2024

Understanding needs: facilitating faculty support for formal assessment processes in higher education

Terrance Cao

Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

UNDERSTANDING NEEDS: FACILITATING FACULTY SUPPORT FOR FORMAL ASSESSMENT PROCESSES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Terrance Cao

January, 2024

Jennifer Miyake-Trapp, Ed.D. - Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Terrance Cao

under guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Doctoral Committee:

Jennifer Miyake-Trapp, Ed.D., Chairperson

Seta Khajarian, Ed.D., Committee

Kay Davis, Ed.D., Committee

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my lovely wife, Jiwon Jung, who has been a steadfast rock throughout my doctoral journey. You have supported me in pursuing this endeavor and have pushed me to keep challenging myself. You are the biggest cheerleader in my life and that means the world to me. As I currently work on finishing this dissertation proposal, you are nearing the end of your premedical postbaccalaureate journey. I hope to give the same support back to you as you continue pursuing your doctoral journey into medical school. I love you!

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Yan Wang and Xiaodong Cao, both of whom built me into the person I am. You have worked tirelessly to support the family and enable me to pursue opportunities to this day. You are always patient about guiding me through the toughest times in life's journey. Most importantly, you taught me to never rest on my laurels and continue growing into a better person. I can never thank you both enough for everything you have done!

I dedicate this dissertation to my brothers, Dennis Cao and Jonathan Cao, who have also been present to me since day one. Thank you Dennis for being an inspiring role model in higher education. I am still waiting for that Nobel prize to come your way! Thank you Jonathan for always being such a pure soul. May you continue to find coins in your daily searches!

I dedicate this dissertation to my faithful dog, Luka, who has been a loyal companion since the first day we met. Thank you for always being a bundle of joy who brings me motivation. Thank you for sitting with me as I typed these pages into the late hours of the night. May you continue to spread this love to the world as you grow up!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my family, friends, and colleagues. Thank you to everyone at Pepperdine University for their excellence in teaching, guidance, service, purpose, and leadership. Special thanks to my dissertation chair, Dr. Jennifer Miyake-Trapp, for encouraging me to begin this program, pushing me through every step, and wisely leading me to the end. Dr. Miyake-Trapp, you embody everything that makes Pepperdine University a great institution.

Thank you to my dissertation committee, Dr. Seta Khajarian and Dr. Kay Davis. Dr. Seta, thank you for also believing in me and encouraging me to enroll in the doctoral program. You genuinely embody everything you teach and research and have taught me a great deal this way. You opened many professional opportunities for me and I can never be thankful enough for that.

Thank you, Dr. Davis, for so passionately teaching me and my cohort about research methods. You are wise, thorough, and exceptional. Thank you for sharpening my practices every time we connect. I am so blessed to have your influence in my professional and educational journey.

ABSTRACT

Prior literature discusses how conflicting beliefs regarding assessment, competing workloads, and a lack of formal assessment resources may contribute to faculty reluctance to engage with formal assessment processes. There is a gap in research on exploring assessment leader-faculty relationships through the lens of Leader-Member Exchange Theory and how that may affect participation in formal assessment processes. To address this gap, the researcher implemented a qualitative, phenomenological study to interview faculty about their lived experiences in working with formal assessment processes and interacting with assessment leaders. The goal was to discover emerging thematic categories regarding faculty perceptions of formal assessment processes and working relationships with assessment leaders that inform strategies for addressing resistance to formal assessment. The sample consisted of 13 faculty members representing 3 divisions within a private accredited institution of higher education in California. Interview transcripts were redacted and qualitatively coded through *a priori* and emergent approaches. The results showed that faculty participants were knowledgeable about formal assessment processes, though there was a learning curve in understanding assessment-related tasks and disproportionate opportunities for participation. Participants also displayed awareness of whether assessment work reflected a culture of student learning or a culture of compliance; emphasis was placed on framing the benefits of assessment for not only student learning but also performance at the programmatic or institutional levels. Lastly, participants indicated that they trusted their assessment leaders through moments of conflict and resistance; tensions were instead directed toward the nature of formal assessment processes.

Keywords: formal assessment process, accreditation, faculty engagement, resistance, leader-member exchange, higher education

Chapter 1: Introduction

Definitions of quality education in institutions of higher education (IHEs) have developed since the 20th century (Brittingham, 2009; Ewell, 2002, 2008). Voluntary regional associations convened in 1885 in response to challenges caused by divergent definitions of high-quality education (Brittingham, 2009). These associations created standards for best practices in IHEs and sought to evaluate schools based on these expectations. Successfully meeting or exceeding an association's standards would grant the status of accreditation, a certification that an IHE delivers high-quality education (Ewell, 2002, 2008). Over time, regional associations would refine their standards for best practices in IHEs and begin referring to themselves as accrediting bodies. The importance of maintaining accreditation has been reinforced by tying government aid and credibility to the status (Bennett et al., 2010; Manimala et al., 2020; N. Pham & Paton, 2019).

One refinement in accreditation was the concept of a formal assessment process (Banta, 2002). Formal assessment processes are meant to be a tool for continuous improvement and self-study in an IHE. Overall, the process aims to provide evidence of how strongly students have mastered predetermined learning outcomes (Banta, 2002; Suskie & Banta, 2009). Accrediting bodies may codify formal assessment into their requirements (Western Senior College and University Commission, n.d.-a). As a result, formal assessment processes can be an expected practice in an IHE.

Findings from formal assessment processes contribute to iterative cycles of assessment that ideally result in continuous improvement on an institutional level (Walvoord, 2010). Formal assessment processes are distinct from assessment for grading purposes, which focuses solely on what students do or do not know (Segers & Tillema, 2011; Walvoord & Anderson, 2009). The

focus on student learning in formal assessment processes is also distinct from faculty work evaluations, which instead emphasize an individual's job performance.

The implementation of a formal assessment process begins with an assessment plan (Maki, 2012). These plans clarify details such as timelines, budgeting, and systems for data collection. Assessment plans also define roles and responsibilities, including whoever serves as the assessment leader that oversees the process (Walvoord, 2010). Duties may be further sorted into data collection, data analysis, and integrating findings into decisions surrounding policies, planning, and budgeting.

Formal assessment processes articulate which student learning outcomes should occur after a specified learning experience (Astin & Antonio, 2012; Maki, 2012; Suskie & Banta, 2009; Timm et al., 2013). These outcomes adapt elements from sources such as accreditation standards, program mission statements, and strategic institutional goals (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Timm et al., 2013; Walvoord, 2010). Statements on mastering learning outcomes are then supported by an array of evidence that demonstrates a clear connection to the skills being evaluated (Maki, 2012; Suskie & Banta, 2009). Evidence of learning can range from direct evaluations of student work to observations during interviews (Suskie & Banta, 2009).

Content matter experts proceed to analyze evidence of learning to provide findings that can inform institutional leaders during their decision-making processes (Maki, 2012; Timm et al., 2013; Walvoord, 2010). Sample decisions include curriculum revisions or allocating funds to specific programs. Gathering input from content matter experts increases the validity of findings in formal assessment processes. As such, institutional leaders often consult their own faculty to assume key roles as content matter experts (Maki, 2012; Timm et al., 2013; Walvoord, 2010). Alternatively, institutional leaders can hire external consultants to serve as content matter

experts. However, this approach may not always be feasible due to possible redundancy with faculty knowledge and additional costs (Maki, 2012; Timm et al., 2013; Walvoord, 2010).

Scholars have taken interest in the ways faculty perceive formal assessment as they continue to develop research on formal assessment processes (Johnson & Coleman, 2021; Pereira & Flores, 2016). Recurring themes in faculty perceptions of assessment include viewing assessment as a process for improving student learning, a process for enhancing teaching, a tool for accreditation, and a tool for accountability (Day et al., 2019; Pereira & Flores, 2016; Postareff, Virtanen et al., 2012). These perceptions provide information about faculty priorities in their instructional approaches (Ho et al., 2001; Northcote, 2009; Watkins et al., 2005). Instructional approaches have a subsequent effect on what faculty believe is meaningful for building student knowledge (M. A. Flores et al., 2015; Martin et al., 2000).

Researchers are interested in using faculty perceptions of assessment to explain cultures of assessment that preside in an IHE (Fuller, 2013). Cultures of assessment are reflected in the beliefs and behaviors of faculty as they engage in formal assessment processes. Assessment leaders may observe multiple types of cultures of assessment. For example, Skidmore et al. (2018) highlight a culture of assessment focused on student learning. This particular situation is considered an ideal situation and end goal in which faculty and staff are fully committed to all stages of formal assessment processes.

In reality, however, IHEs can include cultures of assessment that are not conducive to continuous improvement (Fuller & Skidmore, 2014; Fuller, Henderson, et al., 2015; Skidmore et al., 2018). For example, there may be a culture of fear in which faculty are hesitant to participate in formal assessment processes due to perceived threats. There may also be a culture of compliance in which the formal assessment process is completed but perceived as a rote task

solely for fulfilling accreditation standards (Fuller & Skidmore, 2014; Fuller, Henderson, et al., 2015; Skidmore et al., 2018). Both cultures can be further convoluted by unique contextual factors in an IHE (Cardoso et al., 2017; Reimann & Sadler, 2017).

Cultures of fear and compliance are associated with faculty resistance to participating in the formal assessment process (Skidmore et al., 2018). A lack of engagement with formal assessment can inhibit the process due to the lack of content matter experts available to evaluate evidence. One source of this resistance is a misalignment between assessment leaders' intentions in formal assessment and faculty members' conceptions of the purpose of assessment (Kember, 1997; Martin et al., 2000; Northcote, 2009; Postareff, Katajavuori, et al., 2008). Perceived conflicts in priorities would subsequently reduce faculty members' interest in participating in formal assessment processes.

Faculty resistance to formal assessment can also be driven by a lack of training on the process (Fletcher et al., 2012; Hutchings, 2010; Sasere & Makhasane, 2020). The lack of assessment training not only creates gaps in knowledge that may be filled by misconceptions but also implies that institutional leaders do not value the process. High workloads are another common source of resistance (Anderson, 2006; Cardoso et al., 2019; Deardorff & Folger, 2005; Dunn et al., 2020; N. Pham, 2022; Rawlusyk, 2018). Faculty who feel overwhelmed by their regular workload may decide that adding on formal assessment work is an infeasible demand (Dunn et al., 2020; Good et al., 2013).

Faculty may subsequently resist formal assessment processes as a possible infringement on their content area expertise (Anderson, 2006; Fletcher et al., 2012; Maclellan, 2004; Smith & Gordon, 2019). Such resistance may be exacerbated by the idea that if faculty do not have to provide input on formal assessment processes, an assessment leader should not make

recommendations for faculty practices. Finally, faculty could be aware of inconsistencies in the claims and practices of assessment leaders (Bin Othayman et al., 2022; Emil & Cress, 2014; Fletcher et al., 2012; Liu, 2013; Rawlusyk, 2018; Tierno-García et al., 2016). Inconsistent statements and behaviors decrease the credibility of the formal assessment process and thereby reduce the value faculty place in participating.

