overall psychological sorrow using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (Taouk et al., 2001). Therefore, the wasta favor that was to cause higher pay and improved life status instead made way for a feeling of ineptness.

Fear that the person that assisted them in achieving a position could rescind their courtesy is frightening.

For personal well-being to be in a positive position, one must feel in control of his or her life and responsible for themselves. But if through *wasta*, these people have risen with the help of family, the prior emotion of feeling independent can quickly change to self-doubt. In some societies, favors are a part of the culture. Being popular and likable is important to a family's status. If individuals are not liked, others will not do favors for them and they could be discriminated against (Alwerthan et al., 2018). Favors do not involve two people, but three or more (Alwerthan et al., 2018). The invisible participant is the person that did not get the promotion or assignment because they were passed over due to favoritism toward another (Alwerthan et al., 2018).

Low self-esteem is a symptom stemming from reliance on others. Using personal currency such as flaunting a family name could affect how individuals feel about themselves. Evidence of *imposter syndrome* exists for these people because there is a genuine fear that one day they will be confronted and the truth about them will be exposed (Bothello & Roulet, 2019). A *wasta* user may be a true imposter who received a position in life through favors. Self-esteem and social identity theory can help theorists learn more about gossip with negative connotations (Ye et al., 2019). Damage can also be done to self-esteem as one employee compares themselves to another employee, an example of social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978).

The self-esteem issue of employees happens when they compare themselves to their peers. Also, whether employees are accepted by their peers affects an employee's abilities (Tajfel, 1978). This is how social identity theory is exhibited in employees at work (Tajfel, 1978). Favoritism is likely to occur when one performs repeated favors for another. Groups that are

affected by SIT can be those found in religion, sports teams, employment, and even personal relationships (Benson, 2011). People in these groups favor those in their group which promotes the survival of their group but also generates favoritism. This favoritism is a key understanding of SIT (Axt, Moran & Bar-Anan, 2018).

Currency is sometimes spent to win favor and gain attention. In previous literature, what children do to get attention, why they commit acts to get attention, and to what detriment have been researched (Newland et al., 2018). Experts label attention-seeking behavior a *problem* and say the behavior could inhibit personal relationships (Green, 2018). Although less is known concerning the same attention-seeking behavior in adults, why attention-seeking behavior is chosen as a coping method is normally due to low self-esteem, loneliness, or jealousy issues (Dumas et al., 2020). In most cases, human action has more than one motive (Maslow, 1943). Gaining power at work could relieve hunger for humans and their families, while also making those people feel safe and granting them self-worth. This is what normal work drama is about.

Reciprocation

Downstream indirect reciprocity (DIR) is the behavior that stems from a person being treated kindly or given a gift or service. DIR is the action one takes in response to a favor or act of kindness. This reaction can be different between cultures, moral upbringings, and religions (Szcześniak et al., 2022). Writer, R. Cialdini (1993), writes of the rules of reciprocation, noting when one invites another to a party, the invited individual will later remember to return this favor. The person that gave the invitation and hospitality has earned currency that he or she can spend at the expense of the person that was invited and enjoyed his or her night. It is so common to reciprocate that a well-used phrase sometimes replaces the common *thank you*; that phrase is, *much obliged*. The recipient is now obliged to pay back the favor or gift. Cialdini offers up the

opinions of sociologists and archaeologists which state favors and pay-back are a part of human culture and are found in each language spoken on earth. Favors are a common ground of humanity (Cialdini, 1993). Reciprocation is part of the social capital process which creates communities that engage in beneficial give and take such as those that take place in the work setting (Keathley & Sandlin, 2016).

Personal currency, referred to by many as *social capital*, is built on reciprocation. The process of give and take is used worldwide which creates communities that engage in beneficial sharing such as those that take place in the workplace (Keathley & Sandlin, 2016). The Social Capital Scale is a set of questions that has a rating scale of 1-5, used to determine employees' emotions toward their workplace. In 2016 Keathley and Sadlin used the Social Capital Scale to find how social capital in the workplace was affecting the health of employees. The researchers wanted to find the discrepancies in the data and embrace those differences. The researchers found that the age of the employee and the number of years with an employer affected communication, or perceived communication, between employees. (Keathley & Sadlin, 2016). Keathley and Sadlin believed that by making employee differences known that those differences could be overcome or respected to improve morale in the workplace.

If you are unkind at work, you may be repaid more than your share of unkindness. Physical in humans is something seen in immature children (Tremblay, 2016). In Gordon Ingram's book about tattling, he lays the foundation for the benefits of being kind as well as the consequences of not. If a manager is kind to his or her supervisor, the supervisor, and the supervisor's support staff might repay that consideration. But if a manager is unkind or aggressive to his or her supervisor, that supervisor's adult children could repay that negligence with unwanted behavior. It does not even have to be a relative. Anyone that knows the supervisor

could be offended and arrive to make right the wrong. It takes years to socialize children out of aggressive behavior and to introduce a more mature approach to dealing with emotions, and years past this point to understand the benefits of controlled behavior (Ingram, 2014). This type of social reciprocation exists and encourages kindness for civility.

In adults, it is those that are most powerful that have mastered the technique of controlling inward aggression and other emotions, which gives them an edge (Ingram, 2014). When a person accepts a position with an employer, that person knows that there will be managers above him or her in the office hierarchy (French & Raven, 1959). Accepting that others will have power over an employee and that the employee will have to behave within group norms and defer to the authority of others is normal (French & Raven, 1959). A willingness to obey a manager depends on what motivates an individual to come to work. Motivations can differ between employees. Maslow's theory of motivation teaches that different types of motivations come from goals and not from our innate drives. Those drives concern gaining non-material and material items, feeling loved, a continuation of learning, defending ourselves and others we love, and the quest for excitable emotions (Maslow, 1943). Employees are motivated by their goals while their drives allow them to persist until the goal is complete. The goals that motivate humans, called *needs*, are feeling safe, and loved, obtaining biological and physical needs, having self-esteem, and having the ability to make their goals become real and complete (Maslow, 1943). Humans will resort to drifting from a normal skillset to using currency to meet their needs to reach these goals if necessary. When an employee needs something at work such as acceptance, approval, or the afternoon off, that needy employee will exhibit behavior to both convey the need and manipulate the receipt of the need, since it is the primal goal of each person

to have their needs met. The behavior the employee exhibits to get what the employee needs is the currency because they are *paying* for the need to be met (Maslow, 1943).

For some individuals, having a favor done for them may make them feel bitter and forced to perform a return favor (Brehm & Cole, 1966). Because of this forced feeling, which the researchers dub as a *lack of freedom*, the bitter person could avoid the favor-doer or start a fight with that individual so that they never have to make good on an act of reciprocation. People gifted would rather flee than acknowledge an act of kindness because they feel there are strings attached. Brehm and Cole, 1966, experimented with manipulation and favors in college students. In the experiment, one student would attempt to rate another student diplomatically, even though the one being judged had done a favor for the student doing the judging. From the data results, the judging student who had a favor performed wanted to be free from being obligated to the other and even resented being obligated, intentionally withholding returning of a favor when allowed to perform a favor (Brehm & Cole, 1966). These findings would educate people who work in university settings that include a social environment, to be cautious that favors do not have an agenda (Brehm & Cole, 1966). Never should another employee feel pressure to return a favor, but as seen from this research data, sometimes tension exists after a performed favor (Brehm & Cole, 1966).

Jodi Glickman, CEO of a communication consulting firm boasting big-name clients, suggests that (Glickman, 2012, Jan 11) people cannot get through life under their power. No one is born with money and influence; financing must have a source. Favors are needed, to be performed and asked, for lives to run smoothly. When someone asks for a favor and announces it as such, it is implied if the favor is performed, the favor will be repaid. There is also keen advice from author Glickman (2012), that co-workers should announce their request and specifically use

the word *favor*, then tell them why the favor is needed (Glickman, 2012). People like to hear why they are being inconvenienced so that they understand the plight and using the word *because* has been found effective (Langer, 1978). Also important, is to give the person being asked a way to politely turn down the request (Glickman, 2012). This lets them know they are being engaged with sincerity while not being ordered to consent.

Relationship equity, an attempt by members of a relationship to keep the interpersonal dynamic equal (Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1978), among individuals is known to drive favors (Regan, 1971). Regan performed a lab-like, conditional experiment using college students. He tested how they act when a favor is done for them. His findings revealed, there is an internal need to give back once one has been gifted. It is a palpable rhythm that holds relationships together. Regan (1971), writes of a correlation between people feeling obligated to others that do favors for them, but no causation between people liking those that do favors for them. Dissonance theory was given as a reason a person will buy a raffle ticket from someone that they do not like (Regan, 1971). People do not have to like someone to do a favor for them, such as buying a raffle ticket. In the experiment, it was difficult to configure if liking someone made an individual do things, or if an individual did things for another because he or she was liked (Regan, 1971).

SDT explains the drive to reciprocate a favor because returning a favor is culturally expected (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In McAndrew, Bell, and Garcia's 2007 study about gossiping, *cheating* was what occurred when reciprocation did not occur appropriately. It is cheating the system of social peers when someone has a kind act performed for them, but they do not return this favor (McAndrew et al., 2007). Even anthropological research has found that prehistoric societies used gossip to control groups when the limits of socially acceptable habits were pushed

by members (McAndrew et al., 2007). SDT is at work in this system of cheating because peers have defined what is and is not acceptable. The honor system of reciprocation is part of a society's culture (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The personal currency of gossip is held highest and only used when it is needed to secure a position or relationship and usually falls into the categories of employee achievement, appearance, and social popularity (Nevo et al., 1993).

Gossip starts in the form of tattling, and from there can escalate to insults. At first, children learn to tell the teacher what another student is doing either to keep fairness for everyone when another is cheating or to win favor with the teacher by pointing out that they are doing nothing wrong. Then the tattlers may move on from trusting the teacher with information to telling other students what a peer is doing wrong. Judgments about the wrong behavior could prove harmful because at a young age, you are reporting obvious wrongs such as another child filling the toilet with paper. But as children age into more complex situations, the idea of right and wrong becomes an opinion. Opinions can become accusations. Somewhere in this timeline, children realize they can control situations by saying hurtful words. By age five most children have learned the consequences of being tattled on and behave better and stay within social expectations (Engelmann et al., 2012) to prevent the public and embarrassing act of being told on or being made an outsider with peers. "Whether the negative deviance is explicit or subconscious, whether it involves. . . rumor spreading. . . or otherwise, unauthorized organizational behavior has negative consequences for the entity" (Appelbaum et al., 2007, p. 587). It almost is a question of who is more wrong, the person doing the reporting or the one committing the questionable behavior.

Manipulation, Intimidation, and Peers

Harvard psychologist, Ellen Langer, who performed a human behavior experiment, found modern day humans react strongly to the word *because* (Langer, 1978). The results apprised the researcher that humans respond to a favor with a positive reaction more when they are provided with a reason why the favor is needed. But, Ellen Langer, went a step further. In her first question to people, she simply asked a favor, she had a 60% success rate. In the second question, she asked a favor and then explained why she needed a favor, using the word *because*. She said I need this *because* of that, which 94% agreed to. However, in a third question, it was asked that a need was needed because it was needed. A genuine reason for the request was not given. But still, the word *because* was used and got a 93% success rate (Langer, 1978). Many times, Currency is used because the employee is too uncomfortable to ask for what they want or need. Former psychotherapist Atalanta Beaumont advises if at work, an employee realizes he or she has additional needs, think about renegotiating the employment contract. This is a superior tactic for avoiding manipulation and favors (Beaumont, 2017).

In-person learning is how behavior is learned (McLeod, 2016). Observational education is a progression that must be arrived at individually. The environment is full of many people after which young people could model themselves. It could be a teacher, peer, parent, manager, or media personality. Many characters can influence children. If a peer group approves of an activity by giving positive feedback, one would be more apt to repeat this activity (McLeod, 2016). Therefore, using a currency such as always looking beautiful when taking the car to the shop and receiving low rates for smiling, this type of manipulation could be picked up on by daughters or sons. The action is repeated more often if the peer group rewards an activity. These imitated traits could be masculine or feminine, anti-social, or violent. Humans are going to copy

those people they feel are most like themselves. Children want their behavior recognized by others which is a form of external support (McLeod, 2016). Children quickly learn a currency or behavior that their peers approve of, and children take notice of actions that get them rewards.

Tohidian and Abbaspour's study was published recently in 2020. Employees were interviewed to assess their role as decision-makers in the workforce, mainly exploring their points of view. What these researchers did was vital to the information that came out of the study, was to present the employee interviews to the managers in that workforce. The managers then were able to make suggestions based on the employees' interview answers. It was found that the level of employee motivation was directly correlated to the employees' loyalty to their work culture, not only to the company, but to other employees as well. The interviews and feedback also connected encouragement to cohesiveness between managers and employees (Tohidian & Abbaspour, 2020). This study supports SLT because peers are motivated by watching each other succeed and connect, so the cycle is continued as employees view success in their peers (Bandura, 1977). Managers give their personal currency as positive feedback to employees and are rewarded by higher loyalty from their employees.

Almost half of all employees in the United States report that they have felt bullied at work during the prior twenty-four months (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007), and the field of higher education is included in these statistics (Van Heugten, 2013). But as Salin (2001) discovered, those that are victims of typical bullying behavior do not always identify with being bullied (Salin, 2001). With numbers this large, 50% of the workforce should be in conversation with employers to ask what the employer's influence is over this type of manipulation. Sometimes competition and casual bullying are considered spirited teamwork. Victim precipitation theory (VPT) (Curtis, 1974) is used to better understand workforce bullying by looking at the act on

both an individual and corporate degree. Understanding the pressure that is felt, while at work, to agree with peers and make them happy could help set safe boundaries (Samnani & Singh, 2016).

Employees who are permitted to act in an unorthodox or criminal manner at work are allowed to continue this behavior based on their cognitive functioning, the formal system of managers above them, and how the other employees socialize with them (Monahan & Quinn, 2006). In other words, the behavior is socially and industrially permitted to continue even though it is psychologically harmful to employees who simply witness the abuse (Van Heugten, 2013). An employer must screen behavior and prevent a negative occurrence from that behavior (Monahan & Quinn, 2006). Because of a society that has dropped its standards since the 2010s, (Norman, 2017), people find themselves in a time of casual corruption with a low work ethic. During this study, bullying and pressure from co-workers to accept the currency that bullies offer will be noted if mentioned by university employees.

Anything that gives an individual leverage can be used as currency. Holding onto an important piece of information and then waiting to deliver it to a manager at lunch instead of telling a coworker at clock-in time is using self-discipline and strategy. Manipulating how the information is received will affect how the information is repaid. Though, keep aware that the information passed reflects on the individual committing the gossip (Wyer et al., 1994). In 1993, the Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire was tested by Nevo, Nevo, and Derech-Zehavi. The gossip fell into three self-reported categories: outward appearance, personal achievement, and information that affects social standing (Nevo et al., 1993). Telling a manager about any of these elements, concerning a co-worker, will win leverage to be used as currency. However, those that gossip more were found to be liked less than those that gossiped less (Farley, 2011). Usually, gossip has positive connotations, and it concerns those in the same social circle. Meanwhile,

negative gossip is about those outside the circle. Therefore, when a co-worker hears negative gossip, it may trigger a feeling that the person doing the gossip is acting traitorously and speaking like someone outside the social circle (McAndrew et al., 2007). This could be one reason for not liking a gossip at work. While performing research on gossip, it was realized that men are not as concerned with gossip as women (McAndrew et al., 2007). Therefore, if someone is needing to use Currency to get leverage from a male employee, gossip is not the best option.

Beliefs

Humans are born with characteristics that are usually fixed and permanent, such as gender and race (Bénabou & Tirole, 2016), but beliefs can be shaped and changed. Habits could change beliefs (de Wit et al., 2018). From that starting point, one can add to or subtract from their capital by engaging in activities related to their beliefs to make their worldview stronger. Having beliefs makes an individual's life easier as decision-making is centered around those beliefs, therefore, once a person aligns decision-making and beliefs, those decisions are much easier to make. Profiling, which is when individuals adapt their current decision-making process to past decision-making experiences, is a common way to make those belief-based decisions (Christensen & Osguthorpe, 2004). One can normally change circumstances, such as friends chosen or what church is chosen to attend, but beliefs take more force and time to change. According to Maslow, 1943, an individual will hold fast to some personal beliefs, even sacrificing their family and own life. Their moral and religious beliefs could cause harm because some will sacrifice themselves to maintain those beliefs (Maslow, 1943). Some people will volunteer during wartime and risk their lives for their belief in their country while others will not accept donations if they come from sources of which they do not approve, even if they are in

need. Similarly, people will not agree to do a favor for someone if the favor is outside their belief system (Bénabou & Tirole, 2016). They might not drive a friend to get an abortion or purchase alcohol. Therefore, personal beliefs, which can be fluid with exertion, are a part of the personal currency backdrop because an employee will normally operate within their belief system when accepting or spending personal currency.

For person-to-person sales, the buyer should think of himself as doing a favor for the seller by buying the item. Also, the seller is doing the buyer a favor by selling the item. Marketing aligns these two people. Once the reason to have an item is overcome, the buyer and seller can imagine their exchange as assisting each other (Blanchard et al., 2016). When buyers are confident that they have received an honest and fair price, the buyer's trust in the purchase rises so much that the sale is enabled. This shows a different type of quid pro quo and favor-for-favor exchange between possible strangers. An explanation of trust in a sale amount goes far when used with patience (Blanchard et al., 2016). Symbiotic favors such as a sale and purchases are a symbol of trust. After a purchase both parties are happy; one has a product, and one has money. Even after a sale is made and money and product or service has changed hands, if the interaction was regarded as a symbiotic one by the buyer, the buyer will not think of the salesperson as someone who took advantage of them or benefited but will see the relationship as equal (Flynn, 2005). Regarding the similarities to human currency trade by employees there is also give and take; there is also a sale being made. The individual awarding the promotion is getting a forward-thinking employee that feels aggressive enough about his or her career that it was made a priority. In return, the employee will be grateful and work even harder.

Human Resources

The contentment of university employees and the fairness that they perceive from co-workers can affect employee turnover and administrative costs. The assurance of fairness that employees hope their managers will treat them with is presumptive (Sykes, 2006). Employers can benefit themselves by encouraging quality relationships between co-workers. Co-workers who get along, will join in on a project faster and perform better (McFarlin, 2019). At this time there is not a developed and reliable tool for human resources to use to ensure an efficient matching of new employees to departments or positions so that new hires could be made with a higher rate of confidence (Swanson, 2004).

Findings about non-monetary currency used in higher education institutions can expose weak spots in the rules of administration and assist in writing a new policy. (In Chapter 4, the employee handbook will be analyzed and coded to look for such weak spots). Rules that make employees aware of their slighting behavior could improve this country of colleges and universities, making it a more ethical place to serve one's vocation thus eventually returning honor and respect to higher education employment (Veiga, 2016). In 2019, a study was performed by Tohidand and Abbaspour, on employees at a university to learn more about the decision-making and power of employees. In this study, relationships between employees and managers were examined. It was found that when employees feel as if their opinion and ideas matter and are respected by management and the university, these employees will exhibit loyalty (Tohidian & Abbaspour, 2020). For employees to feel as if their opinion is currency is a powerful tool of self-confidence. When a manager asks an employee for their opinion and it is given, then returned with appreciative feedback, this can a great day. It is a day in the making of a better place for humanity. With this type of appreciative administration that writes new policy to meet

the changing needs of a diverse employee population, personal currency would have high value and the weak spots of the administration would stand out.

Unfair results from a behavior transaction of personal currency could stem from unfair policies (Sykes, 2006). In a normal transaction of conversation or action at work, there is going to be a stronger and a weaker party. The strength and sureness of the weaker party's decision-making skills cannot match a stronger employee (Alotaibi & Muramalla, 2018). Monitoring employees to ensure none are taking advantage of the weaker employees should be done by managers (Sykes, 2006).

Andrew Sykes, of Deacon University (2006), wrote that when judging the acts of someone, the motives of all within the transaction must also be judged. Also, not only should the transaction be judged, but separately, the effects of that transaction can be mediated. When a working relationship exists, there is *presumed undue influence* (Sykes, 2006). Sykes, 2006, advises that respect already exists toward a more seasoned employee. But just because a new employee does favors for a long-time manager as a matter of spending personal currency, with hopes of being liked at work, that does not mean that the manager has exercised influence on that new employee (Sykes, 2006).

Personal currency is important to employment at universities. This method of paying at work by bartering with gossip and personality could affect the budget of hourly employees because they feel obliged, are performing work tasks for salaried employees. Personal currency usage can also affect morale among employees if the same employee in a department continues to get praise while others are ignored. This type of negativity occurs when other employees speculate the reason for the favoritism and this gossip-guessing breeds additional gossip (McQuerrey, n.d.). The currency of gossip is so high that sociologist Dunbar (2004) regards it as

a main form of social bonding. Self-esteem and social identity theory can help theorists learn more about gossip with negative connotations (Ye et al., 2019). Damage can also be done to self-esteem as one employee compares themselves to another employee, an example of social identity theory (Tagfel, 1978).

Social exchange theory likens employment settings to a bargaining meat market. There is something up for exchange and trust is going to be needed with this currency transaction which will later be repaid. As Parzefall and Salin (2010) apprise, there are unwritten contractual favors between employer and employee that expect to be repaid. Such as, a safe work setting provided by the employer is repaid by the employee with an uplifted attitude which leads to higher productivity (Parzefall & Salin, 2010). It is normal to be on alert for gossip about those that one has a social exchange with. This is because our relationships control social standing and that directly affects access to resources like employment, food, and housing (McAndrew et al., 2007). It is unknown if there are ethical implications for employees who exchange and repay currency in a social exchange setting at work.

Thomas Ng (2016) wanted to check the correlation between employees being appreciated at work and then those same employees showing loyalty back toward the employer. At five different points over 18 months, Ng inquired of employees in his study how embedded they felt with their employer and how respected they felt. He not only found a connection between the two as he projected, but he also was able to measure loyalty because those that felt embedded within the company were likely to still be working there six months afterward (Ng, 2016). Social exchange theory was used to explain Ng's work. Respect was given at work through trust and then loyalty was given back by the employee (Ng, 2016).

Loyalty can be given or received as currency. If a woman that works in environmental services found a handful of an admission counselor's business cards in the trash, she might retrieve them and let the admission counselor know where they were found. The admission counselor, while perplexed at the event, would be grateful they were returned and ready to return the favor. The environmental services worker went out of her way hoping to help another person, gain recognition for her deed, and possibly receive a return favor at another date. This environmental services worker's personal currency is to notice strange things placed in the trash and to report them to her superiors for positive feedback. She is trading the knowledge of her observation for immediate feedback and later favors.

Favoritism and Favors

In the study, *Favouritism: Exploring the 'uncontrolled' spaces of the leadership experience* (2019), the view of favoritism is broadened out of a negative view and seen as a necessity for leadership relationships. Favoritism is a community progression. If an entire group starts to show favor to one person and listen to them, that person becomes a leader (Palermo et al., 2019). There is a recipe for favoritism: people with common and different interests must happen upon one another (Dubrin, 2009). What happens next has to do with the level of empathy and ethics of all parties (Craft, 2013). The Oxford Dictionary gives a designation of negative significance to the word favoritism (Oxford English Dictionary, 2017); which is problematic to overcome. The word favoritism is usually linked to an abuse of supervisory power or an act that goes against social norms. However, the journal article about leadership experience by Palermo, Carnaz, and Duarte (2019) finds that favoritism could be initially shown because one wants a favor in return, but relationships develop because of the favoritism.

If an employee regularly brings her manager coffee each morning as her personal currency, the manager could start to favor and choose this employee over others. All employees had the opportunity to initiate the coffee favor. All had the opportunity, but only one acted. Buying small gifts of food and beverage may have been this employee's currency of choice. Favoritism is choosing a member of one's group over other in another group. The manager will see this person as one of his or her people. The act of favoritism has economic and primal reasons for existing (Bramoullé & Goyal, 2016). The handbook of Freedom One University does not prohibit the receiving or giving of gifts, but it does not condone the generous act, either. The advice of the handbook warns not to take gifts for gain, but only accept if it would be impolite to refuse. However, a gift of cash is never an acceptable means of thanks (Liberty employee handbook, p. 18, 2019).

To win favoritism with a manager, an employee must keep in mind that a high-volume gossip is seen negatively (Farley, 2011). Therefore, the gossip that is passed on must matter to that exact manager. To make gossip count for the highest currency, only talk about women to other women and men to other men. Unless one is intimately involved with another, males and females do not care so much about what is going on in the lives of the other sex (McAndrew et al., 2007). McAndrew, Bell, and Garcia (2007) also found another difference in the sexes concerning gossip: men will likely share information they have heard with someone they are intimate with, while women are just as likely to share with an intimate partner as they would with a close friend. By studying college students, it was realized people are usually most interested in what their closest acquaintances and their enemies are doing (McAndrew et al., 2007).

Performing favors can be seen in different ways. Favor-based attitudes can be seen in personal lives, at work, and in family life as well. Bénabou and Tirole, 2016, demonstrated in their research that people sometimes attach value to personal favors (Bénabou & Tirole, 2016), this may explain why individuals feel compelled to repay acts and gifts (Cialdini, 1993). When a person offers presents, food, or work, to a member of one's social group, showing that a singular individual is favored over others outside of the group (Bramoullé & Goyal, 2016), it establishes a relationship. The individual is being favored with a favor. Historically, if we fit in and have many solid relationships, our chances of survival go up (Covin, 2011). The model for Bramoullé and Goyal's (2016) research has definitions related to favors. If a person needs to hire someone and finds the best person for that job, then they are following *market behavior*. But when a person needs to hire someone and looks for the most fitting individual within his or her own group, that is referred to as *favoritism*. However, if the person hiring chooses someone in his or her own group who is not qualified for the position, that would be performing a *favor* (Bramoullé & Goyal, 2016). This is an example of how favors could affect the quality of the pool of employees that enter the higher education staff workforce.

Humor

To have someone happy about your presence because you carry humor with you, making coworkers smile and laugh in an almost post-pandemic world where some workforce members discovered they would rather work at home alone, ranks high in currency. A top complaint at work is boredom (Shimkus, 2016). Humor can remedy this, turning a negative into a positive in a literal minute (Plester, 2009). A high-wit phrase quickly tossed out at the right moment can earn respect, proving that one can think and react fast with words, and this can solidify work relationships (Plester, 2009).

Kindness

Ironical that perhaps the most valuable, non-tangible property in the workforce is absolutely free. To show kindness does not cost a thing. Employees do pay for kindness and favor in the workforce. Paying for kindness or job promotions while an employee is a social phenomenon. A phenomenon is something that can be sensed by an individual's five senses and may be difficult to prove. A phenomenon is sometimes referred to as *sense-datum*, which means the event begs explanation, as most behaviors do (Phenomenon, 2020). Asking or performing favors in higher education can happen daily, weekly, or monthly, and it can be in the same form each time or escalate. These, sometimes random, symbiotic acts, are sometimes thought of as favors. One day a co-worker may bring another co-worker a coffee, and another day they may exchange roles. Symbiotic and thoughtful relationships such as this coffee example are mostly beneficial and found in settings where workers depend on one another. But it is also found that these symbiotic relationships result in lower productivity (Thomas et al., 2004). When studying labor flow at construction sites, Thomas, Horman, and de Souza (2004), compared employees who worked together and depended on each other to those that worked independently. Those that worked independently were more efficient. These workers start when they are ready and wait on no one. While construction is not a closely related field to higher education, the research showed that if employees who worked in dependent relationships were separated, management would have an easier time managing and production would be boosted; evidence that working at home really works (Thomas et al., 2004). This research study on higher education staff hopes to make the phenomenon of kind symbiotic relationships in employment clearer.

Being Helpful or Being Manipulated

Healthy and helpful relationships should be encouraged in the workforce and seen as a professional courtesy (McFarlin, 2019). It is easy for favors to slip into favoritism, regardless of reason, and the acts could be called into question as unfair by other employees. Volunteering to perform favors for a manager could have that manager relying on that employee. The manager knows that the employee is willing to assist, and this could look like a relationship to other employees. The mood of those in the workforce could shift, gossip could start, and production could drop (McQuerrey, n.d.). Normally, doing a favor for another is seen as a positive act (Cadsby et al, 2016). SLT (Bandura, 1977) would explain how the manager learns which employee will agree to a task when asked and can manipulate that employee. Then with the same learning experience, an employee will learn that the manager gives rewarding positive feedback when he or she performs these tasks. The rewarding feedback in the form of praise is a form of currency from manager to employee. Over time, the manager could exploit the relationship by asking for more difficult tasks that are not within that employee's job description. Learning equally as fast, the employee could manipulate the relationship as well and ask for a preferential shift or case assignment because the employee knows how valued he or she is to the manager (Oravec, 2019). Diplomatically, each employee should feel valued, and always do the most to support other employees and the employer.

Time

In some employment situations the work of one group depends on the work of another group to move forward. In this type of situation, the employer must follow the groups closely to ensure time management and stability of all relationships (Thomas et al., 2004). Time is a common currency. Time is donated when one feels compelled. In the Farrelly and Bennett (2018)

research study about empathy and time currency, the factors that compelled people to volunteer were empathy for others or anger at the plight others were going through. Time can be offered as currency when an employee volunteers to stay late, skip lunch, or come to work early (Farrelly & Bennett, 2018). When time is used as donation currency instead of giving cash to a charity, the social benefits and positive feelings last longer (Farely & Bennett, 2018). If information on time currency relates to currency in higher education, then the previous research by Farely and Bennett could indicate that time is valued more than money, and when a favor given is in the realm of time, it could be worth more than anticipated.

Before employees spend their personal currency, they would like to know the value of their currency or the reward they will be receiving for spending that currency (Sescousse et al., 2015). Corrective behavior ability, which should be present in the professional majority, needs to gauge the reward for a behavior ahead of time. *Common neural currency* is the phrase used to describe how humans instantly place all rewards on a scale that can be referred to quickly so that the value of work completed to receive the reward can be scaled correctly (Levy & Glimcher, 2012). Research performed by Levy and Glimcher show that whether women are offered a social or financial reward for an activity, the part of the brain that is activated is the same. However, for men, the brain areas stimulated during motivational seeking behavior are different. This is informative for the field of personal currency during employment because at work employees are aiming their rewards toward being both socially and financially fulfilling. Because, if an employee performs an activity that gains financial wealth at the risk of social wealth there will be consequences. For, if an individual is not well liked at work, there will be issues in their future (Spreckelmeyer et al., 2009).

Decisions and Choices

There is an automatic decision that our brain makes when it makes a repetitive action. The theory of economics is likened to comparing an automatic brain decision to a default or normal mode on a new electronic device that comes with factory settings. If unsure of a decision, an adult will usually make the safest choice and that would be their automatic default decision. This decision would be reinforced if someone suggested that their choice was the correct selection (Samson, 2014). If it is discovered that a negative currency is being used, the university could guide employees to a more diplomatic behavior, and it could eventually become their default option. Employees that have used an effective currency in the past will fall to this same effective currency as an automatic one because it the currency has already proven itself (Samson, 2014). Employees will use a system that they are positive that works over one that they are unsure of, especially if in a hurry. An individual's brain will make every shortcut that is available to save energy (Samson, 2014). This shortcut is known in some professions as *profiling*. When the employee's decision is reinforced when another employee gives them positive decision feedback, that is an example of SLT (McLeod, 2016).

If customers in an online shopping experience are given two choices, one to build their own car, starting with the base model and adding features, or one in which they start with a fully loaded version and take away unwanted features, the customer will invest more money into the latter take-away, car-building practice (Samson, 2014). Humans have limits when it comes to having things taken away. If an employee starts with nothing, building up seems natural. However, if an employee starts at the top, choosing what to take away is difficult, imposing, and uncomfortable. The higher up in an organization an employee is, the more that person could lose, and that employee's behavior may exceed normal personal currency spending standards. Also,

when given choices, employees will lie to protect their co-worker teams even if the lie does not personally benefit themselves (Cadsby et al., 2016). Employees can be defensive and loyal, but managers will risk much to protect what has taken them years to acquire.

Reinforcement of actions

Differential association reinforcement theory specific to criminal behavior was investigated by Burgess and Akers (1966), who uncovered that positive and negative behavior comes from social learning development which lets the learner know what is and is not accepted judging by the reaction of those around him or her (Burgess & Akers, 1966). SLT and SDT support this theory of peer-bolstering behavior (Bandura, 1977; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Reinforced actions are continued as the positive feedback is enjoyed by the subject (McLeod, 2016; Merrill & Reid, 1981). Decisions made by anyone in a group are reinforced if a peer agrees (Merrill & Reid, 1981; Samson, 2014). In contrast, frowned upon or non-rewarding behavior is limited. If a new university employee is being mentored by other university employees, the new employee should pay close attention to the reactions of co-workers toward the mentor so that known forms of acceptable currency can be gauged and noted. Volunteering to grab lunch for everyone might be a solid choice to gain currency, while picking up a manager's child from school could be looked down upon by peers or cause boundary problems. This is based on a government model which notes that those in power have control over others (Capasso & Santoro, 2018). Recent journal articles and research on favoritism highlight differential reinforcement which show that bad behavior like managers taking advantage of those they supervise can be stopped if the reward for that negative behavior is also stopped (Special Learning, Inc., n.d.). Some would say this is a part of normal work drama, and that would depend on your work history and expectations.

Economy

The economy influences workforce character and currency because those that demand more of others and manipulate people will be safe in their employment positions if the unemployment rate is low because there is no one to easily supplant them (Capasso & Santoro, 2018). A managerial university employee that is never on time to work, that has a co-worker cover for him each day, would normally be spoken to because of repetitive tardiness. However, if the pool of qualified managers is empty, then this person will probably keep his or her job and not even be spoken to about the issue. Conversely, if there are many qualified candidates to replace an employee, if that same always-tardy, manager wanted to keep his job, he would need to offer currency to keep the co-worker that covers for him happy and not complaining. Maybe he could bring in fresh coffee and pastry each day. When there are many candidates, unfair employees will be fewer (Capasso & Santoro, 2018). Those with weak character that should not be working in higher education could be maintaining their positions because of personality and personal currency. Normally, personal currency would be spent sparingly, such as when an employee is having a bad day and needs to take a long lunch. However, if an employee is calling in favors each day because of tardiness, the expectation of *quid pro quo* has been established as an assumption and an employee that covers up this act could demand a higher compensation. When spending personal currency not everyone is the same. Just as some are greedy with their cash and assets and do not want to spend, some may be this way at work, too. An employee may take this further and never ask for help because they do not want to be in a position to return a favor. This personality type keeps spending to a minimum because an exchange feels painful to the payer. This feeling of discomfort has a purpose as it keeps the employee from spending what they do not have to offer (Prelec & Loewenstein, 1998).

Summary

The preceding literature constitutes an overview of knowledge on what is known about personal currency in higher education. In this chapter I have shown through literature why people act in a certain manner by way of SLT and SDT. However, current data falls short when applied to an employment situation. What is missing in the literature is a connection between items such as an employment promotion and how that item was paid for, which could be through hard work. To close this gap, ten university employees will be interviewed, turning their words into coded data.

Trends found in this literature review included: self-esteem, likability, reciprocation, manipulation, intimidation, beliefs, human resources, favoritism, favors, decisions, choices, reinforcement of actions, currency, and the economy. Only in an ethical and open atmosphere can learning be constructed into theory from an idea that was once a passing thought, and this process starts with research (Hutzschenreuter & Kleindienst, 2006). Writer and therapist, Virginia Axline lends this wisdom, “. . . research is a fascinating combination of hunches, speculation, subjectivity, imagination, hopes, and dreams, blended precisely with objectively gathered facts . . .” (Axline, 1964, p. 21). Her words lend support to the grounded theory approach and the hunches that must be followed. The concepts of self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) are utilized to understand how and why adults choose to make decisions within a peer culture.

By utilizing solid theories that have been used repeatedly to measure and determine human behavior, this study’s implications should prove insightful to those researching employee behavior at the university level, as well as transferring learned information to other professional subjects such as sports or financing. In combining social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) and

self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), a better understanding of employee behavior among higher education employees will be prevalent and assist in making education employment a place of functional integrity. As the researcher responsible for this study, it is my objective to find how employees use personal currency with their peers and fill a knowledge gap that provides human resources and educators with an optimum example of how the appropriate contemporary peer relationship in higher education employees should look. The results of this study could provide self-awareness to employees that would allow them to correct their own behavior. For example: In the future if an employee finds out through onboarding testing that during a crisis at work, he will usually revert to a childhood stance and hide, he can practice metacognition to find the root of his issue and work to change (Aronson & Bialostok, 2016). Otherwise, to his managers this hiding habit will make him look irresponsible. Since the new employee is now aware of his behavior and why he acts in such a manner, his awareness will help him to overcome this social issue. He realizes that in a time of stress many adults are fearful and want to talk to a parental figure, or maybe do something that comforted him as a child, like eat ice cream or go outside to feel the sun's warmth.

Applying grounded theory will assist the goal of this study to explore and learn more about personal currency in the university staff workforce in a manner that is practical (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This study may assist HEIs' human resources departments and administrators by understanding the unique behaviors that make employees act and react and possibly being able to better place those people within the institution. Therefore, the objective of this qualitative, grounded theory study, through researcher reflection, observation, and data collection, is to explore the ways employees on campus use personal currency.

In the next chapter on methods, data collection will be described, and the setting and participants will be defined. The ways in which useful data are derived from raw information will be explained. How this data will be kept safe will be summarized. My role in this research study will be outlined and exactly how the participants will be chosen, how the data will be documented, and data analysis will be described.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to create a model to better understand the practice of spending *personal currency*, a metaphor for actions that attempt to gain leverage, among employees at Freedom One University (a pseudonym) by focusing on motives for this specific behavior, results, and the type of currency that is used. The grounded theory approach to investigation uses the researcher as a tool that collects and analyzes data until a theory is presented (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A goal of this research was to have the results easily replicated, externally applied, and therefore, transferable to other circumstances and fields of study (Misco, 2007), while assisting in the hiring process for universities, and making for greater self-awareness on campus among employees concerning the way they pay for favor or negotiate at work.

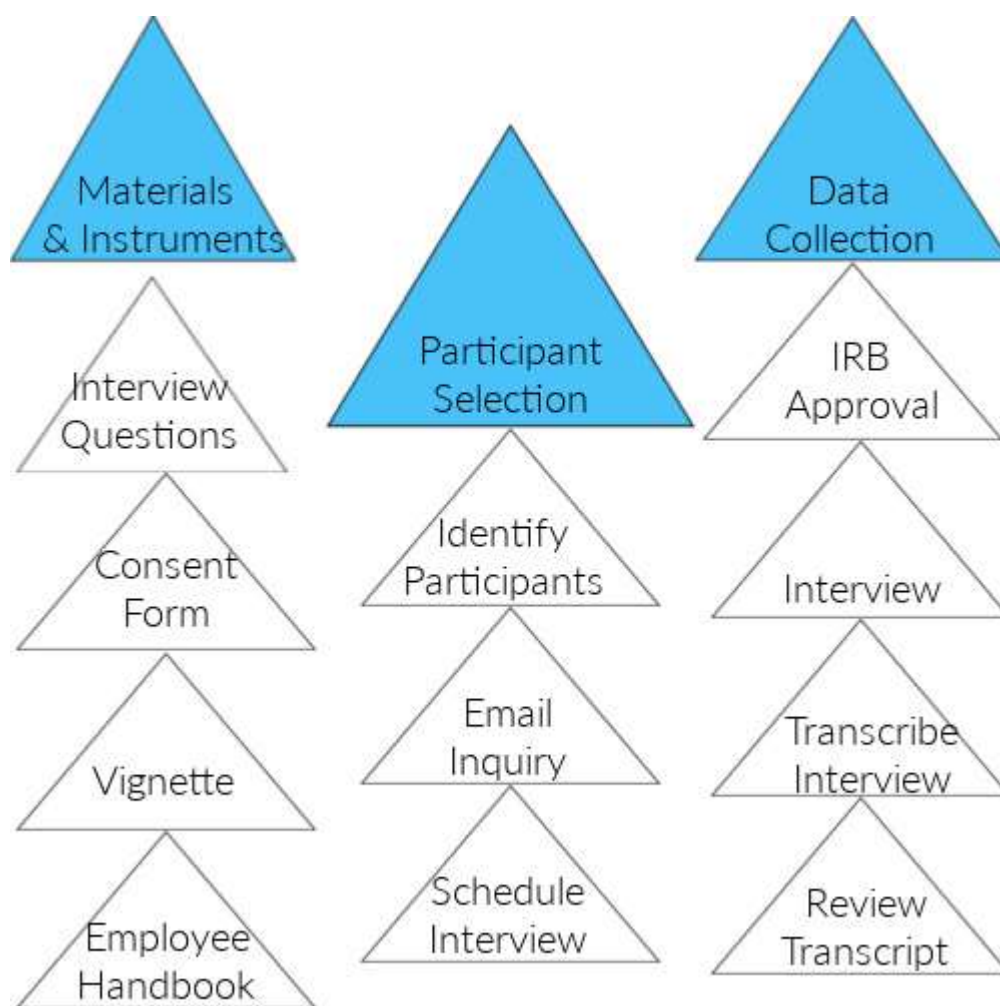
I found the research design that was most fitting to be grounded theory. The reader will find information on grounded theory and the analysis techniques that were utilized in this study, in this chapter (Smaldone et al., 2019). Next, my writing will present the research questions. In those questions I ask how non-monetary currency is used at Freedom One University. The following section pertains to the setting, why it was chosen, as well, leadership and demographic information is given. This is followed by the section on participants. In this portion of chapter 3, the sampling method and initial contact procedure will be explained. This is followed by the procedures. In the procedure section, the details of the research study are revealed and explained in deep detail that allows others to replicate the experiment. Corbin and Strauss advise to be personally invested in the research topic which adds a layer of depth to the writing and experiment process (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The last half of this chapter highlights my role in

the research study and how I am related to the study, setting, and participants (Creswell, 2013).

Data collection procedures and analysis methods follow the researcher's role and come before the interview questions and justifications for those questions. Lastly, in this chapter on methods, the rationale for trustworthiness is justified. Figure 1, below, will assist the reader in following this study.

Figure 1

Data Collection Process



Note. This data collection figure is based on the schematics from Mitch Morrison, PhD's book Team Works (2013).

Design

In the beginning stages of this study, other qualitative approaches than grounded theory, and even quantitative design were explored while I was performing background research about personal currency on campus among staff. An ethnographic approach was originally sought after, as culture and how those in that culture treat one another was a primary goal of this exploration (Creswell, & Poth, 2018). However, after months of applying for jobs at all local universities so that I could get closer to the subjects I was studying, further complicated by Covid-19 pandemic issues, no employment could be secured. Therefore, immersion into the work culture was not feasible during the time of this research study (Snowdon et al, 2014). The subjects of this research study are employees of Freedom One University, specifically staff members. Since people and their behavior are the focus of this study, as well as why and how these employees perform as they do, a design which allowed for personal lived experiences was needed (Creswell, 2014).

Qualitative Grounded Theory

Finally, a qualitative grounded theory design was initiated, for finding the truth of the matter via real circumstances, concerning this social interaction behavior (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), from the research itself, seemed the only correct way to examine, process, and present the data. Theory that is derived from the data are called grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). For reasons related to accuracy and consistency through interpretation by a single researcher instead of data received from subject-completed instruments by numerous subjects, qualitative research was chosen over quantitative research (Instrument, validity, reliability, n.d.). “As grounded theorists, we interact with the data, compare data with data as we code. . .” (Wertz, 2011, p.166), and continue to narrow what could be the answer to the research by becoming

more focused the narrower the research field becomes (Wertz, 2011). How this relates to my research is that an interview was coded, then later, after more information was gathered, I went back and re-coded the same interview. A constructivist grounded theory approach is utilized for this study as it allows for the viewing of data to configure what is needed from the next set of gathered data which could come from the initial raw data. Constant comparison was practiced during the interview coding to reach theme saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Constructivist Grounded Theory

Using constructivist grounded theory, data was mined from transcribed and coded interviews with participants. This is repeated until a pattern or an answer to the research surfaces as new information fails to be produced (Cooney, 2011). This lack of new information is called theoretical saturation (Charmaz, 2006). Constructivist grounded theory is less rigid than its conventional predecessor and allows the viewpoint of the researcher to influence the data direction (Wertz, 2011). This addition is recognized as having great importance when the researcher is passionate about the subject matter. Grounded theory studies are supported by the data that is generated in the study being performed which is important in a study subject that does not contain an overage of research data in which to pull information (Charmaz, 2014). A pattern can appear quickly and there would be no need for further analysis.