Researchers have recommended an array of strategies for creating a supportive environment that reduces faculty apprehension in formal assessment processes. For example, assessment leaders can reduce misconceptions of formal assessment processes by hosting meaningful training sessions for faculty (Fletcher et al., 2012; Hutchings, 2010). There are also opportunities to provide faculty with clear and accessible resources on formal assessment. Institutional leaders can further incentivize faculty participation in formal assessment processes by allotting stipends and recognizing formal assessment work in tenure application packages (Smith & Gordon, 2018, 2019).

Assessment leaders responding to faculty resistance in formal assessment processes may encounter external obstacles that prevent them from using generalized solutions as a strategy. Researchers have identified ways to circumvent some of these obstacles. For example, some leaders may find that they do not have sufficient personnel to manage in-house assessment training for faculty (Dunn et al., 2020). In response, the institution can either hire an external trainer or sponsor faculty to attend assessment workshops and bring back new knowledge (Dunn et al., 2020; Rodgers et al., 2013). Extrinsic incentives for participating in formal assessment may also have inconsistent results (Smith & Gordon, 2018). Therefore, assessment leaders can survey faculty to determine their perceived value of each incentive.

Responses to faculty resistance in formal assessment processes also cannot be treated as a one-time solution. In the long-term, faculty may not retain all of the information they receive from assessment training (Chalmers & Gardiner, 2015; Houston & Hood, 2017; Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, et al., 2008). This loss of learning can subsequently lead back to behaviors that are not conducive to completing the formal assessment process. In addition, extrinsic incentives for participating in formal assessment may lose value over time (Smith & Gordon, 2018, 2019). Therefore, assessment leaders might consider not only discussing assessment as a repeating process but also establishing an effective system for long-term evaluation (Lee et al., 2018; Myllykoski-Laine et al., 2022; Pham, 2020). Sample practices for long-term evaluation include rigorous behavioral observations of and individual conversations with faculty. Each practice creates space for feedback on formal assessment processes.

Although there are possible workarounds to certain obstacles in addressing faculty resistance to formal assessment processes, interpersonal dynamics between assessment leaders and faculty members present a unique challenge. Interactions within and outside of work contexts introduce additional complexity to contextual influences on resistance to formal assessment processes (Baas et al., 2016; Hutchings, 2010). Faculty also tend to view their colleagues' statuses as homogenous rather than adhering to traditional perceptions of workplace hierarchy (Bess & Goldman, 2001; Floyd & Preston, 2018; McGraw et al., 2021; N. Nguyen et al., 2021). Dunn et al. (2020) initially advise that assessment leaders favor trust building over deficit mindsets when speaking with faculty about formal assessment processes. However, there is a gap in research on facilitating assessment leader-faculty interactions to address resistance in formal assessment processes.

Statement of the Problem

Formal assessment processes can be hampered by faculty resistance to participation. Proposed solutions to faculty resistance may not be universally applicable because convoluting factors such as assessment leader-faculty relationships have not been fully explored. The inability to complete the formal assessment process has two potential consequences for IHEs. One impact is that institutional leaders would have limited access to assessment data when making decisions for future improvements. The lack of supporting information subsequently introduces a risk of unknowingly making an ineffective choice. The other consequence is that the IHE would be unable to meet accreditation standards, which include implementing and following up on formal assessment processes. The inability to meet accreditation standards could block the IHE's federal funding and cause a loss of credibility among institutional affiliates offering similar programs.

Faculty members' roles in formal assessment practices cannot be immediately substituted. Literature in formal assessment recommends that content matter experts evaluate evidence as a way to increase the validity of the process. Faculty usually serve as content matter experts due to their specialized knowledge. Staff members at an IHE may share some of this knowledge, but are not as likely to be experts in the range of information covered in learning outcomes. IHEs have the option to hire an external consultant to serve as a content matter expert. However, the range of topics requiring assessment may necessitate hiring multiple consultants, thus creating additional costs. Therefore, IHEs have a greater incentive to understand how they can more effectively reduce faculty resistance to formal assessment processes while raising the perceived value of participation in assessment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the lived experiences of faculty in higher education as they participate in formal assessment processes and interact with assessment leaders. Interpretations of lived experiences will integrate current political and social contexts relevant to IHEs. Formal assessment processes are defined as procedures that IHEs follow to evaluate the extent to which learning outcomes have been achieved (Maki, 2012). Assessment leaders are defined as individuals in an IHE who are formally responsible for formal assessment work (Jankowski & Slotnick, 2015). The goal of the research is to better understand faculty members' knowledge and perceptions of formal assessment processes while filling gaps in research on interactions with assessment leaders. Findings could inform new or existing strategies for assessment leaders to increase faculty engagement in formal assessment processes by: creating resources about the purpose of formal assessment, providing incentives for participation, reducing points of resistance, and navigating interpersonal relationships with faculty.

Research Questions

The main research questions in this study, and their associated subquestions, are as follows:

1. How do faculty describe the purpose and implementation of formal assessment processes at their institution?
2. How do faculty describe their role in formal assessment processes?
3. What are faculty members' perceptions of their interactions with assessment leaders while engaged and not engaged in formal assessment work?

Methodological Approach

This study will utilize a qualitative, phenomenological study design. Data collection will

occur through interviewing ten faculty members on their perceptions of assessment activities and interactions with assessment leaders (Appendix A). The faculty members will be recruited from a private regionally accredited institution in California with multiple divisions on the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Phenomenological research involves documenting the lived experiences of participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Maxwell, 2012). Researchers synthesize these lived experiences into a rich description. The rich description captures thematic categories expressed by participants who have undergone the phenomenon and integrates other data to form a holistic view of the topic of interest. Interviews with open-ended questions are a common data collection tool in phenomenological studies (Amedeo Giorgi, 2009; Clark Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological studies emphasize inductive data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Inductive analysis organizes data into abstract units of information and identifies themes observed in the information.

Phenomenological research is used in this study because there is an identifiable phenomenon: faculty participation in formal assessment activities and their interactions with assessment leaders. Differing influences can lead to a variety of experiences. Analysis through combining emergent and *a priori* coding aligns with the goal to provide new insights that address gaps in research. Additional relevance for a phenomenological approach stems from the intent to capture rich descriptions of faculty experiences with interviews.

Researchers make methodological assumptions about the sample population, data collection techniques, and expected outcomes when they choose an approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In qualitative studies, it is generally assumed that all data are descriptive and make sense of participants' lives based on their perceptions and experiences. One assumption in

this study is that the faculty being interviewed are not modifying their responses to avoid backlash or portray themselves more favorably to the researcher. Another assumption is that the private setting of an interview allows faculty to feel comfortable about sharing thoughts that they normally would not in their usual work context. Furthermore, it is assumed that the faculty will not discuss their interview experiences amongst themselves. Such discussions may otherwise influence colleagues who have not yet been interviewed. Lastly, it is assumed that all participants work under the same formal assessment process and interact with the same assessment leader. This would increase the comparability of faculty members' experiences.

When qualitative researchers engage in reflexive practice, they consider their own role in the study alongside their personal background, culture, and experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Maxwell, 2012). This practice reveals ways that researchers potentially shape interpretations, such as the thematic categories they identify from the data. Reflexive practice is considered a component of qualitative research that critically informs the ways a researcher approaches their analysis. In this study, the researcher acknowledges their own positionality as an assessment leader in a private IHE in California. The researcher also acknowledges that they do not have working experience as a full-time faculty member. Both acknowledgments give the researcher a different lived experience than the intended participants, who are full-time faculty members.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical frameworks provide a structure for situating a study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, leader-member exchange (LMX) theory provides the framework for qualitatively exploring faculty participation in formal assessment processes and faculty-assessment leader interactions. LMX theory considers interactions between leaders and followers

in an organization (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden et al., 1997; Rockstuhl et al., 2012). These interactions contain positive and negative incidents that subsequently impact organizational outcomes.

In this study, literature on LMX theory in higher education settings builds a foundation for the methodological approach. The proposed application for LMX theory is learning about interactions between assessment leaders and faculty members. Organizational outcomes would be reflected through levels of faculty engagement in formal assessment processes. This proposed application will be supplemented by literature on common practices in formal assessment, cultures of assessment, faculty resistance to participating in formal assessment processes, and strategies for increasing the perceived value of formal assessment. Relevant definitions are presented below and organized into four areas: structures for assessment, components of assessment, roles in assessment, and engagement with assessment.

Definitions

The working definitions in this dissertation proposal are organized into the four following areas:

Structures for Assessment

Accreditation. A certification that an institution of higher education meets or exceeds standards for delivering high-quality education (Ewell, 2008).

Accreditation cycle. A repeating process in which an institution of higher education is expected to demonstrate its upholding of accreditation standards (Ewell, 2008).

Assessment cycle. A component of the accreditation cycle in which an institution of higher education identifies learning outcomes, gathers data about progress toward these outcomes, and integrates findings into decision-making processes (Maki, 2012).

Formal assessment. The act of evaluating practices and outcomes in an institution of higher education with the intention of quality assurance (Maki, 2012).

Formal assessment process. The procedures an institution of higher education follows in order to complete the assessment cycle (Maki, 2012).

Components of Assessment

Assessment plan. Documentation of the ways an IHE approaches the formal assessment process, including budgeting, deadlines, roles and responsibilities, and integration into decision-making (Suskie & Banta, 2009).

Learning outcome. A skill or competency that students at an institution of higher education are intended to master (Biggs & Tang, 2011).

Evidence. A body of information that indicates the level of progress toward a learning outcome (Suskie & Banta, 2009).

Rubric. An evaluative tool that guides the review of evidence for learning outcomes (Suskie & Banta, 2009).

Roles in Assessment

Accrediting body. A professional organization that establishes standards for achieving accreditation and reviews the progress of institutions of higher education toward these standards (Ewell, 2008).

Assessment leader. An individual in an institution of higher education whose role is to oversee the completion of the accreditation cycle (Walvoord, 2010).

Content matter expert. An individual who is determined to have sufficient knowledge to make valid evaluations of evidence and learning outcomes (Walvoord, 2010).

Institutional leader. An individual in an institution of higher education who makes strategic decisions at the program level or higher (Walvoord, 2010).

Regional association. An accrediting body dedicated to institutions of higher education in a specific geographic area (Ewell, 2008).

Engagement with Assessment

Conception of assessment. The set of beliefs an individual holds regarding the purpose of formal assessment processes and their participation in the process (Northcote, 2009).

Culture of assessment. "Overarching ethos that is both an artifact of the way in which assessment is done and simultaneously a factor influencing and augmenting assessment practice" (Fuller, 2013, p. 21).

Culture of student learning. A context considered an ideal outcome in assessment, where faculty and staff are fully committed to engaging with all stages of the formal assessment process (Skidmore et al., 2018).