Both data gathered and the reviewed literature combined into a functional model after the data analysis portion of this constructivist grounded theory study was complete. This model can be found in Chapter Four, Figure 15. Had a different paradigm been used to perform this study instead of a constructivist view, the model may have been constructed prior to data collection and the gathering of data could have purposefully generated information that was direct to the central thesis of the proposed model (Mills et al., 2006) which would have ended in inaccurate research.

Constructivist grounded theory also involves a place for human experience in the research.

Constructivist grounded theory allows for many people to go through the same experience but having different reactions to that experience (Borg et al., 2022). Constructivist grounded theory allows for human differences to be brought into the data. In Borg-Cunen's recent research on the emotions and bonding of parents to infants while in utero, constructivist grounded theory was used with interviews to find what information was revealed from collected data. Constructivist grounded theory, using the instincts of the researcher(s), had to be used as there is no scale to measure human emotion from a parent to a child. What Borg-Cunen and the other researchers involved concluded is that doctors and midwives should encourage a healthy relationship of the infant before its arrival and that more longitudinal research should be done to discover if the level of caring toward the fetus at, for example: 8 months pregnant, can be connected to the ways a parent feels about the child ten years later (Borg et al., 2022).

This grounded theory study aimed to look closely at the individual behavior of a pre-determined cohort so that the human desire to be liked and to excel, and other reasons a staff member spends personal currency, could be analyzed, so that the model created would be grounded by the data collected (Charmaz, 2014). An interpretive grounded theory paradigm could not have been used for this study because that method is specific to a space in time (Mills et al., 2006). An interpretation can only happen at the exact moment it is being analyzed. This study about currency hopes to give insight concerning the past, present, and future.

The intent of this study was to discover a theory behind specific actions of university employees. Through interviews and open-ended question surveys, data was analyzed until a beginning and end to the action of spending personal currency was found through identifying not only similarities but differences (Charmaz, 2014). Open-ended questions have been found to

illicit the most honest response from participants (Lamb & Fauchier, 2001). This qualitative design helped me to fill a gap in the data by collecting data and creating a model that depicts information that highlights a cause or explains a theory (Creswell, 2007).

Research Questions

Central Research Question: How do employees leverage human capital, their personal currency, for benefit in workforce settings?

SQ1: How do employees influence, compel, be awarded favor, be liked, obtain advancement, or receive favors at work when that is not a direct part of their employment?

SQ2: What personal tools are being used by employees at Freedom One University to make their day easier? Examples of tools could be kindness, language, tone of voice, smiles, small gifts, performing favors, sharing gossip, or anything else used as leverage to obtain a similar or different act or gift in return.

Setting

The setting for any research study is paramount as it shows the context in which the data were taken, the environment, and the atmosphere in all senses, at that moment in time (Snowdon et al, 2014), while being aware that new contexts can change how this study is perceived (Langer, 1997). Credibility is felt by a reader when the interview setting is described with detail (Creswell, & Creswell, 2018). The setting for this study was Freedom One University, located on the East Coast. The criteria for choosing a university had minimal standards. The university chosen should be one of many and should also be accommodating to the terms of this research study. The location of Freedom One University was chosen because it had many area colleges from which to choose. After researching them all, Freedom One University was chosen because I would be granted more autonomy to interview, given access to work rooms, and access to their

email system if needed. Freedom One University, who has recently changed leadership (WSLS, 2020), “. . . was 47.3% Caucasian, 14.2% Black or African American, 5.15% Hispanic or Latino, 2.06% Two or More Races, 1.33% Asian, 0.477% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.16% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders,” in 2017, with the Caucasian race increasing 2% by 2019 (Datausa, 2019, Enrollment by race & ethnicity). In 2017 Freedom One University had approximately 75,000 students, increasing to 85,586 in 2019 (Datausa, 2019, Enrollment). This total accounted for both online and in-person students. The lead degree earners are female (Datausa, 2019, Graduates). The university employees approximately 1400 online and in-person employees (Dun & Bradstreet, nd).

Participants

For participants to be chosen for this research study the individuals had to be theoretically needed for the study and current staff members of Freedom One University in Virginia. Faculty would not be permitted to join in this study. Just as the approach for constructivist grounded theory narrows as the research grows, so does the researcher’s opinion of who will be an ideal participant; one who will add to the data. Survey interview questions were generated from research. Since the study will involve employees from multiple departments “. . . IRB sought administrative approval on the candidate’s behalf (SOE dissertation handbook, 20-21).” The interviewing style of this research study used open-ended questions because prompts that are open-ended can draw up to three times additional information than more specific questions (Lamb & Fauchier, 2001).

The sample size was 10 employees from Freedom One University. A small number was chosen so that the research may escape from shallow details and expose deeper explanations (Glaser, 2004). Because 10 employees were needed for the study, I planned for 12 people to be

recruited in case of possible attrition. Ten is the minimum number of subjects needed (SOE dissertation handbook, 20-21) to answer this research study with confidence and accuracy (Damen et al., 2012).

Subject attrition rates can vary and are found to be from 30 to 50 percent with online research experiments. When subjects drop out and a study is finished with fewer numerical data, researchers use the information that they have and decipher the small amount of information in which they are left. However, in Zhou & Fishbach's 2016 article, "The Pitfall of Experimenting on the Web," it was found that had the actual number of participating subjects been used, a different, more factual conclusion would have been found by researchers (Zhou & Fishback, 2016). Indeed, it might not even be known to those researchers who perform their science online, that their subjects have dropped out. Partial data are sometimes not recorded by software and the researchers only see the information when it arrives at the point where it is finished. This is a flaw, as scientists need to be aware their experiments are going opposed to their original plan when it is occurring (Zhou & Fishback, 2016).

This research's primary questionnaire that was sent out via email (see Appendix B), described the terms of this research study. The questions asked concerned basic demographics and inquire which department at the university the recipients align themselves with to confirm that they are a university employee and eligible for the study. Once 20 messages were returned, I planned to look through them and choose a balanced set of 12 participants. However, after an extended period of searching, 10 volunteers were all that could be drawn to the study at this time. This researcher needed participants from multiple employee departments and ages and diversity among sexes, but accepted the ten participants that responded. The participants were contacted

for an interview time. This method of first evaluating demographic information gave an accurate variation of the participants (Creswell, 2013).

Procedures

After receiving permission from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), via email (Appendix A), data collection began. A request through Facebook on a local community page asked to find study participants. The recruitment form (Appendix B) was sent out by messenger to those that were interested in participating. For those that meet the requirements and wish to move forward with the interview portion of the study I looked through them, choosing to pick from a varied pool with different age, sex, and department (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). A consent form was sent via messenger (Appendix D) to again ask if individuals wanted to participate in the interview section. If the participant still wants to meet either in person or by Zoom, and give an audio recorded interview, he or she will sign a hard copy of the consent form at the interview setting, prior to the interview. My study aims to be a multi-departmental university study, so IRB will ask for administrative approval in my stead (SOE dissertation handbook, 20-21).

After each interview was scheduled, audio recorded, and complete, it was transcribed by me. This was a timely endeavor but there was no better way to get the words of the participants into my mind. A copy of the transcribed interview was sent to the participant for approval verification. At the time of the verification email, each participant was asked if he or she had any comments or thoughts related to the interview subject that have been reflected on since the interview. This was an open-ended request to draw out a candid response (Lamb & Fauchier, 2001). The thematic analysis of Bran and Clark was employed by myself in this research study

so that I may analyze the data. The reasons I am performing certain tasks and what became of my efforts has been documented in the analysis phase (Braun & Clark, 2006).

The Researcher's Role

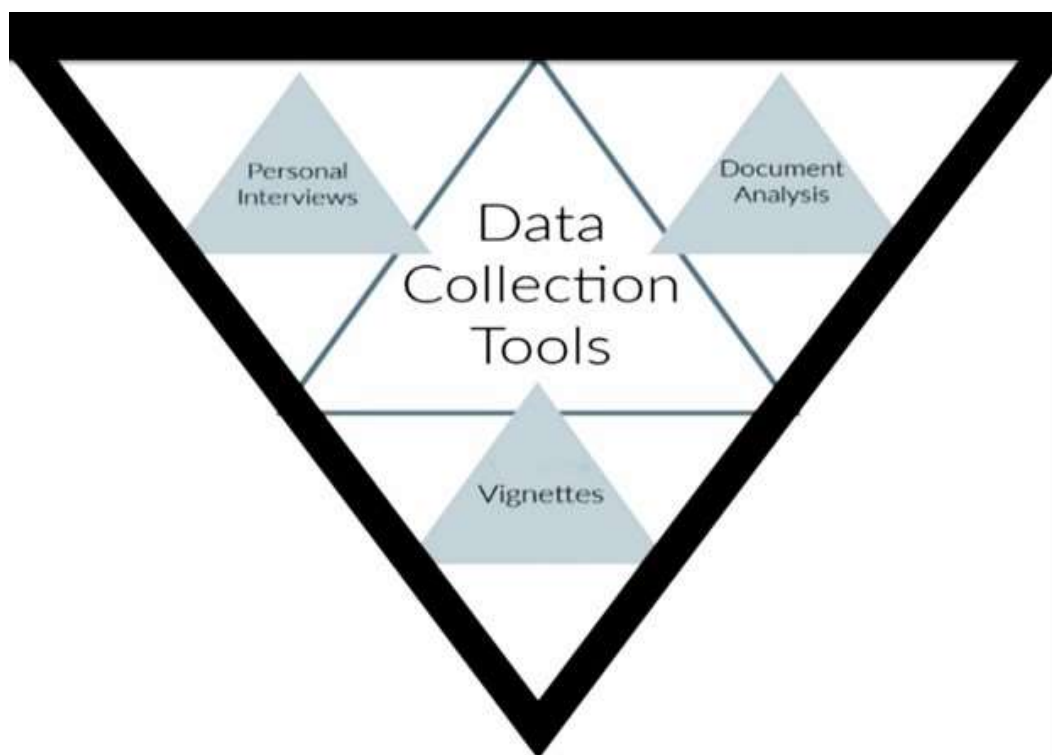
My role in the research setting has been that of interviewer and research instrument. Before I started interpreting data it was paramount that I examined my own life perspective. I did not want to initiate a theory based on my own beliefs, but by diplomatically pouring through research and data and analyzing that raw material for helpful information (Creswell, 2013). Biases of myself and others were respected and considered to better understand the viewpoint of all participants. Research objectivity standards are conduct standards which a researcher voluntarily abides by that state: the researchers will expose their views and the views of their employer if they are relevant (Anonymous, 2002). Research integrity should be exemplified by monitoring self-ethics and maintaining full professional abilities when dealing with the public and stakeholders (CFA Institute, n.d.).

Biases like researcher personal experience can be turned into recognized strengths because the researcher can spot these issues quickly. To keep my worldview in check, a personal journal has been kept concerning my personal opinions related to this study (see Appendix F) (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). There are biases of mine that could impact my feelings during this study. I have previously earned a degree from the university where this study has been performed. If I exhibit a feeling for the university that seems inappropriate, I will ask myself if my feelings are related to the time I previously spent obtaining my degree. Acknowledging heuristic bias, I will realize that I have vivid feelings about Freedom One University, that do provoke emotions, but that does not make what I feel important or truthful (Hayibor & Wasieleski, 2009).

Data Collection

Interviews have been conducted with 10 participants who are employees of Freedom One University. Data were gathered so that they could be analyzed in a diagnostic fashion. Diagnostic analysis uses information that addresses personal currency and explores the attitudes university employees have about bartering with this currency and when exactly employees choose to use their currency (Bryman & Burgess, 1994). Agar's funnel approach to gathering data, which was first learned by doctorate students as they take in large and broad amounts of information, was utilized in this research study's data collection (Agar, 1980). The broad part of the funnel changes as the student narrows in on what he or she wants to study, growing more specific as more was researched and learned. This study employed a similar tactic when the interviews are transcribed, and that large amount of data are searched through, and key phrases found that lead to a better understanding of this research topic.

Vignettes were used during the welcoming transition period at the start of the interviews. The interview was performed and later, a follow up email was sent out. As well, a full analysis of the employee handbook was executed, to see if the handbook supports the information gathered from the employee interviews. More than one data collection method was used to reach a point of triangulation. Triangulation was used for a better understanding of events studied in qualitative research (Patton, 1999). Specifically, method triangulation was used in this research study. In method triangulation many different forms of data collection about the same event or circumstance are collected in different ways (Polit & Beck, 2012). Method triangulation examples of data are interviews, note taking, and observations (Carter et al., 2014). Triangulation methods to be used in this study were from interviews, document analysis, and vignettes (Patton, 2015).

Figure 2*Data Collection Tools*

Note. Visual illustration of triangulation representation for this specific research study.

For this research study theoretical and purposeful sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) were used. Theoretical sampling allows for ample construction of categories when coding and drawing parallel ideas that link those categories (Charmaz, 2006). Data collected should be directly related to the experiment and it also must fit into the method that has been chosen for the experiment (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The order in which data are accepted into an experiment and analyzed can change the results of scientific data and can even change the way participants answer interview questions (Covell et. al, 2012). For this reason, it was important during replication experiments to follow the original scientist's directions precisely. Concurrent data collection methods were employed in this research study. This means that one set of data was collected before moving on to gather new data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). For this

research study, the Freedom One University employee handbook was analyzed and coded, then the participants were chosen and interviewed. Data were analyzed and coded. Then follow-up questions were asked of the interview participants via messenger. Trends were reviewed, across all three data collection methods.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were performed and used in the gathering of qualitative data as it was the most personal way to receive information while the interviewer also gets a chance to come up with new questions as the person being interviewed may take the questions in a new direction (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Alternatives to semi-structured are structured and unstructured. Unstructured interviews are random and unplanned to such a degree that there was no comparison model to view which participant was better, more effective, or more complete than the other. Conversely, a structured interviewee, who gets the interview questions ahead of time, has a possible set of answers in their mind ahead of time (Azarpazhooh et al., 2008). Semi-structured interviews have been chosen for this research study because IRB must receive and approve a list of questions from me before I can proceed with asking those questions of research participants. Semi-structured interviews allowed for listening to the concerns of each participant.

I took notes as I recorded the interview from my computer. I only recorded audio and not video. I tested my computer's recording software prior to each interview. Interviews could be conducted virtually or in person, at Freedom One's library, or my apartment lobby. I was the interviewer. The time of each interview was chosen by the participant.

The following list of interview questions was addressed by this data collection strategy known as *interview* (Chadwick et al., 2008). The interviews are expected to last 30 minutes. Each participant was asked the same questions (Punch, 2005).

Open-Ended Interview Questions.

1. Without stating your exact position at the university, can you describe what it is you do during your shift at work?
2. Describe your work culture.
3. Tell me how you obtained your current position.
4. Tell me about a time you said or did something at work that you thought others did not approve.
5. Explain why you may be liked or disliked at work.
6. Tell me about your manager's favorite and least favorite employee.
7. What type of information does your manager ask you about concerning other employees?
8. Tell me about things that may hold you back from life or work success. For example, do others have perceptions about you that may present obstacles?
9. How do you show generosity to other employees?
10. If you wanted a promotion at work, what would you do to draw positive attention to yourself?
11. What do you consider to be a good work habit or a bad work habit?
12. If a co-worker approached you and said, "Hey, I just did this favor for you...", how would that make you feel?
13. Other than performing basic favors or volunteering, what else could you do at work so that others liked you, so that you stood out to your manager, and so that you fit in with your work culture?
14. How did you get things you wanted as a young person?

15. What is a good example of gossip that you hear in your department at work?
16. What are some ways you have seen your coworkers gain favor at work?
17. Tell me about a time when you leveraged something personal to get ahead at work.
18. If your boss was known to be agreeable while she was eating her meals, how would you use this information to plan a request of a week off during the busy season?
19. When you lived with your parent(s) or guardian(s), what characteristic or action by you was rewarded.
20. Please explain the type of rewards system that is in place at Freedom One University. For example, do you receive praise in front of your work group when you have accomplished a large task or maybe you get treated to the best parking space for a month if you surpass your work quota.
21. I want to thank you for your time and ask one last question. What do you think I should know about personal currency as it applies to the employees at this university?
22. What else might you like to add, even if it is outside the scope of the previous questions?

Justification for Interview Questions

The central research question of this study is *How do employees leverage human capital for their benefit in workforce?* Question 1 allows for a trusting anonymity while not being confrontational, thus establishing trust (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Question 2 draws out the central research question because perhaps the participant was promoted to their current position. Question 3 asks the participant to remember times at work when positive or negative feedback was given because of one of his or her actions or behaviors. This is to gauge what type of

behaviors are accepted or rejected at Freedom One University, thus giving an idea of what lengths employees will go to avoid criticism or negativity at work.

Questions 3 and 4 inquire about work behavior as viewed by peers. Differential association reinforcement theory performed by Burgess and Akers (1966) uncovered that positive and negative behavior comes from social learning development (SLD). SLD lets the learner know what is and is not accepted judging by the reaction of those around him or her (Burgess & Akers, 1966). This relates to SQ1 and the attention received from others.

The reason questions 5 and 6 are asked is to explore the spending of personal currency that could lead to favoritism (Alwerthan et al., 2018).

Question 7 concerns self-awareness which relates to SQ3.

Questions 8 and 10 explore likability in the workforce. Being liked while working is a top motivator because otherwise there can be daily friction in our lives and when the job is to teach, having employee issues that get in the way of that makes the job impossible to maintain at a level that benefits students (Bennett, 2018). When planning to keep employees liked and happy, it is best not only to study the individual and see what motivates that person but to analyze the group as well (Tirole, 1993). In this study, the researcher will look at singular employees so that the group may be viewed as well as individually. SQ2 looks at motivations and maintaining likability in the workforce which is important to employees (Bennett, 2018).

Questions 10 and 11 give information about the work setting and how favors are perceived. Employees do favors at work because there is a parallel for them between being friendly and being accepted. Making money also correlates to being accepted. Going to work is a personal experience. Some work for half of their lives or longer. Work is attached to survival.

Status and how people are treated are related to their position at work and their salary.

Employees attach value to favors by equating them with emotions (Bénabou & Tirole, 2016).

Question 12 concerns reciprocation in the workforce, and how others accept favors or say *thank you* to those favors. This is directly related to SQ2.

Questions 13 and 14 are asked because the self-aware individual can realize ideas and perspectives that they own which could either be closed-minded or have growth potential (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012). Those that work for better self-awareness can discover which currency they are using in their lives. Realizing which currency is used allows the participant to change their actions if the participant feels that those actions need amending. This relates to SQ3.

Question 13 is to configure the meaning the participant attaches to the subject of our research study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Questions 12 and 13 check for the social strength of the participant in the employee network. These social networks can propel careers by affording mentoring, advice, and referrals, thus making the chance of receiving a promotion greater (Higgins & Kram, 2001). SQ2 needs details about personal behaviors and favors that relates to these interview questions.

Question 14 tries to learn of any initial behaviors in which the adult of today may have learned to manipulate in childhood so that the individual can realize a pattern (Baumeister et al., 1996).

Question 15 directly relates to the heart of this research study. Gossip, or something someone heard is free capital and can be used as currency very easily to elevate one's position, even if just for a short period (Farley, 2011).

Question 16 addresses what employees have seen others do to gain favor. Through social theories and rules of assimilation, there should be one of two responses to this question (Feys et

al., 2013). A favorable response (Buunk et al, 2005) will come from those that are friends with those they are talking about. If their friends achieve favor, then they should be able to one day receive the same favor. The other response would be a more negative one concerning those that the employee is not friends with. The answers to this question help me to better understand SQ1.

Questions 9 and 17 are important in that the participant may have been holding on to an idea about personal currency since they were asked to participate in this research study. It is important to give the participants a voice in the study and give them a final chance to speak on behalf of the participants. Truly representing the needs and voices of the participants according to the rigor of grounded theory systems is unique (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Question 17 is to allow the participant to act as an advisor in the study, thus investing them to the point where higher exploration is taken advantage of (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Question 18 is to establish a pattern with SLT that employees have been conditioned when the best time to approach their manager is during the day to establish environmental learning (Bandura, 1977).

Question 19 is seeking to find a base action or behavior that is rewarded in families. This employee may think this type of behavior is rewarded everywhere and utilize it as currency. This question relates to SQ2 and how currency is spent and in what way. SLT, one of the theories in which this study is based on, concerns rewarded behavior and why it is repeated (Bandura, 1977).

Question 20 seeks to understand theories in the workforce by understanding workforce motivation via SLT (Bandura, 1977).

Question 21 gives the participant one last opportunity to express him or herself. This question relates to all sub-questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2015)..

The data collection strategy outlined will honor the research questions by giving insight and clarity into who uses personal currency at work, why it is used, and in what form.

Central Research Question: *How do employees leverage human capital for their benefit in the workforce?*

SQ1: How do employees wish to influence, compel, be awarded favor, be liked, obtain advancement, or receive favors at work when that is not a direct part of their employment?

SQ2: What personal tools are being used by employees at Freedom One University to make their day easier? Examples of tools could be kindness, tone of voice, smiles, small gifts, performing favors, sharing gossip, or anything else used as leverage to obtain a similar or different act or gift in return.

Document Analysis

Non-fictitious documents are used in qualitative data analysis because they are living proof of a past event, concept, place, or the people that lived at that time. Data can be mined from a source such as administrative paperwork, journals, or books to assist in answering a research question (Bowen, 2009). When using a document for data, a researcher must carefully extract data from the piece just as would be done from a different type of data so that the meaning of the original document is understood (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Bowen's article on document analysis in research warns research writers not to borrow words from the documents made available, just to place in their research in quoted format. Bowen (2009) says the document should have a contributory factor to the research question being asked (Bowen, 2009). I feel that the Freedom One University employee handbook and this research's usage met these criteria.