Culture of compliance. A context in which faculty and staff are willing to participate in formal assessment processes but perceive it as a rote task (Skidmore et al., 2018).

Culture of fear. A context in which faculty and staff are hesitant to participate in formal assessment processes due to perceived threats (Skidmore et al., 2018).

Significance of the Research

This study has relevance for formal assessment practices in higher education. Increased understanding of the lived experiences of faculty members who participate in formal assessment processes and interact with assessment leaders may help build faculty trust and collaboration in formal assessment. Building faculty trust and collaboration in formal assessment is crucial because of the role faculty have as content matter experts (Maki, 2012; Suskie & Banta, 2009).

Evaluations from content matter experts give assessment findings a more valid and reliable foundation. Valid and reliable findings subsequently hold increased credibility for informed decision-making. Therefore, it is important for assessment leaders to build trust with faculty in order to increase the likelihood of content matter expert participation in the formal assessment process.

An overview of faculty knowledge of formal assessment processes will supplement the importance of this study. Faculty who do not fully understand the purpose of formal assessment or its structure at their institution are more likely to distrust the process and disengage (Fletcher et al., 2018; Tierno-Garcia et al., 2016). Learning about the extent of faculty knowledge of formal assessment can expose gaps in information. For example, a faculty member may have a misconception that formal assessment is equivalent to evaluating their job performance. In response, assessment leaders can consider new resources and training that fill knowledge gaps, dispel misconceptions of formal assessment, and ultimately increase faculty engagement in the process.

The significance of this research also includes specific descriptions of the amount of value that faculty ascribe to formal assessment processes. Revealing faculty members' lived experiences in formal assessment processes will help identify incentives and points of resistance to participation. Information about motivators and deterrents within formal assessment processes can then inform assessment leaders about changes in practice or new support systems that can increase faculty members' trust and willingness to participate.

There will also be descriptions of the interactions that faculty members have with assessment leaders inside and outside of work contexts. Faculty members' lived experiences in interacting with assessment leaders can provide insight into the influence that interpersonal

dynamics have on the tendency to participate in formal assessment processes. Focusing on interpersonal relationships allows assessment leaders to consider possible influences on faculty engagement beyond institutional systems for assessment. Possible implications include adjustments to interactions that increase the likelihood of building a more positive working relationship.

Overall, this study holds potential for improving the quality of higher education as a whole. Increased understanding of ways to build faculty trust and participation in formal assessment processes would increase the likelihood that an iteration of formal assessment not only successfully concludes but also produces valid and reliable findings. Higher education administrators are then more likely to make informed decisions by using robust, actionable data. In the end, colleges and universities that act on credible recommendations for self-improvement more consistently are more likely to supply their students with high-quality educational experiences.

Chapter Summary

In higher education, formal assessment processes aim to provide actionable information for an IHE to engage in continuous self-improvement. Faculty resistance to participating in formal assessment may hamper the process. The inhibition of formal assessment processes is a significant problem due to its potential to limit an IHE's ability not only to make well-informed decisions but also to fulfill accreditation standards. A qualitative phenomenological study will explore this problem by capturing faculty lived experiences in formal assessment processes and interacting with assessment leaders. Findings will be used to inform new approaches in reducing faculty resistance to formal assessment processes. A literature review will support the study design by presenting current knowledge and gaps in research on practices in formal assessment

processes, faculty resistance to participating in these processes, and approaches to reducing this resistance.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The literature review of formal assessment processes begins with a historical overview that situates the need for quality assurance in higher education. An introduction to cultures of assessment then outlines ideal characteristics and common challenges in implementing formal assessment practices. Faculty resistance to engaging in formal assessment processes will be emphasized. Strategies for reducing resistance and increasing the perceived value of formal assessment are subsequently provided. Finally, leader-member exchange theory is reviewed and presented as a framework for increasing faculty engagement with formal assessment processes.

Historical Overview of Formal Assessment Processes in Higher Education

Constitutional law, legal precedent, and professional conferences have introduced formal assessment processes to institutions of higher education (IHEs). The following subsections detail influences and rationales for accreditation cycles, which include formal assessment processes. Emphasis is placed on external factors that necessitate the implementation of formal assessment processes in IHEs.

Establishing Independence in Higher Education

Formal assessment processes in higher education have been influenced by the Constitution and legal precedent since the 18th century (Brittingham, 2009; Ewell, 2002, 2008). The 10th amendment of the United States Constitution affirms that powers that are not explicitly delegated to the federal government or deemed prohibited are instead given to the States or the people (National Archives, 2015). The Constitution does not mention education in its text. Therefore, the 10th amendment enables the States and people to express authority in education through actions such as developing their own colleges and universities outside of federal control (Brittingham, 2009; Ewell, 2002, 2008).

The Trustees of Dartmouth College v. Woodward (1819) reinforced the notion of independence for IHEs. This case originated from attempts by the New Hampshire legislature to convert Dartmouth College from a privately funded institution into a state university. When the case reached the Supreme Court, the justices determined that the New Hampshire legislature unconstitutionally interfered with Dartmouth College's rights. This decision set a precedent that States could no longer directly control private IHEs (Brittingham, 2009). As a result, private IHEs were free to pursue their own priorities in education. However, an increase in autonomy created divergent expectations on what constitutes minimum standards of quality in higher education (Brittingham, 2009; Ewell, 2002, 2008). Scholars predicted this phenomenon could degrade the overall quality of education in the United States and called for measures to prevent such an outcome.

Emerging Conceptions of Quality Assurance in Higher Education

The United States Bureau of Education established a list of government-recognized IHEs in 1870 as a first attempt to standardize expectations for quality education (Brittingham, 2009; Ewell, 2002, 2008). However, *The Trustees of Dartmouth College v. Woodward* limited the government's ability to enforce this list, especially for private IHEs. The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) sought to enforce authority where the government could not by establishing itself in 1885 as the first voluntary membership association (Bennett et al., 2010; Brittingham, 2009). NEASC aspired to define what comprises quality in higher education and review IHEs according to its standards. Other location-specific associations with similar missions formed afterward.

Regional associations continually redefined their practices based on developments in the field of education. For example, the College Entrance Examination Board's founding in 1900 led

regional associations to use new exams in scrutinizing the rigor of IHE admissions standards (Brittingham, 2009; College Board, n.d.). The establishment of Carnegie Units in 1906 as a way to standardize measurements of academic attainment also influenced regional associations to revise their standards (Brittingham, 2009; Carnegie Foundation, n.d.).

In 1920, regional associations such as NEASC convened at the American Council on Education conference to realign and standardize their definitions of quality higher education (Brittingham, 2009). This conference established the concept of accreditation, which is the process through which an IHE receives certification that it delivers quality education (Ewell, 2002, 2008). Accreditation revolves around core values of institutional autonomy, actions aligned with institutional missions, decentralized and diverse institutions, and academic freedom (Eaton, 2016). The goal is to provide the public and prospective students robust information and confidence in the status of IHEs in the United States. Given these new concepts, regional associations claimed authority over the accreditation process and began referring to themselves as accrediting bodies to clarify their duty (Brittingham, 2009; Eaton, 2016).

Although accrediting bodies continued to operate independently after the 1920 conference, continuous formation of new associations created issues with redundancy and deviation (Brittingham, 2009). In response, the National Commission on Accreditation (NCA) was founded in 1949 to oversee the network of higher education accreditors. When the concept of accreditation expanded to other professions, the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) was founded in 1994 to maintain a focus on the quality of accreditors in higher education (Eaton, 2016).

NCA guidance and further refinement from CHEA stated that IHEs would achieve accreditation if self-study and peer review of their own educational practices were consistent

with an accrediting body's standards (Brittingham, 2009). The NCA and CHEA also determined that institutional reviews would be cyclical, thus providing assurance to accrediting bodies and prospective students for quality education over an extended period of time. Accrediting bodies also designed space for IHEs to continuously improve and evolve alongside new academic discoveries and shifting social and cultural norms (Brittingham, 2009; Manimala et al., 2020).

Over time, accrediting bodies conceived of formal assessment processes as a tool for continuous improvement and self-study (Banta, 2002). These processes provide evidence of the extent to which students master defined learning outcomes (Banta, 2002; Suskie & Banta, 2009). However, IHEs encountered challenges with implementing their own formal assessment processes due to a lack of guidance. For example, there was no clarity on what constitutes credible evidence of student learning, the definition of formal assessment, and rigorous methodology for data collection (Banta, 2002). Eventually, councils on education and regional accreditation commissions resolved these issues by standardizing understandings of best practices in formal assessment processes (Banta, 2002; Brittingham, 2009; Manimala et al., 2020).

As a result, IHEs questioned who had control over each component of the formal assessment process (Brittingham, 2009; Gregory & Machado-Taylor, 2015). Independent associations and the government both subsequently attempted to exhibit authority in the accreditation cycle and its associated practices of formal assessment. Professional conferences aiming to standardize concepts in assessment and legislative acts have since clarified the extent of each entity's involvement in accreditation.

Evolution of IHE Accrediting Bodies. Voluntary membership associations have approached what "quality" means in higher education by providing standardized definitions and practices

(Bennett et al., 2010; Brittingham, 2009). NEASC, for example, was formed in 1885 by stakeholders from Harvard University to endow accreditation for local schools that met established quality standards (New England Association of Schools and Colleges, 2017). Additional location-specific accrediting bodies formed in response to NEASC (Brittingham, 2009). The Accreditation Reform Act of July 2020 removed regional designations for accrediting bodies in an effort to promote accountability and streamline the review process (Trahan, 2020).

Accrediting bodies regularly mention the continuous improvement of educational institutions in their founding statements (Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, 2022a; Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2019; Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, 2022). They also provide mentorship for IHEs in developing mechanisms for self-improvement (New England Commission of Higher Education, 2022; Western Senior College and University Commission, 2022). Furthermore, there are resources on best practices for continuous improvement, including formal assessment processes (Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, 2022b). Each body claims a valid approach to accreditation by directly referring to guidelines jointly developed with the CHEA (Council for Higher Education Accreditation, 2010).

Over time, some associations have been retitled or differentiated by levels of education. Additional associations have also convened to target programs in specific subject areas (Council for Higher Education Administration, 2023; Eaton, 2016). Table 1 below reflects the most updated United States Department of Education (2022) list of all active accrediting bodies in compliance with CHEA standards. The Department of Education regularly collaborates with CHEA to keep the list up-to-date.

Table 1

Accrediting Bodies for Postsecondary Education in the United States

Name	Established
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges	1895
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities	1917
Middle States Commission on Higher Education	1919
Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges	2012
Western Association of Schools and Colleges Senior College and University Commission	2012
Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools	2013
Higher Learning Commission	2014
New England Commission of Higher Education	2018

Although regional accrediting bodies aimed to standardize best practices and assessment processes in IHEs, perceptions of quality education diverged again in the early 20th century (Brittingham, 2009). The American Council on Education convened in 1922 to recalibrate not only the definition of quality education but also the procedures an accrediting body follows when evaluating an IHE. Despite this large-scale standardization effort, accrediting bodies with low credibility continued to form (A. Flores, 2022).

In response, the federal government worked with scholars in accreditation to create the Database of Accredited Postsecondary Institutions and Programs (United States Department of Education, 2022a). Such an instance marks one of many ways in which the federal government would be involved with accreditation and formal assessment processes in institutions of higher education.

Federal and State Government Involvement in IHE Assessment. The federal government has attempted to intervene in formal assessment processes despite its constitutionally-based separation from higher education (Brittingham, 2009; Gregory & Machado-Taylor, 2015). Early attempts at intervention began after the Servicemen's Readjustment Act (1944) and Higher Education Act (1965), which state that the federal government will provide funding for IHEs so long as they meet quality standards (Brittingham, 2009). A federal report by Astin et al. (1984) highlighted the government's initial challenges in identifying eligible institutions according to its own standards. The report delineated a divergence between the expectations of accrediting bodies and the practices of IHEs. This problem could be resolved by developing a new, student-centered approach to assessment.

In response, Congress unsuccessfully attempted to establish a government-based review entity during a 1992 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (Brittingham, 2009; Pelesh, 1994). Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings (2006) later echoed Astin et al.'s (1984) points on evolving academic, social, and cultural norms to criticize outdated assessment practices. Spellings (2006) recommended that the federal government centralize accreditation and formal assessment processes (Brittingham, 2009; Gregory & Machado-Taylor, 2015). However, her suggestion was not implemented as the federal government remained unable to directly serve as a reviewer for IHEs.

Presently, accreditation and formal assessment processes in the United States remain separate from the federal government (Demidov et al., 2021; Eaton, 2016; Manimala et al., 2020; Prince, 2012). However, the absence of direct government involvement in these areas does not preclude the ability to account for accreditation in policymaking. For example, eligibility for federal student financial aid is contingent upon an IHE's accreditation status as a way to ensure

that funds are disbursed toward quality education (Bennett et al., 2010; Manimala et al., 2020; N. Pham & Paton, 2019). Sections 103 and 123 of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (2008) define the practices and risks of illegitimate, nonaccredited institutions.

Similarly, the Obama Administration introduced the concept of gainful employment in 2009 as a measure of the financial value gained from educational programs (National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, n.d.-a; United States Department of Education, n.d.). Consequently, IHEs aim to concurrently maintain their accreditation and federal funding by upholding high-quality formal assessment processes (Bennett et al., 2010; Manimala et al., 2020; N. Pham & Paton, 2019).

Conversely, state governments are more directly involved in accreditation, and by extension, formal assessment processes in public and private IHEs (Eaton, 2016). This involvement is enabled by the aforementioned power over education granted to the States by the 10th Amendment of the United States Constitution (Brittingham, 2009). State governments may have the power to make these practices compulsory. For example, Section 44372 of the California Education Code (2012) authorizes a commission on accreditation to establish and modify its own standards on what should be required for quality educator preparation. This leads to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (2015) requesting evidence of an IHE's formal assessment processes during the accreditation cycle. As a result, educator preparation programs in IHEs around California are compelled to engage in these practices lest they risk deactivation due to noncompliance.

State authorization regulations from 2021 regarding distance education have increased the power of state governments in higher education (National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, n.d.-b; United States Department of Education, 2022b). These

regulations allow a state government to establish its own requirements for allowing an out-of-state IHE to bring a distance education program. State governments can design these requirements to compound on accreditation standards the out-of-state IHE already follows, thus granting additional control over educational affairs.

Connecting Accreditation to Formal Assessment Processes

Accrediting bodies review functions that are pertinent to an IHE's operation (Western Senior College and University Commission, 2013). Each function is described through the lens of an institution's capacity to serve students and the public good, also known as institutional effectiveness. Similar functions are sorted into categories and narratives that comprise accreditation standards.

For example, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) identifies four overarching standards for institutional effectiveness. The first standard reviews the alignment between an institution's stated purposes and its educational objective (Western Senior College and University Commission, 2013). The next standard transitions to the ways core activities, such as creative activity and student support, contribute to achieving educational objectives. Afterward, WSCUC focuses on the structures and resources an IHE allots to make its educational objectives possible. Lastly, WSCUC standards cover an IHE's reflections and refinements in achieving educational objectives and its own purposes.

This literature review and proposed study focus on activities in accreditation standards regarding institutional self-reflection and improvement. Functions within this standard include institutional planning and documented self-evaluation of institutional effectiveness (Western Senior College and University Commission, 2013). Formal assessment processes are repeatedly

mentioned as a cornerstone of institutional improvement, thus garnering scholarly interest in their definition and implementation.

Typical Components of Formal Assessment Processes

Formal assessment processes are iterative cycles that inform continuous improvement on the institutional level. This iterative nature is distinct from assessment for grading purposes, which focuses solely on what students have or have not mastered (Segers & Tillema, 2011; Walvoord & Anderson, 2009). Formal assessment is also different from faculty evaluation, which emphasizes job performance rather than student learning (Rafiq & Qaisar, 2021).

Research on assessment in primary and secondary (K-12) education provides a foundation for adapting similar practices to higher education (G. Brown, 2004; G. Brown et al., 2011; J. McMillan, 2003; McMunn et al., 2004; Remesal, 2011). J. McMillan (2003) introduces the notion that K-12 educators can influence learning outcomes based on the way they approach assessment design. McMunn et al. (2004) refine this idea into a cycle of improving teaching capacity through the actions of probing, planning, implementing, and evaluating. Probing explores and considers resources and strategies that help support assessment capacity (p. 41). Planning assigns roles and responsibilities to achieve short-term and long-term goals. Implementing then follows as teachers carry out their instruction and assessment as planned (p. 42). Finally, evaluating involves data collection and analysis to determine if implementation was successful. Every stage of the cycle buttresses the intent to revise future teaching practices.

Research on K-12 teachers' beliefs regarding assessment exhibits an alignment between educators' conceptions and models of using assessment to improve teaching. For example, G. Brown (2004) surveys K-12 teachers and observes stronger intentions to use assessment as a tool for improvement rather than a measure of accountability. Given these findings, he recommends

that administrators frame policies regarding assessment around improvement. G. Brown et al. (2011) repeat the study in international K-12 contexts and encounter similar findings and implications. Remesal (2011) interviews K-12 teachers and also observes a common theme that they desire to use assessment as a tool for self-improvement.

Research on assessment in K-12 settings and its alignment with educators has led to formal assessment in higher education adopting a similar approach. Formal assessment processes are also cyclical in IHEs. The cycle is comprised of predetermined learning outcomes, determining evidence for these outcomes, designing rubrics for each type of evidence, collecting data for analysis using the aforementioned rubrics, and sharing findings from the analysis (Astin & Antonio, 2012; Maki, 2012; Savickiene, 2005; Suskie & Banta, 2009; Timm et al., 2013).

Learning Outcomes

The first step in the formal assessment process is articulating student learning outcomes that occur after a specified learning experience (Astin & Antonio, 2012; Maki, 2012; Suskie & Banta, 2009; Timm et al., 2013). These outcomes can be created on the institutional, programmatic, and course levels (Biggs & Tang, 2011). According to Biggs and Tang (2011), institutional learning outcomes state skills that graduates of an IHE should develop after their educational experiences. Outcomes on the institutional level tend to be broadly stated. Program learning outcomes add specificity by considering skills developed through educational experiences in a particular degree program. Lastly, course learning outcomes concern skills acquired from completing a specific class.

Learning outcomes adapt elements from sources such as accreditation standards, program mission statements, and strategic institutional goals (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Timm et al., 2013; Walvoord, 2010). For example, an IHE with a goal to establish a global reach may have learning

outcomes dedicated to increased cultural awareness. Each outcome subsequently demonstrates alignment with the aforementioned sources due to shared ideas.

Evidence of Learning

Statements on the mastery of learning outcomes are supported by a variety of evidence (Maki, 2012; Suskie & Banta, 2009). Evidence is aligned with its respective learning outcome by demonstrating a clear connection to the skills being evaluated. Findings in formal assessment can occur through direct evidence, which is evidence that involves performance-based observation of sample student work (Suskie & Banta, 2009). Signature assignments, also referred to as culminating assignments, are common sources of direct evidence due to a higher expected level of rigor in demonstrating all skills.

Direct evidence can be reinforced by authentic evidence. Authentic evidence captures work where students meaningfully apply their knowledge in real-world contexts (Suskie & Banta, 2009; Wiggins, 1993). For example, authentic evidence in a medical program may involve diagnosing live patients rather than making conclusions based on a simulated case file.

Formal assessment processes also use indirect evidence to supplement findings from direct and authentic evidence. Indirect evidence involves perceptions that students and faculty have regarding a learning outcome (Suskie & Banta, 2009). Sources of indirect evidence include surveys, interviews, questionnaires, and reflective observations.

Although indirect evidence does not always measure student performance, it can reveal meaningful contexts in a program. For example, students who perform strongly in a signature assignment may indicate in program surveys that they felt high stress due to a lack of resources. Such findings would lead a program to determine how it could better meet student needs.

Rubrics

IHEs supplement direct evidence for learning outcomes with rubrics that outline criteria for mastery (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Maki, 2012; Walvoord, 2010). Rubrics allow faculty to target specific areas of improvement by disaggregating expected skills (Walvoord, 2010). Each skill may be differentiated into levels of performance along with explanations that clarify the extent of a student's mastery (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Walvoord, 2010).

Assessment leaders make two considerations when creating rubrics. One is aligning the rubric with the learning outcome it intends to address (Suskie & Banta, 2009; Walvoord, 2010). Otherwise, faculty may assess students for skills that have no relevance to the outcome. The other consideration is clearly defining levels of performance for each rubric (Walvoord, 2010). If not, faculty may make ambiguous decisions about where students stand regarding their mastery.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection begins once rubrics for each learning outcome are finalized (Maki, 2012; Timm et al., 2013; Walvoord, 2010). The collection process starts by assessment leaders collaborating with faculty to sample student work from a signature assignment. After the assessment leader redacts all identifying information from the samples, they consult a content matter expert who assigns scores on designated rubrics. Content matter experts are usually recruited from faculty at the same IHE, but external individuals can also fulfill this role. This literature review will focus on formal assessment processes where faculty members are the only scorers.

One approach to scoring student work is having faculty use rubrics designated for formal assessment during their regular instructional duties (Walvoord, 2010). Afterward, they can submit the results to the assessment leader for further analysis. Walvoord (2010) notes that this

method allows assessment leaders to save planning time by utilizing pre-existing documents. On the other hand, assessment leaders may opt to have multiple faculty evaluate student work samples from classes they do not teach. This method is more time-consuming due to each work sample being assessed multiple times. However, external reviewers can provide a less biased perspective on student learning (Suskie & Banta, 2009; Walvoord, 2010). Additional viewpoints also provide opportunities for evaluating reliability.