The Freedom One University employee handbook was analyzed for information that relates to spending personal currency at work. Specifically, words that link to our primary

research questions were looked for. There could be evidence that a give and take of an employee's attributes, which an employee uses to his or her advantage, to compensate another, is encouraged in the workforce of Freedom One University. Theoretical sampling by way of coding what is collected and then analyzing to configure the direction of the remainder of the study is how data was collected (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). The data that comes from the employee handbook could address the research question that asks how one is to obtain advancement at this specific institution. The handbook could mention how advancements are normally made. SQ1 asks how currency is maneuvered at work. The handbook is comprised of rules and what not to do. With these instructions, one can infer what it is he or she can do. This allows employees to know their boundaries for spending currency.

I will be performing coding manually so that a personal level is reached with the data. When coding, it is not always necessary for the exact words of the participant to be regurgitated. Instead, the researcher can conclude what the interviewed person's tone and word meaning were and then code that meaning (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Also, I will be looking for words in each interview that sound nothing like the others. This, if it occurs, could be a *negative case* (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). A negative case is not intentional. It could appear to be a waste of time because it does not fit with a researcher's other data. But instead, it is proof of diplomacy in research because if all the participants had similar stories, that might seem too convenient to anyone judging the research (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Vignette

A vignette is a short fictional story that will have a theme close to that of the research study in which more data are needed. A vignette was handed to each interview participant when he or she arrived to the interview along with a lined sheet of paper. The participant was told to

write down comments, feelings, or what stands out most about the story (Hill, 1997). After five minutes, I accepted the vignette back from the participant and started the interview process. This research study's goal of having easily reproducible research methods does not extend to the vignette.

In 1999, researcher Wade handed out vignettes after personal interviews, while actively studying how children view their family (Wade, 1999). Vignettes are commonly used in tandem with other means of data collection (Hazel, 1995). No control vignette will be issued (Barter & Renold, 2000). A control is a fake vignette that is used to note if similar language and reaction is given to that of the real vignettes (Lanza & Carifio, 1990). All participants were given the same short story about which to comment. This research study is on a subject concerning a social behavior and it is possible to learn more about the feelings of participants if they read a story about the central subject of spending personal currency, and then offer their reactions (Barter & Renold, 2000). When using an abstract idea like spending something that is not tangible, vignettes have been proven to bring understanding to a studied concept. Researchers Al Sadi and Basit's study on cultural intolerance is another example of an idea that cannot easily be measured that used vignettes in their study (Al Said & Basit, 2017). The vignette lends knowledge toward the central research question of how a person uses human capital for their benefit by giving personal currency a face and by giving specific circumstances of spending personal currency and having the participant share those thoughts.

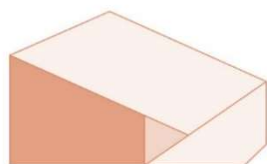
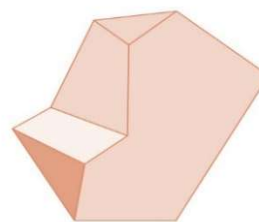
I am the author of the vignette. The vignette is based on my story that was shared in Chapter 1, Situation to Self. The vignette is appropriate for data generation, as detailed above, and my experience converted to a vignette is supported by the literature in that the vignette story draws the participants' attention to patterns in behavior that they could be exhibiting in their own

lives. Vignettes are also helpful in research concerning employment where people might be hesitant to speak out against their employer, work culture, or setting (Al Said & Basit, 2017). The short story is told to see if the participant recognizes the pattern or acknowledges the spending of currency because the story simplifies mindset (Al Said & Basit, 2017) and how he or she perceives that behavior. The responses to the vignette will assist with answering SQ1 and SQ2 which ask how one is to gain favorability at work without the use of funding and what tools are being used to make the action occur.

Figure 3

Vignette

Pauline was 16 yrs old when she started babysitting. When the children she were watching were naughty, she notified the parents and received positive feedback.



When Pauline was 27 she worked in a psychiatric hospital for children. Each time she caught children smuggling in contraband, she got approving smiles from her co-workers.

Pauline was 34 when she found the perfect place to live. It was a large, restored factory with beautiful loft apartments. Not long after moving in, she started reporting leaks and electrical and plumbing issues, and diagnosing these problems. Soon the maintenance manager became angry. He thought she wanted to get him fired.

Note. This vignette was handed to participants when they arrive to the research study interview or messaged to them at the start of an online interview. The participants may give their opinions or comments about how this storyline makes them feel (Hill, 1997).

Data Analysis

For this research project, Braun and Clark's thematic analysis was used as a strategy to understand all data. Data analysis can be accomplished by ethical means and understood by others, with details concerning *the what and the why* of each action performed during the analysis phase (Braun & Clark, 2006). Data collection started with the selection of those that were interviewed (Young et al., 2018). The data collection method first used will be the interview of study participants. The interview method was used so that I could better understand an individual's beliefs, prior experiences, and know more about their daily activities and how they feel about those activities (Chadwick et al., 2008).

Interview Analysis

When I looked at my first piece of data to analyze, it was part of the research data broken down into a smaller piece. The break point of separation between data are chosen when there is a pause in the interview, or where the subject changed (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). I was looking out for transitional words like *after, before, if, and then*, which can cue me that the story has changed or stopped (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) so that I can decipher the interview without interrupting the participant as he or she speaks. I placed all the interviews into a single document so that I could search for these transition words all at once.

All the data collection efforts were completed by myself, therefore when the time for analysis arrived, I was informed about the data and prepared to sift through the information sensibly (Nowell et al., 2017). I studied the data to look for commonalities and explore concepts that could be used to form a theory to explain, describe, or enlighten any idea about different types of personal currency or what common actions employees might use to gain an advantage in a work situation, using personal currency (Peters, 2013). Data organization was accomplished

using coding, memoing, and bracketing. Bracketing is the process of ignoring some details while managing to link others to the primary issues (Blomley, 2014). Different parts make up the whole part of the coding process. Open coding was used to identify broad concepts which can be used to place phrases into categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that before coding, the researcher should start the immersion process and read through the information first. Practicing primary emersion, the most pertinent information was exposed and ready for analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Analysis is a continual process during a research study to keep track of codes and categories. Primarily, it is not the job of the researcher to assume or guess how the data will present in a qualitative grounded theory study. Because the researcher must remain diplomatic and make no guesses that could affect outcomes. The researcher must always keep the data collected at the forefront of this research study. Each theme needs to bring a story to the study that the researcher will explain (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Quotes from the participants need to be included in the final analysis, rooted with the researcher's explanation of the data so that the reader is assured of the study's validity (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An inductive approach was used when placing words and phrases into categories, which means this researcher was looking for patterns and overlaps. The themes will not be made beforehand. The themes that were identified from the interviews do not have to match up to the questions that were asked. The inductive approach ensured that the information in this research study was generated by the data that was processed by this research study (Nowell et al., 2017).

Document Analysis

The Freedom One University employee handbook was read and analyzed. Any information pertinent to personal currency was noted and categorized. This information was used

to verify information gathered from the employee interviews to bolster trust and validity in this research study. This step is necessary for mandatory research triangulation (Patton, 2015).

Data

Data that has been looked over once has not done its job for this research study. As new data are received, the old data may mean more or less than it did initially (Fischer, 2009). As more data are added to the research, the older data may show patterns and like comparisons to the new information. Constant comparative analysis is not always needed and just because it is part of a study does not mean the study qualifies to be called a grounded theory study (O'Connor et al., 2008). Strauss and Corbin, as well as Glaser and Strauss, define grounded theory as what takes place when data are verified by other data, and then a theory is built on that verified data (O'Connor et al., 2008).

Data are mined to find conclusions so that better decisions can be made. In some data gathering, measurements are taken for comparison and contrast, but this study was to explore and gain knowledge. Therefore, measurements in a numerical sense were not gathered. First, I took data from the participants via interview. Then data will be extracted from the interview words after the interviews were transcribed. While small datasets are an issue, because there is less information to compare, they are a modern world reality. Because, in situations when a university is not dealing with large numbers, and only hiring 20 people at a time, a study that has a small dataset would be practical to draw upon (Nate & Zwilling, 2014).

Open, axial, and selective coding was used to decipher and draw out data from the participant interviews. Open coding is the act of placing data in basic categories (Patton, 2015). In axial coding, associations between the categories were made. The process of analyzation gives way to selective coding which pulls out the theory in the relationship between the data (Corbin &

Strauss, 2015). Tables like the one below were used to visibly chart so that relations between categories can be used to move through data. The coding procedure was a personal and lengthy process. To make the process easier, I placed all transcribed interviews into one searchable document.

Table 1

Example table.

Open Code	Participant phrasing

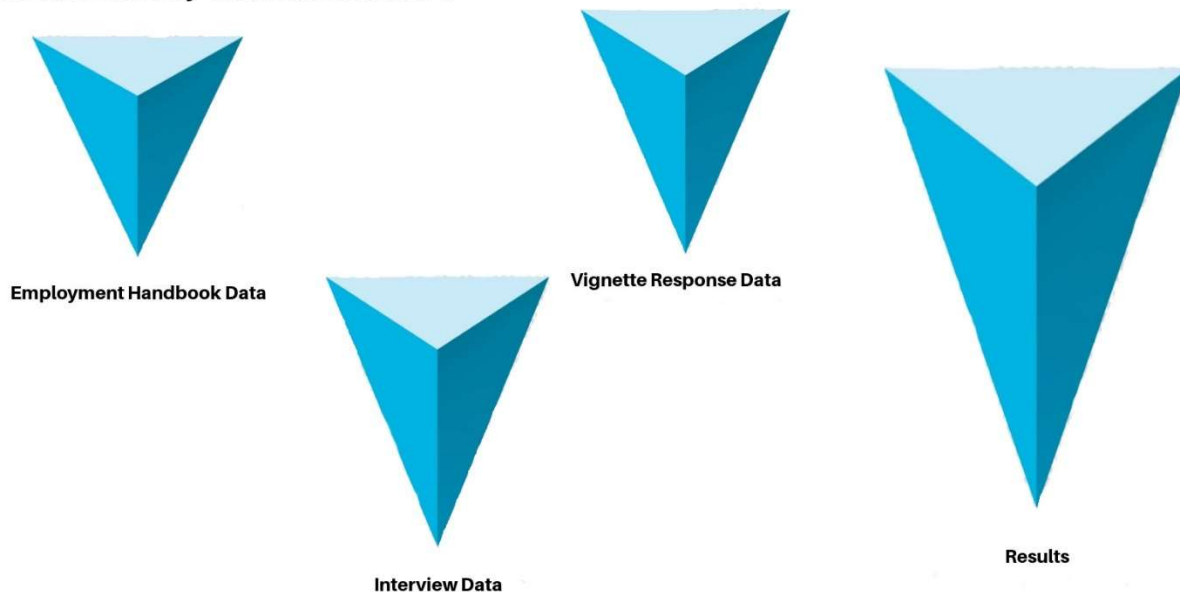
Trustworthiness

This study honors trustworthiness with a promise to bring forth all formative information, even negative case analysis (Denzin, 1989). Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the researcher making all steps and processes clear and keeping procedures honest so that the character of the study is never questioned (Cope, 2014). To protect the integrity of qualitative research, qualitative researchers must perform accurate, detailed, and specific data analysis. The researcher must also record these steps (Nowell et al., 2017).

Trustworthiness during qualitative research and transparency of the conduct of the study are crucial to the usefulness and integrity of the findings (Cope, 2014) Negative case analysis makes research more diplomatic, showing rigor. In this study surprising viewpoints surfaced and were not withheld. Different viewpoints should be the goal of qualitative research (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Trustworthiness means that the data are believable and is a true representation of the words and opinions of the participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). When information comes in

via data gathered, that feels as if it would change the opinion of the researcher, or cast negative information on this study, then the direction of the study would be changed to reflect new information possibilities. No adverse data were hidden, buried, or neglected (Allen, 2017). Content validity was safeguarded by member checking (Birt et al., 2016). Member checking ensures that the participant's views came through in the interview and that the opinions of the researcher were not imposed (Tong et al., 2007). The phrase *member checking* refers to the process of follow up with the participants (Patton, 2015). After each interview was transcribed, an email was sent to the participants with a summary of their interviews. The participants views will be clearly marked. The participants were asked if they agreed with the findings (Creswell, & Creswell, 2018). Some parts of this study could be seen as quantitative in nature. The insertion of quantitative methods does not give way for this research study to be deemed as a mixed methods study. For in some cases, data needs an additional strategy lent from quantitative data to ensure trustworthy triangulation (Patton, 2015). Although, the addition of a quantitative measure or additional source perspective guarantees no additional validity (Silverman, 2005).

Methodological triangulation was used in this study by analyzing different types of data. Those different types of data were interview transcripts, documents, and survey information (Denzin, 1973). Internal validity was maintained by strictly asking each participant the same questions (Cuncic, 2021). The model below is an example of how this study will funneled data and triangulated it for accuracy. The model was finished once the popular themes in each category were identified.

Figure 4*Personal Currency Theme Model Part 1***Personal Currency Theme Model PART 1**

Note. Personal Currency Theme Model, Part 1. All themes were funneled into this data project and the most popular themes were filtered into the results.

Credibility

The reputation of qualitative research is at risk with each qualitative study. For this reason, a logical application must be performed with rigor so that the results are reliable (Attride-Stirling, 2001). To address the issue of credibility, this research study would have allowed contradictory data into the research if it had appeared, which would have allowed for the truth to be told (Allen, 2017; Côté & Turgeon, 2005). Real life information is seldom going to come to a researcher from one clean and agreeing point of view (Creswell, & Creswell, 2018). To better safeguard verification, a dissertation chair will read my research study and give professional feedback (Creswell, & Creswell, 2018). As well I kept a journal in which diplomatic and whole

observations were made. This can be found in the appendices. Candid behavior that is professional was exhibited by the researcher when dealing with the public (CFA Institute, n.d.). Practice honesty to maintain credibility.

Another way to achieve credibility is to have at least three sources from which the research data are mined. When information on the same subject matter is questioned of different sources it is referred to as triangulation (Creswell, 2013). The goal of this study was to have similar information come from each source which can be tied together by this researcher. Also, each participant was able to confirm both the mood and the consensus of their interview so that there were no misunderstandings about how the participant felt about the research subject. For the participant to concur with the wording and mood of the interview, lends further credibility to this research study (Creswell, 2013).

Dependability

To lessen social desirability bias in interview answers, information concerning the exact nature of this research study was limited initially so that participants could not mentally prepare for interview answers ahead of time (Steenkamp et al., 2020). Had they been given the questions in advance, some of the participants could have thought about what the right and wrong answers were, while some could have been too busy to even look at the questions. This would have created answers that were not equal (Steenkamp et al., 2020). To ensure honesty and keep this research on task, activities related to this research study will be recorded and kept in Appendix E with an audit trail. The audit trail also assists in the emerging of categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that an audit trail be evidenced by a reflective journal so that the researcher can understand what he or she is thinking and why, which is determined by a researcher's motives and prior knowledge.

Confirmability

The theoretical framework for this research study is strong in history and is used in current behavioral and scientific settings. This shows the confirmability of the context. As well, coding was kept focused and true to the subject of the study. The best way to reach clarity in the research of qualitative data are to enact check-coding which allows for two different people to code the same data. After an initial assignment has been coded by both researchers, they review the material together (Miles & Huberman, 1994). However, for a doctoral dissertation toward graduation of an individual, there can only be one coder. To prove confirmability in this research study, each interpretation that is made by the researcher should have the researcher draw a parallel relationship to existing literature which was done in Chapter Four (Schwandt, 2015).

Transferability

Transferability is a dissertation subject referring to other professions that are not associated with the research subject being able to adapt this design to their subject, follow the recipe from within, and receive similar or different effects, depending on data collected (Misco, 2007). If a research study is written broadly and with detail, then the possibility of being used later with different cultures and different situations is higher. Writing with deep detail and having a varied participant pool makes the probability of transferability to other professions possible, too (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Researchers have an obligation to use rich and accurate language to describe their study so that other researchers who are interested can read and judge for themselves if the data they are reading is applicable to their research situation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this research study on personal currency, no specific age, sex, or race was sought after for a participant pool to make the likelihood of transferability greater.

Ethical Considerations

The volunteer participants of this research study and their whole selves is the top priority during the length of the study and afterward. While self-awareness is beneficial for an individual (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012), it can also be alarming to learn the reasons for one's behavior. Consent forms were explained to each individual and each individual was told that the research study is volunteer, and the process could be stopped at any time (see Appendix D). The information from this study was collected on my two Hewlett Packard, password protected computers, located in my locked, private home, and is also emailed to myself at the end of each day. This act of emailing keeps the data recoverable in case of a computer incident, but also puts the information at risk of being stolen. Pseudonyms were used for each participant. All personal data will be deleted when they are no longer needed. All other data will be kept three years then deleted. Respect for each participant's private information, given in the interview or otherwise collected, was maintained throughout the research study process. Respect for the research participants and any concerns they have about their personal information was a constant priority (Emmison et al., 2012). As well, the language given in the questions posed to those interviewed was appropriate for the age group that is being interviewed. To minimize confusion on the part of those being interviewed, the questions asked were easy to understand (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary

By making use of solid theories that have been repeatedly applied in the field of science to measure and determine human behavior, the information in this study will explore and possibly give information into the human actions of paying for things without money. A qualitative approach with a grounded theory design was used at Freedom One University. The process of data collection was generated by theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1999).

The goal of this research is to fill a knowledge gap that provides information about personal currency and the wants that drive human behavior while giving human resource departments better insight into hiring those that are self-aware. Those people that are self-aware have tried to remove biases from their lives and have also figured out which of their own ideas or way of dealing with life could be considered damaging to themselves or others (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012). The self-aware individual will be a proponent of personal growth, open to new ideas, while policing their own behavior. Employees who practice self-awareness know when they are trying to use personal currency at work to buy popularity or are making transactions with leverage.

This chapter included the methods that control grounded theory research and showed how this research was accomplished by using specific procedures, collection of data, and analysis of that data. This chapter also included how participants were chosen and how their information was protected. This research was done in a manner that follows the highest of research standards (CFA Institute, n.d.). In the next chapter, the findings of this research study are discussed. Why certain participants were chosen, and what those participants added to the research, was documented. A theme surfaced from the data extracted from the interviews and that was added to this research.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The motive that initiated this grounded theory research study was lack of information in the subject of personal currency and a determination to look through the data, acquired during the research, and examine the interview answers. In assessing the answers, I looked for commonalities or concepts and new ideas that could be explored further, concerning the types of personal currency and actions commonly used by university employees to gain advantage at work (Peters, 2013) so that a model could be illustrated. The newly created model, Figure 15, is a data-based constructed grounded theory functional model of the phenomenon of Personal Currency as demonstrated by staff at Freedom One University. The model shows the actions staff at Freedom One University are using to gain favor. In this chapter, the reader will find information on the participants and details that are true for them as individuals and employees at Freedom One University. The findings of this project were considered in graph, table, figures, and themes, while a discussion of the results' implications are disclosed in Chapter Five.

Participants

The interview subjects participating in this research study ($n=10$) were chosen using the practices described in Chapter Three. Response to a call for interview subjects resulted in 10 applicants, all of whom were employees of Freedom One University. There were no criteria used for eliminating or narrowing the pool of applicants because this was not needed. It was a struggle to obtain the minimum of 10 participants and took more than twice as long as initially estimated. The gender of interview participants was 70 percent male, 30 percent female. The age of interview participants ranged from 19-57, with a median age of 38.5, and an average age of 35.5. Participants were selected because they provided the information that was asked of them, they

were staff at Freedom One University, and agreed to be part of this study. The narratives that follow appear in the order in which the interviews were performed. Immediately below is a table with participant information.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant Demographics (n = 10)

Participant Pseudonym #	Age	Sex	University Department
Gloria	54	F	Administration
Jon	32	M	Sports
Joe	57	M	Environmental Svcs
Gayla	21	F	Admissions
Javan	20	M	Health Services
Julian	19	M	Admissions
Jackson	26	M	Financial Aid
Grace	42	F	Academic Affairs
Jordan	33	M	Military Affairs
Jorge	51	M	Club Sports

Figure 5*Drawing of Gloria*

Note. Drawings representing participants help this researcher give human properties to the research material and allow the participant to be represented even when not present (Sun et al., 2013). All drawings made by the author.

Gloria, Admin

Gloria is in her fifties, from western Tennessee, and claims a personal connection to many of her co-workers. Gloria works in the administration department at Freedom One University. She says she is involved with typical administration work some days and other days she is babysitting the other employees. Gloria sticks to her schedule and appreciates that it works for her. Although Gloria says she has never considered what it would take to be more likable at work, she did have a repertoire of answers such as losing weight, wearing clothing geared to a younger crowd, and forcing a smile, so that she could be more approachable. She added that staying later to clean up after work could allow her to be seen differently by those that work with her and her boss, too.

As a child, Gloria did not make demands of her parents by requesting specific gifts and she seemed happy with what she did get with no need to manipulate those results. Her brother,

who was close in age, seemed much the opposite, always dissatisfied with the results of not knowing what he wanted, thus, not asking for anything. Both Gloria and her brother did not make goals but only her brother was resentful of the results. During the interview Gloria divulged that she, surprisingly, now sees herself as a *pleasing person* and she really did not see herself that way before I had asked questions of her. And when I asked if she was liked or disliked at work, she laughed nervously and said, "Uh. . . I don't know if I know myself well enough to answer this one."

Gloria's vignette response was to make the three mini stories a cohesive unit. She thinks Pauline is searching for recognition, that she does her job but then wants to be favored for doing that job, that Pauline is actually in need of contact and communication with another and the few times she is able to connect this way to another human is when there is some type of relationship which gives her a *captive* audience. Gloria notes that Pauline appreciates attention, and while not willing to lie to receive it, she will wait until it is offered to her and then make the most of that relationship. Gloria finds that Pauline is favored by engaging in aspects of her job at a high skill and talent level. Instead of going out and talking to people and getting attention through normal life instances, Pauline waits for those instances to come to her. This makes her a passive member of her own life and she may have a sense of unfairness about her life, especially when comparing it to others. Gloria notes, "It's almost like she isn't familiar with dealing with others unless it is in a forced and necessary environment, and then when it happens it's ultra-important to her." The currency she used to use to fuel her, now she just uses out of habit.