Assessment leaders are not mandated to use or avoid certain statistical measures when they analyze results for each learning outcome. Instead, they weigh the clarity and relevance of data to decision-making (Suskie & Banta, 2009; Timm et al., 2013). For example, assessment leaders do not share raw qualitative data but instead parse it into themes that tell a story (Timm et al., 2013). In the end, approaches to formal assessment processes by balancing quality, dependability, and usefulness are associated with generalizable evidence that can be efficiently analyzed and compiled into a report (Suskie & Banta, 2009).

Sharing Results

Assessment leaders conclude the formal assessment process by sharing findings after completing data analysis. The recommended practice for disseminating findings is initially sharing key results with program chairs, faculty, and staff in a concise and transparent report (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Maki, 2012; Suskie & Banta, 2009). Assessment leaders may then attend program meetings to further discuss the data and gather feedback. Follow-up meetings with a dean or other administrative staff may be scheduled as needed. In the end, assessment leaders provide program chairs with findings and feedback from various parties. Program chairs and other institutional leaders then use this information to justify decisions with the intent of improving the IHE.

Overview of Implementing Formal Assessment Processes

Accreditors do not determine that an IHE has established self-improvement practices by observing one complete iteration of the formal assessment process. Instead, they view formal assessment as a multi-step cycle supported by a plan that demands technical knowledge and interpersonal communication. Accrediting bodies and scholarly research reduce the complexity of implementing the process by providing guidance in organizational structures and notable trends in assessment practices.

Organizational Structures to Support Formal Assessment

One of the first steps in formal assessment is backwards planning to define how the process occurs in a given organizational structure (Maki, 2012). Accrediting bodies may codify this step into their standards. For example, the Western Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC; n.d.-b) states that an IHE "actively engages in, or has a plan in place to systematically engage in, [formal assessment]" (p. 69). Such standards may be supported by rigorous methodological approaches and clear explanations for faculty and staff involvement.

Developing an Assessment Plan. IHEs are expected to address factors beyond timelines for implementation when they develop an assessment plan (Maki, 2012; Walvoord, 2010). Accrediting bodies influence this practice by publishing rubric-based criteria for evaluating assessment plans (Western Senior College and University Commission, 2013). These criteria define components of effective implementation, such as budgeting for formal assessment and involving faculty with relevant content area expertise. Details within these components may be left open to interpretation. For example, there is no standardized definition on what comprises a sufficient budget for formal assessment, nor are there constraints on what contributes to content area expertise. The allowance for open-ended interpretations in assessment plans is supported by

studies indicating that IHEs have unique contexts that may be constrained by an overly specific approach (Bager-Elsborg, 2018; Cardoso et al., 2017; Vukasovic, 2014)

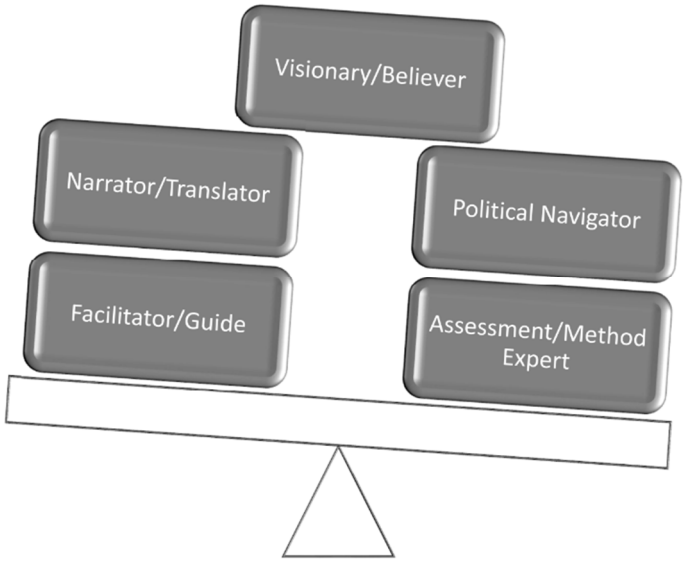
Maki (2012) and Walvoord (2010) guide IHEs on navigating open-ended details in assessment plans through three overarching themes: creating expectations at the institutional and program levels, applying findings from formal assessment to enhance institutional effectiveness, and determining how the aforementioned items are implemented. Creating expectations at various levels in the institution entails identifying expected outcomes, determining methods and criteria for assessing said outcomes, and collecting baseline information (Maki, 2012; Walvoord, 2010). Applying findings consists of determining how formal assessment results are reported and affect decision-making. Finally, implementing an assessment plan involves deciding which student groups to assess, what timeline this should occur on, and who carries the responsibility for interpreting results (Maki, 2012).

Roles and Responsibilities. Walvoord (2010) emphasizes that a lack of clarity is a "criticism so often made by accreditors" (p. 32) when observing roles and responsibilities in formal assessment processes. In response, she recommends that IHEs follow an assessment structure with roles and responsibilities organized by data, digestion, and decisions (Walvoord, 2010). Data covers the sources of student learning that are to be covered. Digestion considers aggregation, analysis, and dissemination of data. Lastly, decisions concern whomever uses data for "decisions, policies, planning, and budgeting" (Walvoord, 2010, p. 32). While there may be variation between institutions, data typically refers to students, learning outcomes, and faculty. Decisions refer to leadership on the level of a Dean or higher (Walvoord, 2010). Finally, digestion comprises a majority of the process and differentiates ideal assessment systems from ineffective ones.

Different positions in an IHE can digest assessment data (Walvoord, 2010). This may occur under the auspices of an assessment director, the provost's office, or a dedicated faculty committee. In each case, these groups may be considered assessment leaders who design all other aspects of the formal assessment process. Jankowski and Slotnick (2015) further elaborate assessment leaders as "individuals who are responsible for coordinating and leading institution-wide, program- and course-based assessment efforts" (p. 79). Such leaders also participate in sharing assessment activities and results with an array of internal and external stakeholders. As a result, assessment leaders need knowledge and skills that allow them to flexibly navigate the dynamics of various working units (Calderon & Mathies, 2013). Jankowski and Slotnick (2015) have summarized these skills into five areas (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Representation of assessment practitioner roles as represented by Jankowski and Slotnick (2015, p. 86)



There is no inherent advantage noted for assigning assessment leader duties to a specific institutional role, and they are all subject to flaws that reduce the effectiveness of formal

assessment processes (Walvoord, 2010). Sample flaws include a lack of power and connection for the assessment leader, unclear communication about the purpose of assessment, and data dissemination that does not reach decision-making individuals. Fuller (2013) reports similar findings and cites possible ambiguity surrounding the ways assessment-related duties are assigned.

Although assessment leaders typically oversee the formal assessment process, they do not necessarily succeed in implementing every stage. For example, interviews with assessment leaders have revealed that faculty may be reluctant to participate in the process (Holzweiss et al., 2016; Lock & Kraska, 2015). Meanwhile, Buhrman (2015) finds that the goals set by assessment leaders may not align with program-specific goals. Fernandes and Flores (2022) highlight the perspectives of program directors who note that approaches to assessment were frequently disrupted by varying institutional regulations.

Overall, while assessment leaders define roles and responsibilities and manage other activities in formal assessment processes, institutional cultures and working relationships can introduce complicating factors. Assessment leaders then face challenges in balancing the demand for assessment information without transforming formal assessment into a bureaucratic reporting process (Jankowski & Slotnick, 2015). These obstacles are further explored in the sections "Cultures of Assessment" and "Faculty Resistance to Formal Assessment Processes".

Trends in Formal Assessment Practices Over Time

Literature and practices regarding formal assessment processes are continuously evolving. Example refinements include job positions dedicated to institutional improvement and the use of learning outcomes to guide curriculum design (Banta, 2002; Bennett et al., 2010). In the past decade, scholars have studied student diversity in formal assessment processes and

closer alignment of assessment tools with instruction (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Ploegh et al., 2009). More recently, research in assessment has expanded into areas such as interpersonal relationships, globalization, and motivation (Hernández-Torrano & Courtney, 2021; Jankowski et al., 2018; Spowart & Turner, 2022).

Studies focusing on interpersonal relationships and motivation highlight the challenge of low faculty support in formal assessment processes (Holzweiss et al., 2016; Lock & Kraska, 2015). As such, research has shifted toward factors that affect levels of faculty participation. One example is delineating faculty members' conceptions of teaching in higher education (Johnson & Coleman, 2021; Pereira & Flores, 2016). Conceptions of teaching indicate core beliefs for the purpose and practice of instruction. Identifying conceptions of teaching prospectively informs the ways that faculty view formal assessment processes and form their own conceptions of assessment (Pereira & Flores, 2016). Munna (2021) adds that conceptions of assessment can further increase the ease with which formal assessment is integrated with other faculty duties. Research on institutional characteristics seeks to further develop these findings by explaining influences on conceptions of assessment.

Cultures of Assessment

Cultures of assessment are a recurring theme in research on conceptions of assessment (Fuller, 2013). Fostering a culture of assessment that fully supports formal assessment processes in an IHE is not automatic (Baartman et al., 2006). Conflicting conceptions of assessment and other inhibiting factors can induce deviation from ideal circumstances. As such, scholarship on cultures of assessment begins with standardized definitions which then form a basis of comparison for commonly observed situations.

Definition of a Culture of Assessment

Banta (2002) frames cultures of assessment as collective commitment among assessment leaders and faculty to values surrounding formal assessment. For example, all parties may agree that robust evidence is central to meaningful findings and thereby integrate faculty input when designing assessment tools. Maki (2010) refines this definition with contributors to commitment in assessment: grounding in an IHE's education values, attention to inquiry in the design process, and integration into the roles and responsibilities of a variety of positions.

Fuller (2013) emphasizes that cultures of assessment systematically describe underlying practices and ideal behaviors in formal assessment. This culminates in defining a culture of assessment as an "overarching ethos that is both an artifact of the way in which assessment is done and simultaneously a factor influencing and augmenting assessment practice" (Fuller, 2013, p. 21). As previously stated in Chapter 1, this is the working definition that the study uses for "Culture of Assessment".

Fuller (2013) utilizes a *Survey of Assessment Culture* instrument that aims to capture this definition through six constructs. Subsequent iterations of the survey have refined the constructs into five factors behind a culture of assessment (Fuller, Skidmore, et al., 2016). The first factor is "Faculty Perceptions," which refers to faculty beliefs about formal assessment. Example beliefs range from advocacy to distrust. Next is "Use of Data" that follows the extent to which assessment data is considered in decision-making. "Sharing" tracks the types of individuals who hear about assessment results, how much data is shared, and how often sharing occurs. "Compliance or Fear Motivators" reveals negative influences on commitment to the assessment process. Finally, "Normative Purposes of Assessment" uncovers an IHE's traditional approach to formal assessment.