Figure 6

Drawing of Jon

**Jon, Sports**

Jon is a trainer for several collegiate sports which keeps him employed year-round. He says he has a knack for spotting what is wrong with the body/character/life of his athletes. He wants them all healthy, and from eye exams to nutrition he has learned advice to give. He keeps his character honest and says that it is easy to do. He is himself at work and only holds back the truth if it will hurt someone and that at the end of the day, he feels great about everything he communicates to others and his actions, too. Jon states, “We all care for each other because we are stuck like dominos, dependent on the success of each other. Yeah (laughing) we have serious dependency issues going on. And, what you’d expect, there is a lot of testosterone, guy-yelling, positive feedback, cuz we support each other.”

He remarks that having religion on the side of the team helps, but that he does not know whether to call it a good luck charm or a superstition. But he does convey that the individual education of his athletes is what is most important. Jon shared that his contribution to his co-workers is his hobby of cleaning cars. If someone was getting married, for example, he would detail their car instead of give a tangible present because he actually enjoys cleaning cars, and it is a unique and appreciated gift. When I curiously ask if there is a least favorite employee of his

manager, he remarks, “. . . because I don’t think there should be a least favorite employee. If someone is the least of the rest of us, why are we keeping them around?

Jon’s reaction to the vignette was to first classify Pauline as good or bad. Jon notes that when Pauline is doing her job people are happy with her but when she is doing the job of others, they are displeased with her. Also, he says that in the first two stories, she does what is expected of her but in the third scenario she is doing what someone else is supposed to be doing. He hopes that she is older and wiser in the last story, so he tries to make sense of her actions. Jon noted that her maturity may have given Pauline the wisdom to reach outside her personal zone of normal actions and perform actions that were not assured to get positive feedback, as she had done before in life. Perhaps Pauline no longer cares to use the currency of her past to get the favor she desired by keeping the status quo. As she has aged her currency is the same but used in different circumstances.

Figure 7

Drawing of Joe



Joe, Environmental Services

Joe is in his 50s and enjoys the scenery of our beautiful campus. His family is from the Atlanta area, and he speaks with a slight accent. He finds a golf cart to be fancy alternative

transportation on campus and is appreciative of this luxury. Joe works with the assumption that all the work cultures at Freedom One University are the same, from department to department. Joe thinks that we all have the same beliefs and all the rules at the university are based on those beliefs, therefore, our culture campus-wide is identical. Joe is a simple man who operates with sense and thought, and his love for all he has and knows shows.

I ask Joe if he did something at work that was responded to poorly. Joe asks, very honestly, “Now, this sounds like a question that's gonna get me in trouble. This ain't gonna get me in trouble, is it?” Joe was offered his current position while he was working as a custodian at a nearby church. A deacon at the church works at Freedom One University and knew of the opening and suggested that Joe apply for it. It is clear that he loves the university job. Joe arrives at school early in the morning, so his manager sometimes asks him if he has seen other people that are also supposed to be there at a similar time. Joe says, “I just tell ‘em if I did (see that person) or not.”

Joe's vignette response was quick and on the surface. He thought that Pauline's life events were about the reaction she got from other people. Joe also said that Pauline kept trying. He noted that Pauline was not a quitter.

Figure 8

Drawing of Gayla



Gayla, Admissions

Gayla is in her early 20s with a long drive from work that is fixed with coffee while she goes over her morning emails. Her environment is normally relaxed, and she is glad about doing her job from clock in to clock out. She relays to me that her work mates are mostly her age or much older and that it makes for a trustworthy and balanced setting.

She advises not to meet with unpopular managers in public settings. Even a standing weekly meeting with just two people can start to look like something else. She thought the harmless gossip was fun, as she got unexpected attention of co-workers that were surprised to see her talking to a member of management. But, Gayla soon realized others thought she might be relaying department information to him in a tattling manner. It caused tension. This may be why she does not normally eat or socialize with anyone at work. But this also gives a false picture of her to her co-workers. They think she is a loner when she is really anxious. To mitigate this, she is crafty and loves to make things for those in her office.

I ask Gayla if her manager ever asks her questions about other employees. She shrugs, takes a breath “Sometimes she’ll ask if a specific person is taking too many breaks or if, you know, a specific person is working well with the team. I mean. . . we all have our off days, our sorta-sick days, and I wouldn’t want to be questioned over what I did on one of them.” Gayla is an example of people who sincerely treat others in a thoughtful matter. As she explains, “...cuz you spend so much time together, and it’s about making a work-day, not the same every single day. . . throwing some good in there. . .”

Gayla’s response to the vignette is that Pauline is reflecting on her life and her actions in which she has given much thought. She thinks Pauline may be searching for the reasons for her actions. She also thinks that self-analysis of this sort is a good thing. The vignette examples show

that personal currency is a tangible element that can be counted and maintained. It can be thought about so that it might be changed.

Figure 9

Drawing of Javan



Javan, Health Services

Javan is in his early 20s and is new to Freedom One University. He is the youngest employee at health services and said he is treated as one of the children of all the other employees. He got this position through an automatic match from school and he said to his knowledge three others had interviews for the job as well. Javan's goal is to go back to school and achieve his registered nurse certification. He is grateful to have a career started at his age and to be making money and to have a skill.

Javan has only made one error in judgement since he has been working at Freedom One University and that occurred one day when a group of sick students came in. They all lived in the same apartment off campus and so he stuck them all in the same exam room. He was trying to contain them to one location to spare the other patients, but this of course would have been a privacy violation. He thinks he has been treated fairly since he has been working with this group

of mature employees. Sometimes they can be jerks to each other but they always later apologize. Javan trusts his peers and knows that they care about him. “We decorate for holidays and bring in food for birthdays. We try to enjoy our time at work together.”

Vignette response from Javan was positive. In the first two stories Javan said that Pauline was tattling and in the last story the maintenance manager only thought she was tattling. Tattling is used so much at work that the maintenance manager probably compared Pauline’s actions with what he knew from his past. As Pauline was in a new situation, she was probably just trying to be helpful, which means she was also probably surprised at the maintenance man’s response. By looking at the vignette it appears people do not expect to be helped when they do not pay or ask for it and people also do not expect to be ridiculed for helping.

Figure 10

Drawing of Julian



Julian, Admissions

Julian is in his late teens and was looking for a job that had a future. He found it at Freedom One University as his mother’s friend manages the admissions department. He has a strategy for climbing out of admissions and into another department in which he would rather be.

He has started dressing nicer. His co-workers all know he wants to transfer, and his sudden clothing change cemented his decision. At first, his co-workers treated him as though he is passing through, which he agreed with. But then he noticed something strange. He got to use his wanting to get out of his department as a currency. Co-workers will vent to him about his boss now that they know he has no loyalty to the department. Strangely, they trust him more now. Julian's wanting to move out of admissions is also an example his co-workers are looking to. They are watching to see how easy it ends; in case they want to repeat that action. Julian's other currency at work is a hug. He hugs those who want one. He knows it is not a modern practice but still continues, "I know that is such a taboo thing at work now, between issues of touching and spreading viruses, but I still do it, in a not creepy way."

Julian's vignette response was quick. He thought the vignette photo seemed like a Rorschach test but with words. To him, Pauline seemed like such a people pleaser that it governed her life. He thinks when she got to her new apartment, she didn't know the hierarchy and so she had no idea of who to please. She would have had to gone through some learning mistakes and endured some uncomfortable moments trying to figure it out. And it looks like that is what occurred.

Figure 11

Drawing of Jackson



Jackson, Financial Aid

Jackson works in the goal-driven, financial aid department. He arrived there by way of transfer from admissions. He is known for speaking up for other staff when the public become abusive. Being a gentleman has made him someone that others look up to.

Jackson shared that on one occasion he wanted a promotion so he took advantage of his friendship with his co-worker, knowing that they would check in with him concerning Jackson's work ethics. Jackson admits to being his best around this co-worker during this period. He told smart jokes, shared Word shortcuts no one else knows, and soon he could hear this co-worker bragging about him to a manager. "I knew I was being controlling and it felt a little jerky," Jackson admits. Jackson goes on to explain, "I gave him entertainment, and paid attention to him, and I took a positive referral from him."

Jackson considers leverage at work a necessity to practice and know about. He listens to a web series about the subject. The easiest thing for Jackson to do was to break down his skills by keeping a notepad at work and writing down the steps to each job he was doing that day. He realized he uses many skills each day that he was not giving himself or his resume credit. Then he thought about how he could get better at these tasks and would perform all of his jobs better. The purpose was to have proof of his value the next time he asked for an hourly raise.

Jackson's vignette response pointed out survival skills that are active in Pauline. He said during her babysitting job she gave helpful feedback to the parents which is always welcome, and she built her own value while doing it. This was very insightful for a teenager. Then she used survival skills of bonding with co-workers, which could prove lifesaving in a hospital environment. She was working on being liked which could also prove beneficial.

Figure 12*Drawing of Grace***Grace, Academic Affairs**

Grace is in her 40s and has worked for Freedom One University for nine years. She comes from a family that was strict in her childhood days, with a cold father that was interested in making his children grateful that he worked so hard. It was not a loving upbringing but her grandparents were a bright spot, “my grandparents would always give me snack treats and that was the best present of all since we didn’t get things like that normally.”. Grace’s beginnings have her attached to her job position because it is more supportive than the atmosphere in which she grew up, and she does not want to lose this.

Grace is a loyal employee at Freedom One University as she agrees with the school’s mission to use education to spread the word of her savior, Jesus Christ. She did not mention her family being religious but out of all participants, she is the most devout. The idea of personal currency interests Grace, as she feels it must go on behind the scenes, so much and so casually, that no one ever sees or feels it. She is going to be on the look out and raise her future awareness of personal currency, especially concerning her own.

Grace's response to the vignette was to break down the stories into actions. To Grace, the first and second stories were similar: Pauline gave negative feedback and received positive feedback. However, the maintenance manager took her feedback personally in the third story. It was his attitude and not Pauline's actions that caused the bad response. Interestingly, Grace blamed the man, "The maintenance manager has the attitude issue not Pauline. Because of Grace's distaste for her father, I wondered if she is always quick to blame the male.

Figure 13

Drawing of Jordan



Jordan, Military Affairs

Jordan wanted me to know that everyone he worked with was doing their best. He did not think employees were using their talents to achieve, or personalities to exchange for benefits at work. Then Jordan contemplated and contradicted himself, explaining: it could be something that everyone does. But he does not believe people analyzed or thought about their actions and motives or what was allowing them to gain favor, nor did they wonder if that favor was won unfairly. Jordan thinks that if currency is spent at work then it is automatic and subconscious. Jordan admitted that the only time he had used leverage, he was just being considerate. His band played at a fundraiser, and he invited his manager out for great food on a beautiful day filled with

talented music. The amazing day could have been seen as a favor that needed to be repaid, but he never intended it to be like that.

Jordan works hard, but fears he is seen as average. He says, “Sometimes I will treat students differently if they are calling or emailing in from a known war zone. I go out of my way more for these kids.” Jordan says he knows they are adults, but he cannot help the urge to spend more time with them. “Some of them sound so lonely and I will spend the time explaining something or just chatting with them.” Jordan says then the inevitable talk with his manager will occur about being more concise with what he says and trying to take more calls each shift.

When asked if anything holds Jordan back from a more successful life, “I guess not wanting more holds me back.” Jordan sees himself as military-driven but not goal oriented the way others are. “At this place in time, I’m satisfied.” This is an attitude that Jordan tries to maintain, and that is what he sees as holding him back. If he always wanted more, he would be a far different person, maybe more aggressive about his future, his income, and his status.

The vignette seemed an easy analysis for Jordan. He believes that Pauline has attention issues. She needs sympathy or congratulations, or to fit in. In each instance she was doing what she could to achieve one of these results. Pauline wants to be accepted and appreciated. Perhaps she has no personal life and in these instances is the only time she has a chance to gain consideration.

Figure 14*Drawing of Jorge***Jorge, Club Sports**

Jorge is in his early fifties and works the software that scans the sports tickets so each person can be admitted to university games in a non-eventful manner at each event. He deals with scheduling and the sports calendar, concentrating on the closest four-week block, even though some of the schedule is set for a year in advance. He is a hustler at work cleaning and fixing as he goes, even though those are not parts of his job. Jorge jogs to and from locations on campus because he doesn't think he should be paid for meandering around the grounds. He takes pride in his behavior at work and is proud of himself for making a difference.

One time at work, Jorge acted on his own and did something that was not given the approval of his peers or a manager because he did not even ask for the approval. He moved a dog poop station that he felt was erroneously placed near their entrance door. He relocated it to another place on campus where there actually were dogs. No one formally spoke to him about this, but he still carries guilt around about it, afraid someone will mention it.

Jorge thinks he's liked at work and that everyone around him is in a job that they really enjoy because it stays challenging. Jorge says about his work team, "Cohesive. We have all worked together for at least three years, some of us way longer than that. We drive similar cars,

dress similar, and none of us has any intention of quitting, that I know of.” He thinks people like himself do not have time to talk badly about others or decide if they are going to like or not like another employee based on whatever mood is trending at that time. He says, “Lawd, we are too busy to even think about stuff like that.”

Vignette response of Jorge is figured with careful thought and brainstorming. If Pauline gave negative feedback to the parents, perhaps she gave positive feedback also, but that received no response from the parent. Reporting a negative incident of behavior to the parents was shocking to the parents and this acted as an equalizer between employer and employee. Here she was a child, and the adult was paying her for a job, but when the parent was reacting to the bad behavior of his or her child, Pauline was almost treated as an equal, as an adult. She might have been apologized to and given respect for acting correctly in a difficult situation. Maybe Pauline realized at this point that doing jobs no one else wanted to do, like changing diapers or working with psychiatric patients pays in gratitude equal to the cash it pays. Jorge finally deduces that perhaps Pauline was a homeowner at one point, and she is adept to fixing her own things, out of habit. She did not intend to be mean to the maintenance man, but she wanted to be seen as important and able. However, while she was proving herself capable, she was really saying the maintenance manager was inept.

Table 3, *Interview Questions Open and Axial Coding*, below, has taken a participant phrase from the interview portion of this research study, open coded and axial coded the phrase. All meaningful phrases were coded, but only those that pertain to the work environment are listed in the table. Phrases that had to do with childhood or personal life had no bearing on the work environment provided by the university or the currency that is being used by the participants.

Table 3*Interview Questions Open and Axial Coding*

Open Coding	Participant Phrase	Axial Coding
Caring culture	Inner department is pretty close	Using talents and natural gifts
Inconsistent management	Upsetting when you think in your mind that people are going to be complementing you but instead you get yelled at	Work drama
Caring culture	Personal connection with many people here	Using talents and natural gifts
Caring culture	At holidays I definitely am a big gift giver	Using talents and natural gifts
Work hard	Some people just know a job needs to be done and they do it	Work ethic and good works
Giving compliments	I get praise, and it's usually for remembering to do something that others forgot	Work ethic and good works
Generous	I am more of a pleasing person than I thought	Using talents and natural gifts
Caring culture	We all care for each other, dependent on the success of each other	Work ethic and good works
Caring culture	I think individuality and the right to express that is important	Work ethic and good works
Be friendly	It's not an effort to smile and tell the truth	Work ethic and good works
Gossip	Anything that could get someone in trouble is used as conversation.	Work drama
Manipulation	I can confess to is using a healthy dose of kindness when needed	Work drama

Ability to change environment	Everything is on the ethical side, and if it isn't, we are all free to report on it	Work drama
Awareness	The only thing that holds me back is me	Work drama
Manipulation	I'd pay attention to him more than I normally do	Work ethic and good works
Awareness	It's about, you know, getting closer to each other in your work environment, cuz you spend so much time together	Work ethic and good works
Awareness	and it's about making a work day not the same every single day you know, throwing some good in there	Using talents and natural gifts
Reciprocity	There is a constant give and take and it stays in motion as we all give	Work drama
Caring culture	This is where we've chosen to spend our days and where we've chosen to gift a good portion of our energy	Using talents and natural gifts
Compliment	I love it when I see in the eyes of someone that I work with that they are impressed with me, that's the best	Work ethic and good works
Caring culture	I think you make it to the top, one kind act at a time	Using talents and natural gifts
Reciprocity	Just paying attention to this person giving them attention so that maybe later they'd be nice in return	Work drama
Good Faith	These are things we learn, more for survival than for manipulation purposes, right?	Work ethic and good works

Note. This data was acquired through participant interviews and used to make a model which was the goal of this research study.

The table above was coded from participant interview questions. Raw data, such as interview answers, should be viewed several times and as the new data are analyzed it should be weighed against the old data (Fischer, 2009). Data from the interviews was placed in basic categories which is called open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Then parallel points between the categories were identified during axial coding. Analyzing this data identifies the selective code which generates a theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Table 3 answers SQ2 concerning the use of personal tools used for currency at Freedom One University. Axial coding categories are: Using talents and natural gifts, Using work ethic and good works, and Using normal work drama. The literature in Chapter Two mentioned each of these categories being a candidate for currency usage. Table 7, found later in this chapter, shows how the data was used to find a theme.

Themes

The model that was created from the data gathered in this research study came from triangulation methods (Carter et al., 2014). The data were gleaned from interview question answers, vignette responses, and analysis of the Freedom One University employee handbook. First, coding was performed, and later themes identified by analyzing categories. The themes that were identified from the axial codes which also answered the central research question of this study is that (a) the staff bond and connect over their good works and work ethic. This following of ethics together creates a fair work environment. A fair work environment allows for appreciation of co-workers instead of resentment (Alotaibi & Muramalla, 2018). This means that favoritism, if it occurs, is understandable and accepted, that no one is getting by on their good looks and doing less work because of it. Another part of the staff relationship is (b) they endure work drama together which brings them closer, as this is a shared experience. People bond over

shared experiences (Sangaleti et al., 2017). The staff (c) use their natural gifts to assist one another. They may have no talents in common, but what the staff uses as hobbies, they use for the benefit of each other. All together, these themes answer the central research question of *How do employees leverage human capital, their personal currency, for benefit in workforce settings?* The answer is staff at Freedom One University bond over good works to each other and give of their talents. The activities that bring the staff members personal joy, they have learned to share with one another while they all endure normal work drama which works as an additional shared experience.

Below is a table of staff participant phrases and open coding, as well as axial code that was identified from the original data derived from the vignette responses. It was difficult to compare this data to the previous set because the previous data was about work and this set is more personal and also from the point of view of a single individual. This made choosing the participant phrases difficult. For many phrases that looked like they could be work-related, once they were open coded and then those words and phrases were axial coded, it became obvious that they were personal and not fitting into a category which was work-related.

Table 4

Open and Axial Coding Table for Vignette.

Open Coding	Participant phrase	Axial Coding
Needing attention	Searching for recognition	Work drama
Needing attention	Wants to be favored	Work drama
Lonely	Only has captive audience	Work drama
Appreciative	Appreciates attention	Work drama
Patient	Will not ask for attention	Work drama

Depressed	May compare self to others	Work drama
Feeling Valued	She does her job, others are happy	Work drama
Feeling Disappointed	When others are not doing their job, she is not happy	Work drama
Growing up	She used the currency different as she aged	Using talents/natural gifts
Loyal	She is not a quitter	Work ethic and good works
Helpful	She is helpful	Work ethic and good works
Gives attention	People pleaser obsessed	Using talents/natural gifts
Strong	She is a user of survival skills	Work ethic and good works
Capable	She built her own value	Work ethic and good works
Hard worker	Bonded with coworkers, worked at being liked	Work ethic and good works
Appreciated	When dealing with adults, her feedback is appreciated	Using talents/natural gifts
Rejected	When dealing with immature adults, her feedback is rejected	Work drama
Lonely	Wants to fit in/be noticed	Work drama
Effective communication	She gives the type of feedback that will get a response	Work ethic and good works
Effective communication	She equalized employee/employer relationship w/bad feedback	Work drama
Manipulation	She proves herself capable by proving others are not	Work drama

In the vignette analysis, it is recognized by the participants that behavior changes from childhood to adulthood. The participants expected that a person would get wiser and make better

decisions as that individual aged. It is the natural process of *personality maturation* to learn from mistakes as one grows older (Asselmann & Specht, 2021). The vignette results allowed this research study to view the opinions of university staff. Since all participants are employed, it would be a fact that they have made good choices, learning from life, or from employee handbook advice, and have not been terminated from their staff positions. The axial coding results place the vignette character's actions within work drama parameters.