Fuller, Skidmore, et al.'s (2016) five factors are aligned with each other and adapted from recommendations for best practices in formal assessment. For example, Walvoord (2010) states the importance of clearly defined responsibilities in assessment, which corresponds to Fuller, Skidmore, et al.'s (2016) factor of Faculty Perceptions. Likewise, Suskie and Banta (2009) discuss the need to share easily comprehensible findings, which can be observed in Fuller, Skidmore, et al.'s (2016) factor of Sharing.

Arguments in Support of Creating a Culture of Assessment

Maki (2010) initially supports establishing a culture of assessment by highlighting that formal assessment occurs for reasons such as accountability, improving student learning, or access to financial resources. Fuller (2013) encounters similar findings in a survey of assessment leaders. Forty-nine percent of responses focused on improving student learning, while 40% spoke to maintaining accreditation. A follow-up study would again find prevailing perceptions that assessment occurs to maintain accountability and funding (Fuller, Henderson, et al., 2015). Jankowski and Slotnick (2015) reinforce this opinion by associating a culture of assessment with improved capacity for responding to accountability-based demands. However, studies on recommendations for formal assessment processes share a theme of improving student learning (Astin & Antonio, 2012; Maki, 2012; Suskie & Banta, 2009; Timm et al., 2013). Such differences in the perceived purpose of formal assessment suggest a disconnect with what happens in reality (Goss, 2022).

In response, research on cultures of assessment has been endorsed for bringing IHEs closer to the student learning aspects of formal assessment (Fuller, Henderson, et al., 2015; Goss, 2022). One potential benefit is identifying practices that actively promote a focus on student learning (Fuller, Henderson, et al., 2015). Strategies for increasing faculty engagement can then

be developed. Accrediting bodies use their authority to create additional importance for cultures of assessment (Goss, 2022). For example, workshops on using cultures of assessment to improve student learning indicate that an accrediting body officially endorses this concept (Western Senior College and University Commission, 2019).

Antecedents to Creating Cultures of Assessment

Cultures of assessment bring assumptions that faculty hold only positive perceptions of formal assessment and are fully engaged in the process. In reality, these cultures adopt a variety of characteristics that either support or hamper efforts to garner faculty support (Fuller & Skidmore, 2014; Fuller, Henderson, et al., 2015; Skidmore et al., 2018). Such characteristics can be influenced by an assessment leader's choice to reinforce or avoid certain messages (Fuller & Skidmore, 2014). Although each situation is subject to unique contextual factors, cultures of student learning, fear, and compliance have recurred as major themes throughout the literature.

Culture of Student Learning. The culture of student learning is considered a context in which all ideal aspects of a formal assessment process are embodied (Skidmore et al., 2018). Student learning is deemed vital to assessment in this situation. Timm et al. (2013) note that "values, beliefs, norms, and behaviors reflect a shared appreciation of assessment practice and its value to institutional advancement" (p. 73) in a culture of student learning. This definition manifests as complete buy-in from both faculty and assessment leaders for engaging in formal assessment. In the end, these factors enable IHEs to make informed decisions that lead to positive transformations (Skidmore et al., 2018).

Although there is no definitive procedure for establishing a culture of student learning, Timm et al. (2013) initially suggests gaining support from upper-level administration. Administrative support subsequently shifts individuals' work values toward assessment leaders'

values. Bishop et al. (2015) add that cultures of student learning can be strengthened by institution-wide support during all stages of the process. Orientations and professional development opportunities can also make assessment more accessible for new faculty (Timm et al., 2013). Lastly, transparent conversations can establish that assessment is a collective commitment rather than a task siloed with one individual (L. McMillan et al., 2020; Timm et al., 2013).

Culture of Fear. Another possible culture of assessment revolves around fear that the process can induce (Fuller & Skidmore, 2014; Fuller, Henderson, et al., 2015; Skidmore et al., 2018). Faculty experiencing fear perceive that institutional leadership holds lopsided power to enforce unexpected or unwanted directions. Moskal et al. (2008) provide an example where teaching to the same learning outcomes as other faculty may be viewed as a loss of academic freedom and creativity. T. V. Nguyen and Laws (2019) note that faculty are cognizant of what role and influence they have in integrating formal assessment into curriculum design. Overall, a culture of fear may hamper formal assessment because faculty are hesitant to share authentic perceptions of student learning (Skidmore et al., 2018).

Redmond et al. (2008) also highlight a lack of academic freedom in a culture of fear. They describe potential consequences for faculty who openly transmit knowledge, such as a loss of credibility, damaged interpersonal relationships, and preclusion of career advancement. Therefore, Redmond et al. (2008) recommend that leaders in higher education directly acknowledge the fear of such implications; otherwise, the lack of faculty input would inhibit the formal assessment process.

Culture of Compliance. Finally, a culture of compliance highlights the acknowledgment of assessment without necessarily securing commitment (Fuller & Skidmore, 2014; Fuller,

Henderson, et al., 2015; Skidmore et al., 2018). When compliance pervades in assessment practices, so does the motivation to complete tasks solely because they are mandatory (Shockley et al., 2011). Completing mandatory tasks is not analogous to quality education and continuous improvement because engagement with student learning does not necessarily occur (Cardoso et al., 2019; Shockley et al., 2011; Skidmore et al., 2018). Similarly, compliance with formal assessment may belie an underlying apprehension if it is justified with external mandates instead of immediate institutional needs (Driscoll & Noriega, 2006).

Shockley et al. (2011) recommend addressing external disruptions as a way to transition away from rote compliance in formal assessment processes. For example, an individual faculty's attention may be splintered by external pressures, resource scarcity, and tenure tasks. These distractions detract from the level of engagement outlined in a culture of student learning (Shockley et al., 2011; Skidmore et al., 2018). Driscoll and Noriega (2006) also advise gaining commitment to assessment processes by ensuring they are "well aligned with the professional role and intentions of faculty" (p. 4).

Obstacles to Establishing a Culture of Assessment

There are other challenges in establishing an ideal culture of assessment besides practices that lead to cultures of fear and compliance. One is accounting for unique contexts in each IHE which may convolute the efficacy of a singular approach (Cardoso et al., 2017; Reimann & Sadler, 2017). For example, a survey by Jankowski et al. (2018) finds that the larger an institution is, the less likely it is to use diverse approaches to assessment and integrate results into decision-making. Subsequently, larger institutions are more likely to foster a culture of compliance due to reduced emphasis on informed decision-making (Fuller & Skidmore, 2014; Fuller, Henderson, et al., 2015; Skidmore et al., 2018).

Social, cultural, economic, and political contexts influence cultures of assessment (Adie et al., 2021; Simper et al., 2021). Simper et al. (2021) elaborate that institutional policies and goals influence perceived barriers to change. Assessment practices may also be differentiated by a faculty's specific discipline (Bager-Elsborg, 2018; Simper et al., 2021; Yeo & Boman, 2019). Specifically, faculty of different disciplines also have different priorities and ways of thinking (Simper et al., 2021; Yeo & Boman, 2019). These differences may lead to divergence in what assessment leaders intend to accomplish.

Finally, some research reveals doubts of the usefulness of cultures of assessment (Baas et al., 2016). For example, there are opinions that a culture of student learning is too aspirational for faculty to realistically believe. According to faculty interviews, skepticism for cultures of assessment is fueled by a discrepancy between what assessment leaders know about teaching and what actually occurs in the classroom (Baas et al., 2016). Individuals in ambivalent positions are also uncomfortable about voicing their opinions due to discomfort with contributing to clashing narratives. In the end, references to faculty in cultures of assessment introduce an opportunity for narrower research about faculty engagement in the formal assessment process.

Faculty Resistance to Formal Assessment Processes

Faculty resistance is a recurring theme in challenges to establishing cultures of assessment. For example, Skidmore et al.'s (2018) description of a culture of compliance describes how faculty are unable to commit to all aspects of formal assessment processes. In the meantime, faculty priorities influence their perceptions of assessment (Bager-Elsborg, 2018; Simper et al., 2021; Yeo & Boman, 2019). This is reflected in studies such as those by Holzweiss et al. (2016) and Lock and Kraska (2015), who discuss faculty members' unwillingness to

support assessment leaders. Given this context, faculty resistance to formal assessment processes and responses to this resistance are emerging research topics.

Faculty Conceptions of Assessment

Misalignment between assessment leaders' intentions for formal assessment and faculty conceptions of assessment can reduce engagement with formal assessment processes (Kember, 1997; Martin et al., 2000; Northcote, 2009; Postareff, Katajavuori, et al., 2008). Conceptions of assessment provide information about goals that faculty prioritize in their instruction (Ho et al., 2001; Northcote, 2009; Watkins et al., 2005). These instructional approaches subsequently affect beliefs about what is meaningful for student learning (M. A. Flores et al., 2015; Martin et al., 2000). Conflicting priorities between faculty and assessment leaders can compound faculty resistance (Pajares, 1992; Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, et al., 2008; Samuelowicz & Bain, 2002).

Research on conceptions of assessment initially occurred with K-12 contexts before expanding to higher education (G. Brown, 2004; G. Brown et al., 2011). Remesal (2011) introduces conceptions of assessment into higher education through four themes: learning processes, teaching processes, accreditation of learning, and accountability. These conceptions can be interwoven to determine an overall level of commitment to assessment. Research on assessment in higher education continues to apply these characteristics (Day et al., 2019; Pereira & Flores, 2016; Postareff, Virtanen, et al., 2012). Currently, there is no consensus on which conceptions are more common or influential than others as the results of one study contradict another (Day et al., 2019; Postareff, Virtanen, et al., 2012). Therefore, discussions of each conception of assessment in higher education emphasize general characteristics over how much influence they have.

Learning Process. Remesal (2011) describes outcomes of learning new content and improving learning strategies when viewing assessment as a component of the learning process. Such outcomes can also impact a student's motivation. Postareff, Virtanen, et al. (2012) and Pereira and Flores (2016) encounter similar findings in a university-level setting, as faculty interviews mention the practice of measuring student outcomes. However, faculty have expressed that external constraints, such as class sizes and workloads, inhibit the ability to implement assessment as a tool for continuous improvement in student learning (Pereira & Flores, 2016; Watkins et al., 2005).

In comparison, guides in implementing formal assessment processes highlight a goal of understanding student learning and making continuous improvements for learners (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Maki, 2012). Faculty conceptions of assessment as a learning process aligns with this goal, as student learning is a central focus in each case. The importance of such alignment is implied as some studies state that "It is encouraging to see that teachers strongly focused on the student learning aspect of assessment" (Day et al., 2019, p. 2231).

Teaching Process. When educators conceive of assessment as a part of the teaching process, they make informed adjustments to tasks and classroom materials that better meet the needs of students (Remesal, 2011). These changes can be extended from short-term actions to long-term methodological shifts. Postareff, Virtanen, et al. (2012) observes this view among faculty in higher education and labels it as a transformational conception due to the focus on assessment criteria, validity, and equity. Day et al. (2019) also discusses transformational conceptions, as eight faculty interviewed in their study mentioned the importance of regularly providing effective feedback.