Self-Determination Theory

SDT explains motivation for behaviors is propelled by the need to control one's destiny while being accepted by his or her peer group. Also, the need to be appreciated can also motivate behavior (Ryan & Deci, 2000). A change in behavior occurs when one aspect of a person's life needs attention. An individual will feel the need to restore his or her life to a peaceful setting and will work hard to get back in control of their life, be accepted by co-workers, be appreciated by a manager, or feel useful in their employment or personal life (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Social Learning Theory

Earlier in this research I explained that social learning theory (SLT) was a mix of types of behavioral conditioning and learning and stimuli reactions. I wrote that SLT could explain workplace settings that had become wrought with dishonesty. But what I found was the opposite while still agreeing with the theory. SLT explained why there was a culture of honesty, care, and concern at Freedom One University. I had expected for the value of SLT to be used as an employee asking for a favor, that favor being granted, and then the same favor being asked of the same individual at a later date in a repetitive fashion (Bandura, 1977), thus taking advantage of the employee that always wants to help or has issue with declining propositions. But instead,

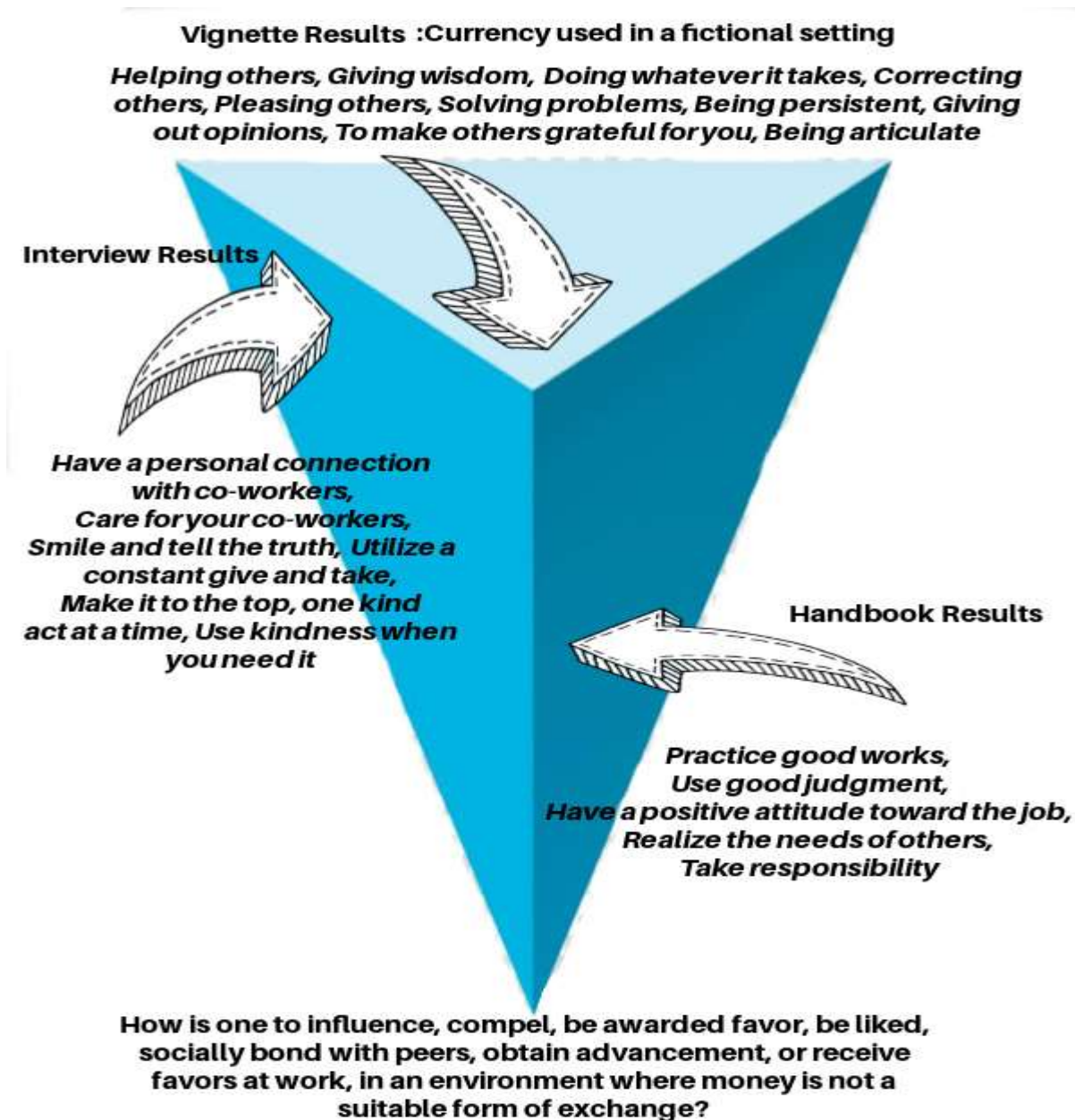
when an employee asked a favor of another employee, and the favor was granted, it showed that they were cared for.

Central Research Question

The primary question asked of this research study is, Grounded theory methods and design were used which required that constant comparison and coding be used, pushing each other firmly until a final limit was reached that revealed the coded category, central to this study (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Leverage is used by employees to receive a trade, not just with their fellow employees but with their employer, too (Newland et al., 2018). The employees are giving, and need or want something similar in return. They give their time, and they receive a paycheck. The staff at Freedom One University bond over good works to each other. The staff members give of their talents. The activities that bring them joy, they have learned to share with one another while they all endure normal work drama which works as a shared experience.

Figure 15

Personal Currency Theme Model, Part 2.



Note. This is a data-based constructed grounded theory functional model of the phenomenon of Personal Currency as demonstrated by staff at Freedom One University. Corbin and Strauss (2015) let researchers know that a well-developed theory that has sufficient supporting evidence

might not be used as it should unless it has a visual representation that will be understood and noticed by those that work in the field.

Vignette Responses

The responses to the vignette were hoped to assist with the answers to SQ1 and SQ2. SQ1 and SQ2 ask, “How is one to gain favor at work without the use of funding?” And also, “What tools are being used to make the action occur?” The vignette responses contributed equal helpful data as compared to the interviews or employment handbook. I did not feel as if anyone was speaking anonymously, whether intentionally or not, to their personal employee situation through their vignette analysis (Al Said & Basit, 2017).

A summary of the vignette, without bias: The first story is about Pauline telling on children and parents reacting. The second story is about Pauline telling on children and her co-workers reacting. The third story is about Pauline noticing every imperfect detail about her new home, which angered the maintenance manager. He thought she had bad intentions.

Currency: Language

Gloria noticed that the currency of giving negative feedback on Pauline’s clients bolstered the necessity of Pauline’s job, but even when she no longer had a job, she continued to use her learned currency of handing out negative feedback. Gloria also noticed that Pauline’s currency was not a strong one. She found it weak because it was only mentioned to be used three times. However, maybe Pauline only used it in her most crucial and called-on moments. She was articulate. If this was a tactic learned in childhood, maybe it only came out when Pauline felt child-like or helpless. Language was the tool used to gain currency.

Currency: Unsolicited Opinions

Jon thought concepts similar to Gloria's when he told me that Pauline is using the same currency as she ages, but when she got older, she used it in different ways. He thought the maturity of her currency was a positive point in Pauline's life as it took wisdom to live outside her personal zone and to convert the currency she learned in childhood to adult needs and circumstances. Her currency was tattling which gave way later in life to the giving of unsolicited opinions. Because tattling is just that, unsolicited opinions of another's behavior

Currency: Persistence

Joe's opinion of the vignette was that Pauline was the type of person to keep going and to never quit. He felt that the stories were a woman thinking back at her life on her progress and mistakes and wanting to understand her past decisions. Sometimes she got the reaction she wanted and sometimes she did not. He foresees that she keeps going and improves her actions and reactions. Joe thinks persistence is Pauline's currency.

Currency: Correcting Others

Gayla told me that the vignette interpretation was difficult for her, and she blamed her youth. She called the vignette "excerpts from Pauline's life". Pauline is first telling parents that their children did something wrong. Then she's telling co-workers, and maybe the children themselves, that they did something wrong. Then later she thought the maintenance manager was doing something wrong by not performing his job correctly. It made Pauline feel good when she corrected people. Pauline's currency is her action of correcting others.

Currency: Helping Others

Javan seemed apprehensive to engage in the vignette assignment because he did not understand the part it would have in this study, "I guess I don't understand how this helps you."

He read the vignette repeatedly while brainstorming out loud. Finally, Javan communicated that he thought Pauline expected things to be perfect at her new apartment home and when it was not, she spoke up about it. She defended herself and her lease. The maintenance manager felt he was being tattled on. In the first two stories she actually was telling on children, but maybe she felt the maintenance manager could see through her, and who she was, making her feel bad that maybe being a tattler earlier in life made her one for all of her life. Pauline's currency early in life was to tell on people and get attention. She realized that this was her currency, and she changed the way she treated others and stopped getting recognition by pointing out the mistakes of others. However, even though she changed, she somehow had not changed completely because she was still seen as being a tattler. At the next juncture in Pauline's life, she will have changed completely, leaving the tattler behind, and be happier with who she is. The currency she meant to use when she moved into her new apartment was to help others.

Currency: Pleasing Others

Julian believes that the life motto of Pauline is, "I must please people." He thought she did well by this and survived and thrived until she reached the apartment stage of her life. It was then that she no longer knew who to please. Therefore, she chose to help out everyone, giving advice to the other tenants by diagnosing their issues which to Pauline seemed the right thing to do and harmless. But then she realized there was tension growing between her and the maintenance manager. She had no prior relationship with the maintenance manager, so she gave this much thought. She gave all encounters she had with the maintenance manager to her mind to replay. She thinks he feels that the apartment owners, herself included, find that he is subservient to them, but that is not how she feels at all. Julian sees Pauline's currency as pleasing others.

Currency: To Ingratiate

Jackson feels insight into Pauline's thoughts. He says she has lived three different lives and has taken the time to plan each of them. Jackson thinks the teenage babysitting story resulted in an apology from the parents and more money than promised at the end of the night because of guilt. Pauline made her value known as a sitter and Jackson finds this an incredibly advanced strategy for a teenager. In Pauline's twenties she uses a survival technique by bonding with co-workers. Being bonded with co-workers could prolong her job and prolong her life if violence was ever introduced into the psychiatric hospital setting in which Pauline worked. In Pauline's thirties she was trying to make a home for herself and bond with neighbors by giving advice about maintenance issues. It was not Pauline's intention to compete with the maintenance manager. The maintenance manager's flawed perception should not be reflected on Pauline. It is Jackson's perception that Pauline's currency is to bond with others, possibly to have them indebted to her, to ensure her security.

Currency: Giving Wisdom

Grace saw the vignette as an equation. Pauline gave negative feedback and in return received positive feedback from the parents while she babysat. Scene two was similar. But in the final scene she gave negative feedback that was not well-received, and she was given negative feedback in return. The maintenance manager was unaccounted for in the equation. It was his attitude introduced into the equation that changed the outcome. There will always be outside forces. Without the maintenance manager, Pauline's assistance might have been welcomed by the building manager and the tenants. Pauline's currency is that she gives what she is thinking, her insights, and her expertise.

Currency: Whatever it Takes

Jordan has a limited imagination and has lots of questions he needs answered concerning the vignette stories. He wants to know what sort of positive feedback Pauline got from the parents of the children she was babysitting. Did she receive attention, sympathy, cash? In the second story she was given smiles from her co-workers, acknowledging that they saw what she had done. She had successfully found contraband on the children in the psychiatric hospital. By having a personal need to feel accepted from one's own peer group, Pauline's currency is going to be determined by whatever act it takes to fit in with her current peer group.

Currency: Solving Problems

Jorge puts forth a valid idea. Perhaps Pauline first gave positive feedback to the parents of the children she was watching, but that feedback was not fruitful. Parents expect to hear good things from their sitter; their reaction to positive comments about their children was unremarkable. Jorge thinks Pauline had an epiphany and realized she can get more money for doing dirty jobs. She pointed out the children's flaws and received attention and sympathy in return. Pauline then went on to work at a psychiatric hospital because having your eyes spit in and getting hit with chairs is certainly a circumstance to win you an apology or be cheered-on by co-workers. Later, Pauline was older when she went to the apartment community and maybe she was looking for a new start, so she approached it, giving 100 percent. She tried to be everything to everyone and fix any problem that she could, including maintenance problems. Pauline's currency is solving problems so she can be rewarded with accolades.

Figure 16

Vignette Analysis Personal Currency Usage



Note. This figure shows how research participants analyzed the vignette and assigned personal currency usage. These responses answered both SQ1 and SQ2, telling what currencies were used by the vignette character. This is a data-based constructed grounded theory functional model of the phenomenon of Personal Currency as demonstrated by staff at Freedom One University.

Table 5

Vignette Categorized Personal Currency Usage

Using talents/ Natural gifts	Work ethic/Good works	Work drama
Language	Whatever it Takes	Unsolicited Opinions
Solving Problems	Pleasing Others	To Ingratiate
Gives Wisdom	Helping Others	Correcting Others
	Persistence	

Currency usage for the vignette placed itself within the three axial coded categories of *Using talents and natural gifts, Work ethic and good works, and Work drama*. Table 5 shows a theme of the staff at Freedom One University agreeing that Pauline, the vignette character, used the act of giving talents and natural gifts to others and in return being given the talents and gifts of her co-workers as her currency as seen in Table 7. What exists for personal currency usage at Freedom One University is more of a barter system, a relationship equity, (Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1978), and its exactly how an ethical business should have its employees behave.

Freedom One University Employee Handbook

I analyzed the Freedom One University employee handbook (2019). Note: there is a separate handbook for faculty. I was looking for any weak spots in policy, but I saw none. I did not see any room for one person to take advantage of another. I did not see any mistakes in grammar, spelling, or anything that could be considered confusing. Therefore, I continued with coding, looking for words that pertained to this study, how often they were found in the handbook, and how many times those same words were found in the participant interviews. The most popular words were compared from two different sources, Freedom One University Employee Handbook (2019) and the answers from the participant interviews. Comparing commonly used words resulted in no helpful results as common words had many meanings and contexts.

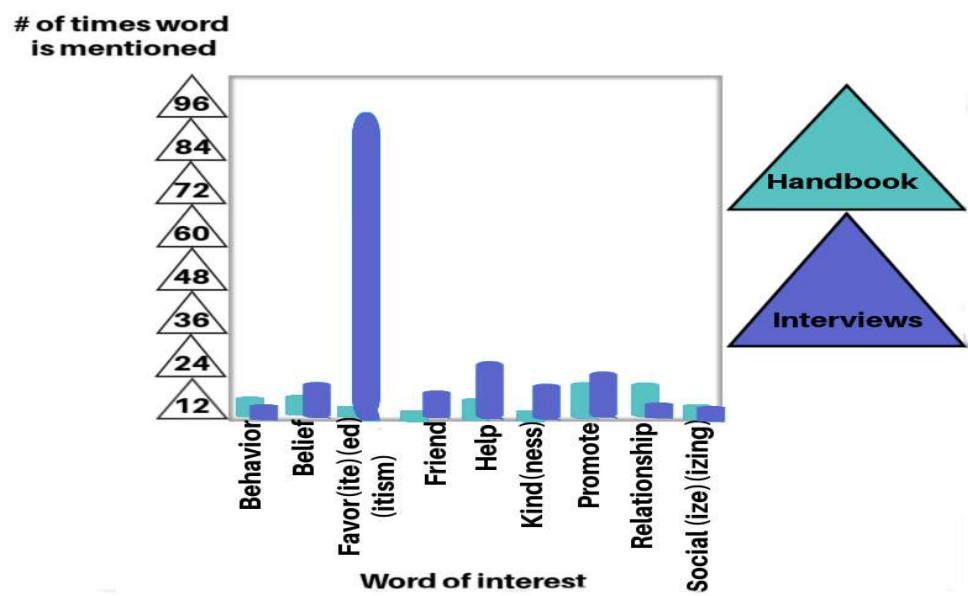
Word Problems

The problem with word counts is their lack of meaning. To read identical words in the sentence in which they are found in the handbook, there were too many variances for accurate comparison. Therefore, even though the word is the same, there is no sharing of meaning and can add no data to this research study. This is disappointing because I thought a lead of commonality

would be traced to the words themselves. Counting common words of the interviews and handbook elicited no meaningful results. The common words of the vignette analysis that was provided by the participants were not computed, as they would have been inaccurate for the same reason.

The ability to convey multiple meanings when a singular word is used is why themes and gut feelings from a qualitative researcher carry more weight and accuracy than individual words without context. If I created a different graph, that showed those same words and forms of those words: behavior, belief, favor, friend, help, kind, promote, relationship, and social, and the graph also showed the many meanings in which each word was used in the two comparative documents, the graph would be very large, with tiny writing, and it would be so subject-broad as to be meaningless. I publish this graph to show how important coding and themes were to this particular research study.

Table 6.
Word of Interest.



University as a Community

The handbook states that the university is a “community”. It acknowledges that people are “social” beings (p. 7) and urges employees to exhibit “. . . sensitivity to the needs of others, social responsibility (p. 8) . . .” (Liberty employee handbook, 2019). I believe these acknowledgements nod to an environment where people do things for one another including giving respect and being careful with one another. Sub question 1, SQ1, asks how an employee is to pay for things at work. The staff handbook tells us to be communal with our co-workers and show kindness. These are the very actions of the participants at work as answered in the research interviews. Here, the handbook and the interview answers concur.

No Kickbacks

The handbook addresses favors and payments, “It is a violation of University policy for an employee, or anyone acting on behalf of an employee, to ask for, accept or agree to accept anything of value for their personal gain, or the personal gain for another, or to accept or agree to accept, or pay or agree to pay any money, service, or other valuable consideration in exchange for any University business-related favor, advantage or benefit (p. 18).” (Liberty employee handbook, 2019). These policies take serious the contracts that are signed with Freedom One University, the outside organizations that do business on grounds, and the honor of the university which is at stake. The university acknowledges that something like this could happen, by announcing its disapproval with those who agree to take funds or items of value, tangible or otherwise, in exchange for consideration at the university. “University policy does not encourage the receipt of gifts by employees for their personal gain (or personal gain of those related to or associated with the employee) for people, firms or companies that do or seek to do business with the University, unless specifically authorized by Executive Management. The acceptance of cash

or its equivalent in any amount is absolutely prohibited. Business meals or gifts of a token value may be accepted or retained if the circumstances indicate that refusing the gift would be inconsistent with the University's best business interests (p.18)." Therefore, you may keep a gift if it would be rude to return it (Liberty employee handbook, 2019). These rules are in place to keep jealousy out of the workplace. If a large tip is left for the cleaning staff, individual staff members might want to know how it was divided and the phone calls to management and the accusations over who took what would be a distraction that is not needed. It is better for a gift of food to be sent over as a thank you to all (J. Bowles, personal communication, September 1, 2022).

Because, in the employee handbook, the university advises against taking gifts for favors, it acknowledges that such a thing happens, if not at their university, then, at other HEIs. With this same analysis, the Freedom One University employee handbook mentioning intimidation and pressure in their work environment would infer that the university is aware that such tactics are used at their or other universities and that they do not want them to be used.

No Drama

"Rumors, gossip, or disclosure of inappropriate or confidential information to the public is strictly prohibited. The spreading of rumors, gossip, derogatory opinions, or inappropriate and confidential information regarding other employees, supervisors, management, or the Board. . . (p. 18)." Drama on popular campuses is big news. But it should not be. It should be a place for education, research, and talent. Therefore, what happens to popular students should be kept confidential and information concerning staff should be kept private. Rumors and gossip are a top currency at most employers (Beersna & Van Kleef, 2012) but forbidden at Freedom One University. While most conversations do not rise to the level that they would be brought to the

attention of human resources, if specific employees, students, or stakeholders were spoken about, the reputation of the university could be at risk.

Freedom One University can discipline employees who are engaged in gossip, those that speak on social media of employees involved in scandals, or employees who do anything to darken the image of the University, per the university employee handbook. These same employees can also be reprimanded for not having the correct attitude toward others they might interact with while clocked in. (Liberty employee handbook, 2019). Harassment of all sorts, which includes words or physical touching, has a no-tolerance answer from the handbook writer(s). The handbook also states that the university wishes to provide a constructive and respectful environment without intimidation or pressure. (Liberty employee handbook, 2019).

Currency is Relative

Dogma is recognized and will be addressed if issues arise. Section 2.8, titled: *Hiring of Relatives*, states that disputes and biases could happen from discrimination and low morale could also take place if employees with relationships favor one another. This would be a serious currency issue where favor was given to a relative. To rectify a situation in which people already within a department marry or have a marital like relationship, the University is within its rights to ask which employee would like to stay in the department and which would like to be transferred out, if a position elsewhere were available. (Liberty employee handbook, 2019). If two people were working as one, then it would be easy to concentrate their currency and find extra benefits from a normal job position. Having rules that prevent this temptation is a superior way for the university to keep the flock ethical.

Coding

When attempting to code the handbook data the problem of comparing an entity of the university to the characteristics of individual people made itself clear. For this reason, I am coding the handbook data with the mindset that the handbook has created its ideal employee, and that ideal employee was exhibiting and obeying all rules suggested of the handbook. Sixteen meaningful phrases, that could wisely advise an employee who wanted to be successful with Freedom One University employment, were found:

- Act in sensitive ways
- Realize the needs of others
- Utilize social responsibility
- Don't accept tokens for personal gain
- No rumors or gossip
- No disclosure to public
- No biases to other employees
- Positive attitude toward job
- Positive university image while in public
- Practice good works
- Use good judgement
- Use good faith
- Be honest
- Take responsibility

All the phrases above which were taken from the Freedom One University handbook could be used as personal currency. They are phrases that would be seen representing a person of

character whose integrity was important to them. For example, being someone known to practice good judgement would be an asset if a leader were needed. These phrases were sorted into the singular open coded category of *Positive environment*. Then the axial categories of *Using talents and natural gifts*, *Work ethic and good works*, and *Work drama* were taken into consideration with only one category fitting, and that was *Work ethic and good works*. The theme was identified as the staff using their work ethic and good works to receive favors when they do favors. The environment is full of reciprocity.

What was found is that all the advice and rules in the handbook were written to protect the university and to make the employee aware of how the university wants that employee to behave. There was no inclination that the employee would ever be rewarded for following the rules, just warnings of consequences if the employee did not follow the rules. The handbook essentially gives the employee a list of acceptable currency. You are allowed and possibly encouraged to be social, be sensitive, recognize needs, be socially responsible, exercise a positive attitude about your job, do good things for others, give others the benefit of believing them, take responsibility when mistakes are made.

Results

The steps taken to develop a theme were to separately code the research interviews and the vignette responses. From axial coding a core category is identified. This core category connects the axial codes, thus connecting the original phrases, and becomes the theme for this research study (Patton, 2015). The Freedom One University handbook was also coded, first for words but this proved ineffective due to the many meanings of the majority of common words in that document. Instead, the document was coded for phrases pertaining to personal currency, then

coded by their fit into the axial categories. I felt that this was the best way for the results to be both trustworthy and usable (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Table 7

Theme Identified

Axial-Codes	Enumeration of open-code appearance across data sets	Theme
Work drama	19	The staff at Freedom One University bond through good works to each other. The staff members give of their talents. The activities that bring themselves joy, they have learned to share with one another while they all endure normal work drama which works as a shared experience.
Using talents/natural gifts	10	
Work ethic and good works	29	

Theme Development

With selective coding, a core category theme was identified using the chart above (Yocum et al., 2015). When selective coding is started, open coding is stopped (Patton, 2015). But first, the vignette results were coded twice and both results concluded in axial coding with the phrases of *Using talents and natural gifts*, *Work ethic and good works*, and *Work drama* identified. The work-related interview answers contained participant phrases that were divided among those axial codes. Those axial codes then provided an answer to the research question. At this point selective coding must connect the axial categories and it should answer the question of How personal currency is used by staff members (Patton, 2015).

This analyzation process of open coding the data involves taking apart the interviews, and handbook, and placing them into smaller pieces that can be coded. For this research study,

phrases that had to do with employment, currency usage, how employees treat each other, or how the employer treats employees were used. In axial coding the codes are placed into common categories. The categories that connected the codes become the axis that the research is joined with. Then, the axial coding categories are combined into a common idea which is the selective coded theme (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

For selective coding I have taken the axial codes and made them into an explanation. This explanation answers this study's research questions: *The staff at Freedom One University bond over good works to each other. The staff members give of their talents. The activities that bring them joy, they have learned to share with one another while they all endure normal work drama which works as a shared experience.* Figures 15 and 16 were created to show the different types of personal currency that are used on campus.