Guidance on formal assessment reiterates that continuous improvement is a foundational practice that can be achieved by changes in instruction (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Maki, 2012). This practice is central to adjustments mentioned in the conception of assessment as a teaching process (Remesal, 2011). Therefore, conceiving of assessment as a teaching process displays alignment with the fundamentals of formal assessment processes. Postareff, Virtanen, et al. (2012) advocates for this alignment when listing implications for practice, noting that, "attention should be paid on developing or changing teachers' conceptions of assessment along with assessment practices" (p. 91).

Accreditation of Learning. Viewing assessment through the lens of accreditation creates an emphasis on information that is beneficial for maintaining an accredited status (Remesal, 2011). This conception can manifest as assurance that the results of formal assessment are meeting an established norm. Accreditation can also be viewed as a control and selection system for ensuring the implementation of desirable practices. According to Pereira and Flores (2016), faculty in higher education are generally aware that assessment is reviewed as a part of the accreditation cycle. However, this does not necessarily entail that they have detailed knowledge of why accrediting bodies value assessment.

The conception of assessment as accreditation of learning shares characteristics with an assessment culture of compliance. In the culture of compliance, formal assessment is acknowledged as a required practice for accreditation but not fully embraced otherwise (Fuller & Skidmore, 2014; Fuller, Henderson, et al., 2015; Skidmore et al., 2018). Assessment as accreditation of learning focuses on achieving predetermined standards (Remesal, 2011). However, meeting standards does not guarantee that faculty perceive intrinsic value in assessment. To that end, discrepancies between the culture of compliance and the ideal culture of

student learning can also be observed in the viewpoint of assessment as accreditation of learning (Shockley et al., 2011).

Accountability within Professional Teaching. Lastly, assessment may be viewed as a mechanism for keeping educators accountable to their professional responsibilities (Remesal, 2011). One example is using assessment results to justify instructional choices and make comparisons with other parties. Faculty in higher education rarely mention this conception; for example, one study interviewed 20 faculty and recorded one instance of connecting assessment to professional accountability (Parpala & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2007). Postareff, Virtanen, et al. (2012) refer to this finding but do not expand upon it. Pereira and Flores (2016) find similar sentiments but also do not elaborate further.

The focus on professional accountability in assessment can be connected to both a culture of compliance and a culture of fear. The need to justify instructional activities implies a push to fulfill expectations (Remesal, 2011). This push is reflected in the culture of compliance, which espouses task completion without further reflection (Fuller & Skidmore, 2014; Fuller, Henderson, et al., 2015; Skidmore et al., 2018). Meanwhile, a culture of fear occurs when faculty perceive a loss of academic freedom (Moskal et al. 2008). Overall, comparisons and reports made to maintain professional accountability do not reflect characteristics of an ideal culture of student learning (Fuller & Skidmore, 2014; Fuller, Henderson, et al., 2015; Skidmore et al., 2018).

Antecedents to Resistance in Formal Assessment Processes

Faculty may resist formal assessment processes because of misaligned conceptions of assessment and the stressor of certain external influences. Some research on these conditions contains deficit views of faculty. For example, Baas et al. (2016) received a response noting that

"Faculty resist assessment because they resist everything. They are the most immovable objects on the planet" (p. 8). On the contrary, Germaine and Spencer (2016) tout that perceptions of faculty play a critical role in successfully implementing formal assessment processes. As such, assessment leaders must balance empathy for faculty with the desire to complete tasks. This literature review focuses on differing priorities and perspectives that may create resistance rather than engaging in deficit views. An IHE's specific context can create unique forms of faculty resistance. Despite this potential complexity, four areas of resistance have been consistently highlighted by multiple studies.

Lack of Assessment Training. Faculty interviews have uncovered contexts in which they are not trained in formal assessment processes (Fletcher et al., 2012; Hutchings, 2010; Sasere & Makhasane, 2020). When this training is absent, it is less likely for faculty to differentiate formal assessment from performance evaluations and grading in the classroom (Fletcher et al., 2012). As a result, faculty become more likely to make assumptions about assessment that clash with the intentions of assessment leaders. Similarly, the lack of formal assessment training implies that an institution does not value the process (Fletcher et al., 2012; Hutchings, 2010). The perceived absence of value then translates into low faculty prioritization of formal assessment. Streamlining formal assessment with technology has been proposed as a solution for generating value, but technology integration does not occur automatically (Sasere & Makhasane, 2020). Specifically, Sasere and Makhasane (2020) observed challenges in implementation due to a shortage of requisite technical proficiency that was assumed to be established.

The lack of assessment training is not a phenomenon exclusively observed by assessment leaders and researchers; faculty have also cited this phenomenon when providing feedback on

formal assessment processes (Maggs, 2014; Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, et al., 2007; Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, et al., 2008; Tierno-García et al., 2016). According to Maggs (2014), faculty who are overall ambivalent toward the formal assessment process are willing to make suggestions regarding clearer structures and guidance. Meanwhile, Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, et al's. (2007) follow-up interviews on pedagogical training found comments that training clarified ambiguous concepts in formal assessment. A further study on the same group of faculty revealed that their conceptions of assessment began to deviate from the intent of the original training (Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, et al., 2008). This suggests that training for formal assessment needs to be reinforced over time instead of concluding within one session.

Competing Workloads. Research in primary and secondary education first establishes the notion of assessment being perceived as a workload burden (J. H. McMillan, 2003). Such research extends into higher education, where multiple scholars have addressed the clash between faculty responsibilities and the demands of formal assessment processes (Anderson, 2006; Cardoso et al., 2019; Deardorff & Folger, 2005; Dunn et al., 2020; Pham, 2022; Rawlusyk, 2018). Interviews with faculty have revealed sentiments that formal assessment is an artificial external standard that competes with the goals of a department (Deardorff & Folger, 2005; Germaine & Spencer, 2016). Early-career faculty have also been found to average a 47-hour workweek; compounding assessment tasks on top of this workload would then be perceived as an overwhelming demand (Dunn et al., 2020; Good et al., 2013).

Several characteristics can cause assessment work to be viewed as a conflict rather than a valuable tool. One contributor is that results of assessment may not be meaningfully integrated into the quality assurance or decision-making process (Anderson, 2006; Cardoso et al., 2019). The lack of meaningful integration may cause faculty to believe that formal assessment does not

have the value it claims to, thus reducing its legitimacy as a work task. Detractors for legitimacy can be exacerbated by unaddressed biases, unclear assessment criteria, and convoluted processes to prepare work samples (Rawlusyk, 2018). Finally, an excess of procedures for documentation can cause the formal assessment process to become less focused on student learning, leading to perceptions of tedium (Cardoso et al., 2019; Pham, 2022).

Ownership of Content Area Expertise. Faculty may also resist participating in formal assessment processes due to a perceived infringement on their content area expertise (Anderson, 2006; Fletcher et al., 2012; Maclellan, 2004; Smith & Gordon, 2019). Faculty are hired and trained for their subject matter area, but not necessarily in formal assessment processes (Fletcher et al., 2012; Smith & Gordon, 2019). Faculty also may not regularly receive peer feedback about their assessment practices (Bose & Rengel, 2009). Definitions of quality education for faculty and assessment leaders then diverge as each group receives differing information on this topic (Anderson, 2006; Fletcher et al., 2012). Perceived differences between the goals of faculty and the standards established by accrediting bodies can further drive this divergence (Maclellan, 2004). As a result, an assessment leader's recommendations may be perceived by faculty as an uninformed judgment from a third party (Fletcher et al., 2012). This conflict may be exacerbated by the perception that if faculty have not provided input on the assessment process, an assessment leader should not comment on a faculty's work.

The amount of value faculty place in their own expertise can further drive wariness of formal assessment (Fletcher et al., 2012; Hutchings, 2010; Smith & Gordon, 2019). In general, faculty are subject to mechanisms of accountability besides accreditation standards, such as performance evaluations within the IHE (Fletcher et al., 2012). Faculty can then be cautious about how their work is perceived as they know that there is scrutiny from multiple perspectives.

Some IHEs instead isolate faculty from formal assessment by excluding it from their list of required duties (Smith & Gordon, 2019). In turn, there are phenomena such as faculty staying reticent on formal assessment processes not only because they lack training but also because they fear making ignorant statements (Hutchings, 2010).

Perceived Inconsistencies in Formal Assessment. Repeated inconsistencies in formal assessment processes lead to resistance via a loss of legitimacy (Bin Othayman et al., 2022; Emil & Cress, 2014; Fletcher et al., 2012; Liu, 2013; Rawlusyk, 2018; Tierno-García et al., 2016). Fletcher et al. (2012) note that formal assessment processes can be hampered by assessment leaders who claim a certain stance but practice the contrary. Later studies supplement the phenomenon by finding that alignment between the goals of faculty and assessment leaders positively affects engagement in the process, while misalignment has the opposite effect (Emil & Cress, 2014; Liu, 2013).

Tierno-García et al. (2016) develops this understanding by finding that satisfaction among faculty toward assessment training was belied by concerns that not every recommendation could be realistically implemented. For example, the training touted the need to adopt multiple methods and instruments, but faculty discussed large class sizes and expressed, "the [formal assessment process] can be implemented more successfully in some activities with reduced groups" (Tierno-García et al., 2016, p. 37). Assessment leaders may also experience inherent inconsistencies in their duties. In particular, faculty may perceive a clash between an assessment leader's goal to create safe spaces for critical reflection with their obligation to report findings for external accountability (Fulcher et al., 2012). Such a complication could then create wariness about interacting with assessment leaders.

Faculty often learn about formal assessment from personal experience or their colleagues (Rawlusyk, 2018). Learning from a source other than assessment leaders creates a larger likelihood of resistance based on information that does not truly clarify the purpose of formal assessment. Bin Othayman et al. (2022) also find that faculty have a tendency to view evaluation as a tangential matter due to a perceived lack of benefit. In the end, faculty resistance in formal assessment processes revolves around the impact of being informed about assessment leaders' true intentions and the value that faculty derive from participating in the process.

Implications for Working Relationships with Assessment Leaders

As research on faculty resistance in formal assessment processes has developed, so has research on addressing resistance. From a broad perspective, literature on organizational behavior emphasizes the importance of addressing resistance in order to sustain an initiative (Kotter, 2012; Robbins & Judge, 2014). In higher education, strategies for reducing resistance to formal assessment revolve around actions by assessment leaders that promote positive working relationships with faculty (Dunn et al., 2020). Although recommendations may need to be specifically tailored for each IHE, common themes in nurturing supportive environments can be identified.