Explanation of Personal Currency Model

As we age, our wants, and needs change and this research study shows personal currency changes to fit our lifestyle and maturity. This idea is linear with the major theories that guided this research study. Self-determination theory (SDT) has people motivated by anything that would assist them in seeking their own destiny or find approval of their current peer group. At age 10 that peer group would be that individual's friends, at age 30, that approval would sometimes depend on co-workers for psychological satisfaction. Also consenting, social learning theory (SLT) supports this concept of personal currency changing with age, because as we age, our peer group also ages and what they accept of us changes. What a community accepts as appropriate behavior is going to change between childhood and adulthood (Asselmann & Specht, 2021). If people act like a 10-year-old when they are 30 years old, their peer group will let them know by their disapproval (Bandura, 1977). This will curb childish behaviors. Conversely, when

people act maturely, their behaviors will be reinforced by their co-workers and friends, strengthening the pattern of thought that achieved the mature behavior (Bandura, 1977). The personal currency model shows what staff at Freedom One University are currently using for giving and trading purposes.

Sub-Question 1: How is one to influence, compel, be awarded favor, be liked, obtain advancement, or receive favors at work without the use of monetary currency? The participants answers revealed many phrases that would assist in answering this question, explaining common issues or influences shared by the participants regarding this research question. Joe, who works with environmental services answered that, “. . .since I don’t have small kids, I use the fact that I can work weekends, holidays, and do special events, so if I need to change my schedule my bosses know I can make up the time and it will help them out.” Joe uses schedule flexibility to get days off when he needs them. He just kindly mentions that he can make up the day on a weekend when his time is more valuable to the university. Joe’s personal currency with the university is flexibility.

Gayla in admissions admits that although she does not tattle, she will answer a question from her manager, “Sometimes she’ll ask if a specific person is taking too many breaks or if, again, a specific person is working well with the team. I mean, I would hope my opinion of how I view co-workers is important.” It is Gayla’s opinion that her judgment holds weight. Her opinion of others is a currency that she exchanges with her manager. She is against getting co-workers into trouble, as, “. . . we all have our off days, our sorta-sick days, and I wouldn’t want to be questioned over what I did on one of them.” Gayla, while young in age and experience, uses her currency fairly.

Sub-Question 2: What personal tools are being used by employees at Freedom One

University to make their day easier?

SQ2 asks what is being used for currency. If there is no major case for manipulation that can be seen from the data with our ten participants, what are they using to help themselves, and how are they getting through the day? By viewing the data, it appears the staff is giving a positive attitude and working well together in a way that would win them kudos. The employees are giving of themselves and their talents to make their coworkers happy and the staff is in a reciprocal mood. The employees are complimenting each other and concerned with one another, and everyone seems to be getting the attention that they need. What the staff at Freedom One University are using for personal currency is care.

Several participants used acts of kindness to bond with co-workers. But I do not think any of those same acts were used to intentionally benefit the giver. Gloria who works in the administration department tells me, “. . .I have a few ladies I’m very close to and I know their sizes and if I’m thrift shopping, I will pick up things I think they might like.” This mirrors the treatment of an extended family and is not an act meant to manipulate. Jon, who works in the sports department, admits, “. . .when someone is going to their kid’s wedding, I’ll clean their car instead of giving presents.” He went on to describe the peace he finds from detailing cars. This is another circumstance of someone taking a skill or an action that they enjoy and sharing it with their co-workers. It is just being used in the normal give and take of friendship to keep the balance in the relationship.

The tools that are used at Freedom One University by employees to assist them in getting through their workday are the same ones that assist them in life. Some of those employees bake, clean cars, repair cars, and take an interest and active part in the lives of their co-workers. The

staff at Freedom One University are members of a group, and this gives them value. This makes them part of a unit and for units to work those units need to be whole. In turn, these employees know that the university cannot run when they are not there and that most of them are not easily replaceable as each one has unique properties and talents. These shared talents, when used together, keep the staff in a cohesive unit that rewards their employer with loyalty.

Conclusion of themes. From the beginning of coding, general themes waited to be identified. Also, the follow-up question, asking about the participant's family's income when they were children and related details, proved to be very helpful in knowing the participants as people but not helpful in the sense of data. It was hoped that there would be a pattern between socioeconomic standing and work ethic or worldview, but no such connection could be made. Analysis of data gives this research study greater focus and fine-tunes the questions that can be asked if further data are sought (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

The sections in this chapter explain findings that were gathered from data received directly and indirectly from the participants during their interview and follow-up questions. Additionally, I have researched to find evidence that supports the findings of this study and that is provided in this chapter as well. The last section in this chapter will present the main theme that was found to coincide with this study's central research question.

Table 8*Enumeration Table*

Research Questions	Theme
How is one to influence, compel, be awarded favor, be liked, socially bond with peers, obtain advancement, or receive favors at work, in an environment where money is not a suitable form of exchange?	The staff at Freedom One University bonded over generosity to each other. The staff members give of their talents. The activities that bring them joy, they have learned to share while they all endure normal work drama which works as a shared experience, bonding them further.
How do employees influence, compel, be awarded favor, be liked, obtain advancement, or receive favors at work when that is not a direct part of their employment?	The staff uses their work ethic and good works to receive favors when they do favors. The environment is full of reciprocity.
What personal tools are being used by employees at Freedom One University to make their day easier?	In offering their talents and natural gifts to others, in return, they are given the talents and gifts of their co-workers.

Summary of Findings

This research study created a model by way of collecting and analyzing interviews, vignette analysis, and coding the Freedom One University handbook, then turning the data into a picture that would allow the viewer to understand human currency. Despite the differences in ages, genders, and job positions of the participants, the staff did connect through human currency.

From the data gathered it can be inferred that personal currency is both a group behavior and a part of social relationships at Freedom One University. The volunteer participants ($n=10$) did not give the answers or information as detailed as I would have liked. But the relationship between what employees offer each other so that they may survive and thrive at work was linked between the vignette responses and the interviews which align with the theories that guided this research study. Because there is a lack of understanding concerning personal currency in most adults, no participant was able to speak directly about the idea of how personal currency usage affects employees at the university. But what the participants could not see in their own circumstances, most were readily able to see in the currency of Pauline, the fictional vignette character. The vignette story details, coded separately twice, resulted in a nod toward an ethical work environment, which identified axial categories of using talents and natural gifts, work ethic and good works, and normal work drama. The interview questions, which were work-related, were open-coded, then axial coded into categories that would tie them together for the remainder of the research study (Patton, 2015).

The employee handbook coded phrases were in the interest of the university, with none benefiting the individual staff member. There were consequences listed if the rules were not followed, but no rewards listed if the rules were followed. All the phrases were axial coded into the category of Work ethic and good works. Therefore, the answer to *How do employees leverage human capital, their personal currency, for benefit in workforce settings* according to the Freedom One University employee handbook for staff? The staff member should respect the contents of the employee handbook and practice good works with a high work ethic.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

Creating a research model that was able to show which currencies are used and how they are used was the goal of this study. In this chapter, the data collected, and findings will be explained. The staff of Freedom One University was recruited for this research study as participants. This was accomplished through social media posting (Appendix L). Demographic and employment information was collected through initial contact (Appendix B) and is displayed in Table 2. The participants were told if they met the criteria for the interview portion of this research study that they would be contacted. Ten volunteers were purposefully selected to participate and received a \$30.00 gift card (Appendix K) once his or her portion of the study was complete. From the online interviews that I performed, data were gathered using coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), until I was able to see themes. All findings came from careful triangulation which included information gathered from interviews, vignette responses, scientifically accepted theories, a follow-up question, and the Freedom One University employee handbook analysis.

Discussion

The findings of this study are that staff at Freedom One University use personal currency to bond with each other; united by good works toward each other. The staff members give of their talents. The activities that bring them joy, they have learned to share while they all endure normal work drama which works as a shared experience, bonding them further (Sangaleti et al., 2017). The developed themes give us the findings from this research study. The data-based constructed grounded theory functional models of the phenomenon of personal currency that I investigated contribute to the answers to the research questions. A research model was built from the data collected from the staff participants. In previous research using grounded theory

methods, Saat, Piaw, and Fadzil's grounded model emerged from the transcript data. Coding developed four major themes and eight sub themes. The model was able to emphasize the most helpful parts of the new information that was added to the knowledge field by the researchers (Saat et al., 2023). Their research created a model to help scientists, teachers, students, and parents see the relationships between the four of them and what students were learning in the fields of science and math and how the performance of the students was related to the contributing scientists, teachers, and parents. The model made the relationships more attractive and showed the collaboration between them (Saat et al., 2023). In the same way, this research study on currency created a grounded model that shows how currency is traded on the staff level at Freedom One University.

Interpretation of Findings

The theme identified from coding the research data are that the staff at Freedom One University bond over good works toward each other. The staff members give of their talents. The activities that bring them joy, they have learned to share while they all endure normal work drama which works as a shared experience. This information was shown in the model (Fig. 15) which is a data-based constructed grounded theory functional model of the phenomenon of personal currency usage Freedom One University by staff members.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The thematic findings and the answers to the questions that guided this research study will be found in this section. Afterward, this researcher will make connections between the acquired data that were collected during the experiment with the participants, literature, the location of Freedom One University, the employee handbook, and the idea of personal currency.

Interpretation #1 Location. This researcher can find no connections between the location of Freedom One University and the subject of personal currency that would add to the current field of knowledge. Neither the interviews nor the Freedom One University handbook offered any ties that would have been geographically prominent enough to assert the data as a commonality. As such, I would have to say that there is no relationship between personal currency and the geographical location of Freedom One University.

Interpretation #2 Literature. The theories that guided this study are the same ones that close it. SLT teaches every new employee what acceptable behavior at work is, as they watch other employees (Bandura, 1977). If a co-worker gets denied the time off that he asked for and does not look angry about it, then a new employee could think that being turned down was expected. However, if the employee gets angry and says, “After all I do for this place, and they won’t even let me take off three days?” A new employee could think that the employer is not being fair. SDT can further this situation when the seasoned employee thinks that his wants and needs do not matter to the employer. This could drastically lower the morale and work ethic of the employee that was turned down for a few days off, to the point where he is providing a bad example to the new employee. But if the employee who wanted days off started to use his personal currency and take his boss’s trash out each day, and bring the mail back from the front, and continues with good works, then is awarded his days off, the new employee would start to realize how currency is used. The new employee would realize instead of getting angry, they can do their job better and maybe get something in return.

The act of getting to be an employee found common experiences among participants. In Chapter Two, *wasta* was discussed in which who a person knows has much to do with the outcome of their job application (Alwerthan et al., 2018). Who a person or their family has

connections with has influence in the hiring process and this was seen in many of the participant stories of how they obtained employment at Freedom One University (Alwerthan et al., 2018). Joe in environmental services told that he received notification from a deacon at the church he cleaned, of the job opening at Freedom One University. He gave the deacon as a reference and received the job as a known honest and hard-working employee.

Interpretation #3 Participants. The participants were all mild mannered, exemplary employees that exhibit good work habits like showing up to work on time and are considerate to each other. From data gathered from the participant interviews, work conditions are adequate and the managers are providing sufficient instruction with moderate supervisory skills. Had the participants been more success driven, they may have also been more manipulative. However, that was not witnessed in this study. The majority of participants were happy where they were currently working, and in their assigned role.

Summary of theoretical findings. The theoretical findings of this research study showed a correlation with Equity Theory in that the balance of employer/employee relations is not just about a basic give and take but is comparative (Adams, 1963). The model that this research has created shows that personal currency is important as it serves as a balance. An employer cannot give everything, but if they provide other high-quality employees, then the group can share currency with one another.

Personal currency is not just between co-workers, because the final relationship at work is between an employer and employee. Personal currency like using humor and getting baked goods in return can make one's day easier. Participant Jon said, "It's not really an effort to smile and tell the truth. I mean, I think that can get you pretty far." That statement was coded into

Positive environment which was axial coded as staff offering their talents and natural gifts to others, in return they are given the talents and gifts of their co-workers.

The questions that initiated this research study asked about motivation as related to personal currency. Social Learning Theory (SLT) was one theory that guided this study. When each of the participants showed a positive attitude and was happy with his or her employer and co-workers, it can be guessed that the like-minded group benefits from a culture of kindness. The peer group at Freedom One University has unknowingly but intentionally agreed that being polite and caring is approved by their peer group and those that act in a polite and caring manner will be accepted.

The theoretical framework for this research as outlined in Chapter One was followed (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). The theories of SLT and SDT gave definition and direction to this study. From SLT this study was able to focus on the interview answers that showed what was acceptable to these employees as a group (Bandura, 1977). SLT opened information showing why everyone acted within acceptable parameters at this university (Oravec, 2019). SLT is related to currency being spent on campus as when one person is kind, another person returns that favor of kindness. Since this behavior is approved by the employer and the peer group, the kindness continues (McLeod, 2016).

Implications for Policy

The surprising data came from the Freedom One University employee handbook. It was one-sided, protecting the interests of the stakeholders and made no attempts to benefit the employee. It gave warnings about how an employee could be terminated, but gave no instructions on how an employee was to be recognized for following all the regulations in the handbook. The higher paid administrators and professors need ways to compliment the staff and

it should be so formal as to be included in the handbook to ensure that it is constant. Recognition bolsters the personal image and can be a top motivator (Mason, 2016). Freedom One University does have employees of the month, published on their website, but this could be done in a grander manner. It is suggested that the beginning of an employee handbook thank the employees and announce that they are the most important part of making the university a success (McCabe, 2015). This would be a monumental step in showing the employees how much they are appreciated and lend some balance to the employee handbook.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

People who do not accept criticism well, who take it as a point of rejection instead of a starting place for doing better, those people are represented by the maintenance manager. His character of immaturely taking the pointing out of mistakes as a personal attack, played an unexpected part in the life of Pauline, the fictional vignette character. Participant Grace pointed out that when Pauline dealt with adults, her constructive feedback was appreciated. But when Pauline gave that same feedback to a man who responded like a child would, defensively, the outcome was negative. The takeaway from this is to consider how people are going to respond before feedback is given. Being close to someone, both physically and mentally, is an indicator that the person that is being advised will not oppose criticism (Svensson, 2007). Pauline had just met the maintenance supervisor and was not in a position to criticize him, even though that was not her intention. If you do not know someone, you do not know how they will react, and in that way, they are free to act any way at all because there are no expectations.

There were no implications for the method of grounded theory found during this research. I believe the study shows how biased the Freedom One University handbook is and how it serves and protects the university. However, it is a handbook, intended for staff members to use as a

resource when needed. Even so, it is not filled with positive information for an employee. It can be more thought of as a manual of what not to do, during and not during, working hours, while employed by Freedom One University. Employee handbooks should highlight the importance of the employee (McCabe, 2015), the Freedom One University handbook does not.

This study confirms downstream indirect reciprocity (DIR) (Szczęśniak et al., 2022). DIR is the reaction an individual expresses, after being gifted an object or service. In the case of this research study, all participants originated from the same country and have a similar understanding of our culture. This is reflected in that all participants have a similar way of paying back their co-workers when something good is done for them. Since all the employees were happy in their positive environment of caring culture, the reciprocation between staff of personal currency is successful, as well as the balance between employer and employee.

Limitations and Delimitations

Anecdotal, or formal fallacy, nods its head at the human condition of assuming what one knows, is all there is to know (Dorr, 2017). While this research and its biases do initiate from a singular viewpoint, the research that accompanies this standing should give way to a greater truth than my own. In addition, to get past my own belief system, confirmation bias needs to be addressed. Confirmation bias exists because people support rules and systems that agree with their personal beliefs to which many are emotionally attached (Kappes et al., 2020). This personal defense system against beliefs other than an individual's own makes it difficult for people to argue with a method that supports what an individual already thinks they know is wrong. However, a responsible standard is to question all evidence, and the validity, even if it seems to peacefully go along with our thought process. Instead of using the evidence found by

others that disproves our ideas, humans will be self-justifying, and the opinions of others will carry less weight if they do not agree with our own (Kappes et al., 2020).

Non-response Bias

Non-response bias is a term that recognizes the type of people you may need for your research study are the exact type of people who will not respond. For example, when researching extreme weight gain and the health effects that go with rising numbers on a scale, the heaviest of people will not respond to the survey (Fergusson & Boden, 2015). For reasons personal to the non-respondents, the reasons the people that did not respond ignored the ad were probably related to embarrassment, not wanting to face their problems, or not wanting to be lectured or advised about their issues. This cohort, who needed to be represented most of all, declined to participate (Fergusson & Boden, 2015). This research study saw a similar effect in that the motivated and driven individual that this study wished to cross paths with, was probably too busy at work to take time for a research study.

When reading over the interview answers I am faced with the possibility that although the participants come from different backgrounds, there is a lot of Americana-shared cultures between them. The participants all grew up knowing what was expected of them and entered adulthood ready to make those expectations work. The participant's responses are not all the same, but too similar for a researcher who is looking for a large pool to dive into to fish around for new answers. I have to ask myself: What if the type of person that answers Facebook ads to help people with their research is a caring and helpful type of person while the manipulative person I was looking for is too selfish to give time for research? I did not even think this could happen, but, "Human Resources supports the University by continually striving to attract and retain top talent for the University through continual improvement and quality control of hiring

practices (p. 12) . . .” (Liberty employee handbook, 2019). Perhaps manipulative employees have been quality-controlled out of the payroll and that is why the participants did not respond to my plea for research participation.

The type of person I needed to interview, to have a full picture of personal currency, the selfish person, was too selfish to participate in a study that only paid 30.00 for an hour. I thought if I had ten random people in my study that those participants would contain an average of behaviors and attitudes. To fix this blunder of having the same type of person apply to ads for research. I expect different ploys would need to be thought of, ones that would tempt someone with a high self-opinion. Appealing to their need to be wanted and appreciated, a request for *super-hero, overachievers at work* could be placed, with much higher compensation for their time.

No one was left out of the study who could be in the study. Tighter restrictions on the participant pool would have been detrimental to the timing of this study. However, a factor that could have been changed was the amount of funding offered to each participant. The amount offered was a 30.00 gift card. If this were increased to \$100.00 or even \$200.00 per participant, then there would be a larger group to choose from. Because I wanted as many participant candidates as possible, I did not want anyone left out of the pool of participants. The more truths and opinions I had direct access to, the more similarities I could find that united them all or perhaps the data could have found them united by their differences.

It was suggested and even pushed toward me, that I change this grounded theory study to a case study. Grounded theory is no longer encouraged at my university of learning. To overcome this, students will have to get special permission ahead of time to pursue grounded theory. Also, it will be more difficult for them to find a chair to monitor their work. I am grandfathered in and

chose a chair and committee member wisely in the initial stages, so this research study has adhered to all university rules. I still feel that an ethnographic study would be one of the best disciplines for this study. I feel that for a more effective study, the employees need to be watched by a researcher, so that what motivates them can be seen and understood, and that the culture of give and take and favors versus what motivates these employees can be recorded as it happens (Creswell, & Poth, 2018).

The first questions asked should acclimate you and your study with the participant and put them at ease (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Asking about their childhood roots is perfect for this purpose. However, I did not want to waste a question on formality, so I skipped this pleasantry. But I later thought this was a mistake. Knowing where the participants came from and having a hint of their family income helps identify circumstances that could tie into the study. This was so important that I made it the only follow-up question: Can you tell me where you grew up, and the income situation in which you felt you lived at that time? Of course, the question may be answered with a child's perception, as participants could use their childhood memory to respond. If their parents were asked a similar question, their answers may be different.

Recommendations for Future Research

The recommendations for the future of personal currency research are given with much thought. To my regret, the interview questions in this study were not designed to elicit the response that was needed. As such, the answers to the twenty-two questions were inconsistent with the subject matter. Also, it has been my personal interview experience that a speaker will talk well beyond what is asked. But in the interviews for this study, the participants seemed a bit nervous and did not discuss more than I had asked. This was partial to my benefit, as in the past, an interviewee would ramble in self-serving banter, and that would not have served this study

and possibly polluted the data. My experience has been to interview those that were natural speakers, however, the participants of this research study were not natural speakers. Some were more comfortable than others, and the interviews being performed over the Internet may have also been a factor as the participants were not my captive audience, as they were in their own homes or places of work.

I think that an ethnographic study, in which the researcher is immersed in the environment, would best serve the answer of how personal currency is used in the workplace. A job with an easy workload would be needed so that the researcher could pay close attention to work dynamics and how people treated one another. Depending on how closely the department worked with one another, I would estimate a position in which one had access to learning the habits of the other employees should take 4-12 weeks.

A population that should be studied further for personal currency should be those aged 50 and over. Having participants that have life and work experience combined with maturity makes the research easier. The participant's lives have done the research, there just has to be a researcher to facilitate the best way to extract that information. Also, this population will know themselves better, know why they use certain behaviors and when, and know more about their co-workers. When the participants are in their 20s, working a first job, they are not going to understand the weight of the questions being asked because they may lack life and communication experience. Older individuals in a study push the researcher with viable choices and possibly more accurate information because those older participants are not guessing at answers like a younger person. As well, older participants are sure of themselves, and they answer in a way that matches their maturity. Maturing as one ages is called *personality maturation* (Asselmann & Specht, 2021).

The main recommendation for this study would be to improve interview questions. For, it was difficult for this researcher to create questions designed to give an answer that I was unsure would expose any truth about anything related to personal currency. Few of the participants were able to pinpoint the currency that they used as children. If the ten participants had been able to recognize what strategy they used as children to get their way, and also, what they used years later to convince a spouse or co-worker to do things for them, then the connection between childhood currency and adult currency could be made and changes in currency could be seen. To achieve this data of viewed personal currency, the interview questions would need to be given to the participant ahead of time so the idea of currency could be absorbed and ideas of how the participant may have used their own currency would come to the person's memory. Also, it would be helpful if the participant's childhood guardians fill out a questionnaire concerning the participant's childhood behaviors. A prerequisite for that study would be having one willing childhood guardian participate in the study. Another option would be a longitudinal study which would interview a large group of participants every five years, from the ages of 10 to 50. Largescale studies such as these are quite expensive and are focused as much on the element of change, as the details that are being followed (Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010). Even so, a study with more participants from varied locations could improve the results.

Question 12, which asks about co-workers doing favors for the participant, proved to be much more of a helper than I had planned. Most participants admitted what favor could be done for them that would make a difference in their day. And that really should have been the question that was asked: What favor could a co-worker perform that would make a difference in your day? The answers to question 12 showed the vulnerabilities in each participant and improved knowledge about that individual.

Question 17, inquiries about leverage and experiences performed on the job, was not well-received due to the age of some of the participants. Had the age of the participants been older, the participants could have referred to previous job experiences. However, having ages 18 and older, qualify to participate in the study, and then be participants, limited the response of the answers. I still think all the questions were needed to find a common denominator among participants. But, at this point in the research process, I wish I had asked fewer questions and that those questions had been more specific to the topic without pushing the participant in any direction.

Conclusion

Ten participants who are currently staff members at Freedom One University in Central Virginia took part in this research study. The participant staff members completed a basic survey and signed a release form. From there they agreed to and did provide answers to interview questions and gave an analysis of a vignette. Later each participant answered a follow-up question and completed a member checking sheet.

The findings of this research study showed that when employees offer their talents, hobbies, and natural gifts to other staff members, in return they are given the talents and gifts of their co-workers. This achieves respect and balance by being supported (Rathert et al., 2022). The currency that was used at Freedom One University by staff members included acts of kindness and consideration while the staff members showcased their talents of repairing vehicles, detailing cars, shopping, or baking.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

IRB approval email

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 24, 2022

Olivia Dodson
Russell Yocum

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-1120 WHAT'S YOUR CURRENCY AND HOW DO YOU USE IT? EXPLORING THE WAYS STAFF ON CAMPUS USE NON-MONETARY FORMS OF PAYMENT: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF NONMATERIAL CULTURE

Dear Olivia Dodson, Russell Yocum,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46.104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX B

September 15, 2021

Dear University Employee,

I am a doctoral student with the School of Education, here at Liberty University. As such, I am completing my dissertation and am starting research as part of my graduation requirement toward my Ph.D. My research study purpose is to explore personal currency among university employees, what employees use as currency when cash is not acceptable in the work setting, and if the employees are aware of their personal currency usage.

This letter is a request to you, from me, to take part in this research study. If you are currently an employee at Liberty University and are able to volunteer for this study, please answer the questions in the anonymous survey, below (this should take about five minutes).

Afterward you will be needed for a volunteer, face to face (masked if you wish), or via Zoom or app of your choice, interview at the Liberty University campus, in the library or a location of your choosing. This interview will be audio recorded and will take about 30 minutes. Afterward, you can review a transcript of the interview to ensure the accuracy of your words and personal views. About a week later you will be asked a few follow up questions. Any identifying information that you provide to this study will be protected and confidential during the course of the study and afterward. After the study, your personal information will be deleted.

Once you send back this completed survey, if you are chosen, I will schedule an appropriate time for an interview. If selected and you choose to take part in this research study, you will be gifted a \$30.00 Target or Walmart gift card.

Olivia R. Dodson, Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University

Survey

1. Are you currently employed as a staff member at Liberty University?
2. Which gender do you identify with more closely, male or female?
3. Which department in the university do you work with?
4. What is your age?
5. Do you manage any other employees?

Appendix C

Timeline

Summer 2020: 960 Dissertation Planning, 815 Quantitative Research, 701 Advanced Learning Theory & Research.

Fall: EDUC 917, EDUC 980 (Choose a committee and chair).

October-December 2020: Write prospectus.

January 2021 Take 988 and 989 Dissertation I

Summer 2021 Take 989 Dissertation II

August 2021: Enrolled in EDUC 989 Dissertation III

September 2021: Submit proposal manuscript to chair.

Proposal defense: Present 20-minute pp presentation.

Submit complete IRB application to Cayuse.

When IRB approval is received start the procedure of finding participants.

Write chapters 4 and 5, collect and analyze data.

Submit dissertation to chair.

Make corrections as guided.

Once the defense is scheduled, doctoral support will request my enrollment in 990.

Register my dissertation with the Jerry Falwell Library.

May 2023: Graduate

Appendix D

Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of the Project: What's Your Currency and How Do You Use It? Exploring The Ways Staff on Campus Use Non-Monetary Forms of Payment: A Qualitative Grounded Theory Study of Nonmaterial Culture

Principal Investigator: Olivia Rosalind Dodson, Liberty University, School of Education

- **Your invitation to participate in this research study.**

You have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Olivia Dodson, a student of Liberty University, as part of her doctoral dissertation. To participate, you must be a current employee of Liberty University and considered a member of the staff. Your participation in this study is voluntary.

Please take time to read this form in its entirety and ask any questions that you may have prior to deciding to take part in this research.

- **What is this study about and why is it being done?**

The purpose of this grounded theory study is to understand the practice of using personal currency in the university setting. Personal currency is how individuals pay for things at work in an environment where cash is not acceptable, such as doing favors for colleagues or bringing in baked goods, or volunteer at every opportunity so that they become favored.

- **What will happen if you take part in this study?**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Interview. I will audio record a 45-minute interview with you where I will ask you 22 questions. A vignette analysis is included in this section. This is where you read a story that is a few sentences in length and then tell me or write down your impression of the story.
2. Lastly there will be a few follow-up questions for clarification of the original interview. You will be sent or given a transcript of your interview to check for accuracy and to ensure that you agree with the tone of your opinion as conveyed in the interview. This process should take about 10 minutes

- **How could yourself or others benefit from this research study?**

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

The benefits to society, specifically, workplaces, would be a better understanding of how employees interact with one another and what motivates those employees to work with more efficiency, and with a better attitude.

- **What risks do you assume by taking part in this study?**

The risks involved in participating with this research study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

- **How will your personal information be kept private?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data are shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer or safe. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

- **How will you be compensated for taking part in this study?**

Participants will be compensated for taking part in this study and will receive an emailed \$30.00 gift card from Walmart or Target when they have finished their portion of the study.

- **Is study participation voluntary?**

Yes. Participation in this study is voluntary. You decide whether or not to participate in the study and it will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. You may not answer any question or choose to leave the study at any time without affecting those relationships.

- **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address or phone number included in the next paragraph. If you should choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

- **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Olivia Dodson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Russell Yocum at [REDACTED].
Redacted for privacy.

- **Whom do you contact if you have questions concerning your rights as a research participant?**

If you have and questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or you may email IRB@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations.

The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University

- **Your Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Name of participant

Date

Signature of participant

Appendix E

Audit Trail

Dates and Tasks

August 30, 2022- Made initial post on Facebook on this page:

[REDACTED]

Redacted for privacy.

September 1, 2022- Started coding Freedom One University employee handbook while waiting for participants to come forward.

September 10, 2022- Response has been slow but steady.

September 30, 2022- I posted a new ad to gain participants in case any of the initial 10 dropped out.

November 16, 2022, Walmart 30.00 gift card purchased:

November 17, 2022, Walmart 30.00 gift card purchased.

November 30, 2022, Walmart 30.00 gift card purchased.

December 2, 2022, Walmart 10.00 gift card purchased.

December 3, 2022, Target 20.00 and 10.00 gift cards purchased totaling 150.00

December 8, 2022, Walmart 30.00 gift card purchased.

January 1, 2023, Walmart 20.00 gift card purchased.

January 4, 2023- I started coding the words of participant interviews.

January 30, 2023- I have 180 pages in my dissertation and I need to finish Chapter Four within the next week so that I can stay on schedule. Dr. Yocum has agreed to look at my Chapter Four while I continue to work on Chapter Five so that I do not lose momentum.

February 7, 2023- submitted chapter four to Dr. Yocum, hoping he can give some direction. I'm almost feeling stuck. The model I started writing with last year, and dissertations from that year that I had been using for assistance, now do not align with the newer model for chapter four, especially.

APPENDIX F

Personal Perspective Journal Excerpt

For the last few years, and maybe for the rest of my life forward, when I meet someone, I ask them about their personal currency. Usually, the person says they have never really thought about it. This afternoon was one of those informal interview days. An old man I know who does sound for the local music venues asked if I would come out and listen to a group of musicians. I obliged and a stranger at the bar began speaking with me while I was eating Lynchburg's largest salad. We talked basic banter, about what some people consider fun, what others consider to be happiness or peace. I asked him about his personal currency, and he thought my question was interesting, but he did not know exactly how to answer. I inquired if him giving advice to others might be a currency he uses. Again, he did not know the answer and instead talked about luck and how that might matter as much as knowledge. It was getting time for me to go, so eventually I moved the conversation forward and tried to ask him a dog question since he used to be a dog trainer. His tone immediately shifted, and he said if he could buy me a drink that he would answer my question. I started packing up my stuff to leave. I felt uncomfortable and was not going to be pressured to stay because he had a small bit of information that might help me. He tried to make his ultimatum better by saying that I did not have to consume the drink, that I could give it away if I wanted to, or just leave it on the counter. He was attempting to justify his pressuring behavior. I said a kind goodbye to him so I could be home before dark. It was then that I realized the man did have a currency, and it was advice by way of manipulation. He would withhold advice until an individual did what he wanted. He would even be generous and give a gift to trade for what he wanted. The man did not know the answer to the personal currency question as it related to his own life, but he was able to tell me just the same.

(Sample 2) While researching for this dissertation my 20-year-old daughter made a new friend. He was about 30, balding, beer-bellied, married, and unemployed. I attempted to ignore his appearance because this gentleman was acting in an interesting manner. He lived in a townhome near my daughter's townhome and was sometimes hired to clean them when tenants moved out. Because of this contact, he knew things about the daily happenings in the business office. He kept telling my daughter things she needed to know, and things others were saying about her. At the same time, he was finding out things about my daughter, like she had a cat she didn't pay a pet fee for, and other bits of truths from my daughter that this man could gain positive feedback from if he reported the information to the property manager: "Hey, Aerielle, in 508, has a pet". This guy was giving but he was not taking. I couldn't wait to meet him and find out what his currency was. I imagined that he was raised to be polite and perhaps had a unique personality that made him keep secrets close to his guard. How was he paying his way at the townhomes and what was he gaining from his friendship with my daughter? I wanted to know. From my view, he was gaining companionship with my daughter, and she had a car (he did not) and they went on fast food runs and hung out at the pool.

One day the simple truth came out. I was giving far too much credit to this individual, who was more common than unique. He was polite to my daughter and kept her confidences hoping to have a much closer relationship with her. When she made it obvious that they were to only ever be friends, the gentleman called the police and reported her, saying she was sad. They showed up beating on her door on her 21st birthday. Her friend also called social services and three days later they showed up, too. There had been a report of neglect concerning my daughter's 4-year-old son.

I over-reached when judging this man. I thought there might be something complex or different about him. Yet, what I came to understand is that he was an opportunist that threw tantrums when he was disappointed. So, what was his currency? To get what he wanted he told women secrets, gave them knowledge, or perhaps bought alcohol for them if they were too young to make the purchase. There was nothing complex about him.

(Sample 3) This weekend I helped my neighbors move. They thanked me repeatedly, which I understand because for someone to volunteer to assist you in this time of need is moving, as most time is usually short. They were needing to get in and out of the building repeatedly and since I knew they would not always have a key on them, I gifted them the 4-digit door code. I asked them not to give it to anyone else as we are supposed to use our key fobs to get in and the codes are only for USPS, FedEx, and UPS. They all agreed that they would not share the information with anyone.

I had made several trips to my car with their plants and boxes of dishes when they found another neighbor to help. Within minutes, on one of my trips downstairs, I heard them give the other neighbor that started helping, the code. I was shocked, but it immediately made sense. They had nothing to offer the guy but gratitude, so they also gave up the code to get in the door in case this guy ever got locked out. I gave it out because I wanted to help. They gave it out to pay for moving assistance.

(Sample 4) I just typed for this research study, “The employees are giving and need or want something similar in return. The staff members give their time, and they receive a paycheck. Otherwise, the relationship would be off-balanced, and bitterness and regret could start to grow

within the mind of the employee.” And I find myself in a situation that recognizes how real my words are. I have been working, cleaning apartment buildings and apartments. After two weeks, I invoiced the company. Days later I was told I would receive a check that Friday. No check arrived that Friday, nor the next Friday. And by the second Friday, I had invoiced for another two weeks. I indeed feel a very off balanced relationship. I do not know if I should keep cleaning and keep waiting, using my own money on cleaning products and gas to get between buildings, or if I should stop. And what would make the relationship even more off balanced is how it was initiated. The company manager told me that she was paying 1,300.00 per building, two times a month, for these cleanings and that the people never really cleaned the building. The manager told me all I had to do to take over the job, would be to buy a one-million-dollar personal liability policy for my business and fill out a W-9. I got that information to her the next day and she then told me, well the owner’s don’t really want to pay that kind of money. They will pay you 800 per building, two times a month. Then after another two days, she said, the owners don’t really want to pay 800 for the other building. Then she added to it by saying, if I didn’t agree, they would just have the maintenance manager do it for free and there’d be no job for me at all. So, I agreed. Instead of cleaning one time every other week, I have cleaned 23 days the last month. This made sure that each building was always cleaned, and I also identified and removed brown mold. I was wondering if I should continue without pay or stop until I have been paid. But after writing this, it is not really the dilemma that I thought it was. The choice is obvious.

Appendix G

Member Checking (Birt et al., 2016)

Thank you for the time and thought you gave to this study concerning personal currency in the educational employment setting. The purpose of this document is to share your transcript, as well as inquiring if you agree with my analysis of your interview and if your understanding of this research makes sense to the average person.

1. Please review the transcript that is attached to this email. If you feel any corrections need to be made, please include those changes in your return message. Do you feel that the transcript is an accurate account of the words you exchanged with this researcher?

Strongly Agree/Agree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

2. The statements that follow will mention themes that surfaced during this research study. After each statement, indicate how strongly you feel about the analysis of this research study regarding themes that were found.

Reciprocation at work is something I witness during my day. One person does things for another, and that kind act is later or immediately returned.

Strongly Agree/Agree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

When I am polite to others, they are polite in return.

Strongly Agree/Agree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

If I work late and sacrifice my personal time for the university, it would be nice to receive a message of thanks or recognition in some way, by a member of management.

Strongly Agree/Agree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

3. Using the knowledge of an average person, I agree that it would make sense that at work we use our actions and choices as a way of driving our careers and that this could be seen as a type of currency.

Strongly Agree/Agree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

4. Setting/Situational Context: This theme considers a knowledge of one's own behavior and how that behavior may be used while at work. I agree that this theme is a sensible conclusion considering my knowledge of the research topic.

Strongly Agree/Agree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

Member checking form adapted from Yocum et al., 2015.

APPENDIX H

Reflective Journal Excerpt

October 20, 2021

Dr. Park said of my research director review that Liberty University only allows certain faculty members to supervise grounded theory dissertations and that this needed prior approval. As my chosen Chair, Dr. Yocum is listed under Grounded Theory in the university's Chair directory, I am left with much frustration.

October 20, 2021

Dr. Kurt Michael types that I may do a grounded theory dissertation as I am grandfathered in, and suggests we meet in person or speak on the phone.

October 21, 2021

Met with Dr. Kurt Michael in his office on campus. I cried nearly the entire time. My only trigger in life is this school. The 12 years I have spent as a student and the \$175,000.00 in student debt is such an emotional subject for me that it is crippling. It is better that I stay off of campus, although I do fine at the library. We spoke for over an hour. Dr. Michael urged me to change my dissertation to a case study approach. He assured me it would be quicker and that he himself could oversee the project.

October 22, 2021

I do not see how performing 10 case studies is going to be any quicker than performing 10 interviews.

October 25, 2021

I wrote to Dr. Michael thanking him for meeting with me but declining his assistance with my dissertation. It would be nice to have someone local help me, but I did not feel I could keep up

with the expectations of Dr. Michael and also live my life which is already new as I just moved this year to a totally new environment. More accountability is not what I need during this time.

November 23, 2021

I wrote to Dr. Michael telling him he was correct about it being my fault that I got off course with my dissertation schedule. While I still do not think Liberty should advertise this degree in a 3-year plan model, to stick to their plan mandates four classes each semester and several semesters I just took three classes. I tell him that I am not sure I have any more wanting in my to complete this degree. I have no family and minimal friendship support at this time.

June 6, 2022

I emailed Dr. Michael asking why it was a surprise to myself, and others, that the IRB process was lengthy. I relayed to him that I thought after my proposal defense that I would just fill out a paper and send it in with my dissertation. I was completely shocked to find out that IRB does not see my dissertation, just parts of it that will be shared with participants. I told him I was also surprised that consent and other forms had to use a specific template. I thought I could say whatever I wanted, as I was looking at past dissertations and the doctoral community outline. For me to find out that the IRB application was making many documents out of my dissertation and then submitting everything separately, and they wanted links and forms that I had yet to generate because I was working on the first three chapters for my proposal defense, was very much the surprise. This should have been its own class, especially since it took a complete semester.

June 6, 2022

Dr. Michael returned my email reminding me of classes EDUC 980 and 917 when IRB was discussed. The classes were two years prior. I was not placated by his response.

January 4, 2023

I emailed Dr. Yocum that the madness and my coding process had begun.

February 7, 2023

I sent Dr. Yocum most of chapter 4 to look over and give direction. I feel stuck. Between using 2022 dissertations as a guide and using the newer qualitative dissertation template, I think I ended up with too much, and not enough.

March 7, 2023

I have spent the last month volleying my research back and forth to Dr. Yocum.

April 13, 2023

Emailing my research to Dr. Yocum, maybe for the last time.

April 14, 2023

Emailing my research to Dr. Yocum for the last time.

April 17, 2023

Again, editing for the last time. As APA changed in the middle of my work, as well as the dissertation format, it has been a struggle to keep up with both. Hopefully this will be the last correction.

Appendix I

Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. Without stating your exact position at the university, can you describe what it is you do during your shift at work?
2. Describe your work culture.
3. Tell me how you obtained your current position.
4. Tell me about a time you said or did something at work that you thought others did not approve.
5. Explain why you may be liked or disliked at work.
6. Tell me about your manager's favorite and least favorite employee.
7. What type of information does your manager ask you about concerning other employees?
8. Tell me about things that may hold you back from life or work success. For example, do others have perceptions about you that may present obstacles?
9. How do you show generosity to other employees?
10. If you wanted a promotion at work, what would you do to draw positive attention to yourself?
11. What do you consider to be a good work habit or a bad work habit?
12. If a co-worker approached you and said, "Hey, I just did this favor for you...", how would that make you feel?
13. Other than performing basic favors or volunteering, what else could you do at work so that others liked you, so that you stood out to your manager, and so that you fit in with your work culture?
14. How did you get things you wanted as a young person?

15. What is a good example of gossip that you hear in your department at work?
16. What are some ways you have seen your coworkers gain favor at work?
17. Tell me about a time when you leveraged something personal to get ahead at work.
18. If your boss was known to be agreeable while she was eating her meals, how would you use this information to plan a request of a week off during the busy season?
19. When you lived with your parent(s) or guardian(s), what characteristic or action by you was rewarded.
20. Please explain the type of rewards system that is in place at the university. For example, do you receive praise in front of your work group when you have accomplished a large task or maybe you get treated to the best parking space for a month if you surpass your work quota.
21. I want to thank you for your time and ask one last question. What do you think I should know about personal currency as it applies to the employees at this university?
22. What else might you like to add, even if it is outside the scope of the previous questions?

Appendix J

Permission to use and publish Schematics

May I use your Schematics in Appendix D?

From: Dodson, Olivia Rosalind

Tue 2/16/2021 11:24 PM

To: Morrison, Mitch

And if so, do you want me to cite your book or your original research work?

From: Morrison, Mitch

Tue 2/16/2021 11:27 PM

To: Dodson, Olivia Rosalind

Yes, you may use the schematics.

Cite which one you think fits best for context used.

Great hearing from you!

Mitch

Dr. Mitch Morrison's iPhone

Appendix K

Stipend for time of participant

November 16, 2022, Walmart 30.00 gift card purchased: Gift card code: [REDACTED]

November 17, 2022, Walmart 30.00 gift card purchased: Gift card code: [REDACTED]

November 30, 2022, Walmart 30.00 gift card purchased: Gift card code: [REDACTED]

Dec 2, 2022, Walmart Order 10.00 # 2000105-18614234, Jan 1, 2023, Walmart Order 20.00

[REDACTED]

December 8, 2022, Walmart 30.00 gift card purchased: Gift card code: [REDACTED]

December 3, 2022 Target gift cards, Order # [REDACTED] 150.00

<u>Design</u>	<u>Amt</u>	<u>Card Ending</u>	<u>Seq Num</u>
Vintage Merry Christmas	10.00	440-687	[REDACTED]
Vintage Merry Christmas	10.00	440-695	[REDACTED]
Vintage Merry Christmas	10.00	440-703	[REDACTED]
Vintage Merry Christmas	10.00	440-711	[REDACTED]
Vintage Merry Christmas	10.00	440-729	[REDACTED]
Vintage Merry Christmas	20.00	440-737	[REDACTED]
Vintage Merry Christmas	20.00	440-745	[REDACTED]
Vintage Merry Christmas	20.00	440-752	[REDACTED]
Vintage Merry Christmas	20.00	440-760	[REDACTED]
Vintage Merry Christmas	20.00	440-778	[REDACTED]

Redacted for privacy.

Appendix L

Social Media Post

This study pays a 30.00 gift card from Target or Walmart (your choice). For Liberty University employees (staff): ATTENTION FACEBOOK USERS: Part of the requirement for my doctorate in higher education at Liberty University is to conduct research. The purpose of my specific research is to learn more about how staff at Liberty University use human currency to maneuver through their days at work. The only requirement for this study is that you be an employed (non-faculty) member of the staff at Liberty University. The first step is to complete an online screening survey which consists of a few questions. If you are eligible and chosen, you will be asked to complete a 30-minute interview either in person, at Liberty University or another convenient location, or over Zoom, then answer a few follow-up questions by email or messenger sometime after the interview (10 minutes). Each participant that completes the study will receive a Target or Walmart \$30.00 gift card. A consent document will be emailed to you if you qualify and are selected for my study. The online screening survey will be sent to you when you message that you are interested. I will not answer any questions in the post due to the privacy of the study and participants. If you have questions or comments, please message me.

Appendix M

Coding Notes