Transitioning Away from Deficit-Minded Interactions. Hutchings (2010) highlights how faculty may avoid formal assessment processes in order to avoid displaying their lack of knowledge. Meanwhile, Fletcher et al. (2012) discuss how faculty actively alter their instruction because they know their work will be assessed. Perceptions of fairness and justice in leadership can influence organizational change and are applicable to formal assessment processes (Germaine & Spencer, 2016). In all cases, there are interpersonal dynamics that affect behaviors at work. Baas et al. (2016) present evidence of these dynamics by observing a deficit mindset

among some assessment leaders when they speak about faculty resistance to formal assessment processes. Such characteristics can be observed in an assessment culture of fear (Dunn et al., 2020; Skidmore et al., 2018).

On that note, Dunn et al. (2020) advise avoiding deficit-minded interactions in favor of practices that encourage receptivity to assessment. This advice builds on Fuller, Henderson, et al's. (2015) recommendation that communication is vital in showing faculty how much an IHE values formal assessment. One approach is to adopt a stance of encouragement instead of expectant compliance (Dunn et al., 2020). For example, faculty can be formally recognized for positive changes in student learning that are informed by assessment outcomes. There is also the possibility of introducing faculty leader roles into the process, as "some faculty enthusiastically take on opportunities for new leadership roles" (Dunn et al., 2020, p. 251). Faculty can also be given a voice in assessment plans rather than being imposed on as subordinates.

Creating Trust-Based Engagements. Gradually increasing trust in formal assessment processes can also alleviate faculty resistance (Dunn et al., 2020). Faculty have been found to lose trust in formal assessment if there are inconsistencies between what assessment leaders proclaim and what they practice (Bin Othayman et al., 2022; Emil & Cress, 2014; Fletcher et al., 2012; Rawlusyk, 2018; Tierno-García et al., 2016). In response, regaining trust in formal assessment processes is achieved by several strategies beyond ensuring consistency between a statement and actual practice (Dunn et al., 2020).

Hutchings (2010) denotes the scholarship of teaching and learning as an area of interest for faculty, and Dunn et al. (2020) recommend leveraging this interest for engagement with formal assessment processes. Assessment leaders and program chairs can collaborate regarding ways for formal assessment to inform research in teaching and learning, thus building on mutual

interests (Dunn et al., 2020). Related practices include sponsoring travel to teaching-related conferences and allocating research funds for utilizing assessment outcomes. Another opportunity to increase trust in formal assessment is facilitating a community of practice for faculty participating in the process (Guetterman & Mitchell, 2016). Dunn et al. (2020) ties this idea to increased trust by underscoring the high amount of value faculty place in working with colleagues who share common interests. Such a community provides an environment to define what issues should be pursued. Overall, trust can be embedded into developmental change facilitated by formal assessment processes (Germaine & Spencer, 2016).

Clarifying the Purpose of Formal Assessment Processes. Earlier in the literature review, lack of training on formal assessment and attempts to fill gaps in knowledge of formal assessment were connected to faculty resistance (Fletcher et al., 2012; Hutchings, 2010; Sasere & Makhasane, 2020). Multiple researchers have made recommendations to implement assessment training and supplement it with informative materials (Fletcher et al., 2012; Hutchings, 2010; Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, et al., 2007; Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, et al., 2008). Consultations with assessment experts have also been correlated with improved assessment practices (Rodgers et al., 2013).

Dunn et al. (2020) endorse providing expertise and training to reduce faculty resistance. They provide additional suggestions to account for various institutional contexts. For example, some IHEs may not have the resources to hire a full-time assessment expert. Instead, these institutions may collaborate with other schools or departments to provide training (Dunn et al., 2020). There can also be support for temporarily hiring an external consultant or sponsoring faculty to attend assessment workshops. All things considered, IHEs can implement a variety of strategies for reducing faculty resistance to assessment by familiarizing them with important

concepts. Each strategy may necessitate that assessment leaders utilize various skills backed by theories of leadership.

Potential Application of Leader-Member Exchange Theory in Formal Assessment

Leadership theories have been connected to efforts in collaborating with faculty (Bensimon & Neumann, 1992; Freitas Junior et al., 2021). However, leadership theories are not always implemented meaningfully in higher education, and by extension, formal assessment processes (Reinholz et al., 2021). In the proposed study, leader-member exchange (LMX) theory with an emphasis on faculty-assessment leader interactions serves as the theoretical framework. The rationale for this choice will be supported by a general overview of LMX theory and its known connections to higher education from the faculty perspective. Gaps in research and proposed applications to formal assessment processes that expand the literature follow thereafter.

Overview of Leader-Member Exchange Theory

LMX theory focuses on interactions between leaders and followers in an organization (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden et al., 1997; Rockstuhl et al., 2012). These interactions contain positive and negative incidents that subsequently impact organizational outcomes. The quality of an exchange is not predestined, as leaders can facilitate interactions in various ways (Sun et al., 2022; Yang & Chae, 2022). Best practices in facilitating interactions are first supported by established definitions that inform research through the lens of LMX.

Definition. According to Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), “LMX clearly incorporates an operationalization of a relationship-based approach to leadership” (p. 225). This allows relationships and interactions to inform leaders of their next actions. Another notion is that LMX theory “begins as transactional social exchange and evolves into transformational social exchange” (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995, p. 238). While the initial interactions between leaders and

followers may vary, the goal is building effective relationships that enable the progression of desired changes.

Liden et al. (1997) elaborate that relationships described by LMX theory "are characterized by the physical or mental effort, material resources, information, and/or emotional support exchanges" (p. 48). These antecedents lead to consequences regarding perceptions, behaviors, and organizational outcomes. Applications for LMX vary depending on organizational and cultural contexts (Rockstuhl et al., 2012). There are also theoretical extensions in exchange processes, social exchange, and reciprocity that continue to undergo development (Liden et al., 1997; Premru et al., 2022).

Facilitating the Quality of Interactions. In LMX theory, the quality of interactions between leaders and followers facilitates the subsequent development of their relationship (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden et al., 1997). As such, the interactional variables of expectations, liking, perceived similarity, and personality similarity are of interest (Liden et al., 1997). Ideal positive interactions in LMX theory contain mutual respect and trust that lead to empowerment (Sun et al., 2022). In reality, leaders have different interactions with each follower which creates gaps in the way each relationship develops (Li & Liao, 2014; Sun et al., 2022). Awareness of these gaps may be associated with envy and contempt that discourages altruistic behavior within a team (Sun et al., 2022).

There are several recommendations for ways leaders can facilitate interactions with followers. First is recognizing that leaders have greater control over the quality of an exchange than their followers do (Liden et al., 1997). Another recommendation is openly expressing supportiveness and intentionally investing in understanding each follower's needs for a high-quality interaction (Li & Liao, 2014; Yang & Chae, 2022). Leaders should also be vigilant about

how their interactions are perceived. Similarly, followers may privately compare their leader-follower interactions, including any disparities, among themselves (Sun et al., 2022). Finally, open channels of communication for feedback can encourage positive developments by providing followers with an unfiltered outlook for improving their performance (Chen et al., 2007).

Applications to Organizational Outcomes. Organizations experience beneficial consequences when maintaining high-quality interactions described in LMX theory. One dimension is changes in attitudes and perceptions such as organizational commitment, satisfaction, and upward influence (Liden et al., 1997). Chen et al. (2007) explore perceptions of empowerment in response to leaders' practices. Later studies develop knowledge of this association in terms of role engagement (Li & Liao, 2014; Rockstuhl et al., 2012). Rockstuhl et al. (2012) explain that followers perceive leaders as acting agents of an organization regardless of their own affective and normative commitment to the organization. As such, the quality of a follower's relationship with their leader is associated with the quality of their relationship with their organization.

Outcomes of applying LMX theory also include changes in behaviors ranging from organizational citizenship to performance (Liden et al., 1997). For example, Chen et al. (2007) find that approachability for feedback is associated with improved job performance. Rockstuhl et al. (2012) highlight how the relationship between LMX and task performance is not significantly affected by how individualistic or collectivistic a particular organizational culture is. Other studies connect positive LMX phenomena to reciprocal behaviors not only between leaders and followers but also among the members of a team (Sun et al., 2022; Yang & Chae, 2022). Leaders

may additionally bestow extrinsic benefits to followers such as promotions and salary increases (Liden et al., 1997).

Leader-Member Exchange Theory in Higher Education

While general characteristics of LMX theory have been explored, the prior literature does not pertain to a specific educational setting. Higher education involves contextual factors that require additional consideration. Chief among these are workplace dynamics for faculty which differ from traditional workplaces in terms of hierarchical perceptions. These differences create special implications for higher education leaders.

Faculty Perceptions of Hierarchy. Overviews of LMX theory assume that the working relationship between leaders and followers is defined by a hierarchy where one party reports to another and is subject to directives (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden et al., 1997; Rockstuhl et al., 2012). On the contrary, faculty experience distributed leadership as they view each other's statuses as homogenous and engage more often in collegial interactions (Bess & Goldman, 2001; Floyd & Preston, 2018; McGraw et al., 2021; N. Nguyen et al., 2021). This is partially based on the differentiation of faculty by talent, attitude, and personality instead of their job title (Bess & Goldman, 2001). Faculty also create informal organizational groupings rather than being assigned to predetermined teams. The development of distance learning in higher education additionally enables opportunities for greater autonomy (Power, 2013).

While there are administrative roles that manage resources for faculty, they differ from managers in business and industry in that teaching quality and research productivity are emphasized over profits (Floyd & Preston, 2018; N. Nguyen et al., 2021). Positions of leadership in higher education, such as associate deans, do not always have clearly-defined roles (Floyd &

Preston, 2018). As a result, there is room for greater variation in faculty perceptions of hierarchy due to more evenly distributed agency between leaders and followers (Bess & Goldman, 2001).

Implications for Higher Education Leaders. Although working relationships with faculty exhibit distinctions from the typical workplace, some aspects of applying LMX theory are similar in both contexts. General research in LMX theory has discussed reciprocal behaviors that occur when followers experience benefits resulting from positive interactions with leaders (Liden et al., 1997; Sun et al., 2022; Yang & Chae, 2022). Faculty are also aware of levels of reciprocity that can subsequently influence their intentions at work (Iqbal et al., 2022; White-Lewis et al., 2022). The impact of reciprocity leads to recommendations that academic leaders continually monitor the environment they promote. Meanwhile, researchers have discussed the importance of avoiding differentiated exchanges with followers that may unintentionally favor certain individuals over others (Li & Liao, 2014; Sun et al., 2022). This phenomenon is also observed in higher education with incidents such as gender inequality (Bess & Goldman, 2001; Kjeldal et al., 2005).

When applying LMX theory to higher education, leaders should consider that faculty value intellectual capacity and personal growth (Horne et al., 2016). Within formal assessment, these values add importance to creating perceptions of support for faculty by prefacing interactions as a space to enable and facilitate professional development. Benevolent leadership styles further increase the quality of interactions through the lens of LMX theory (N. Nguyen et al., 2022). For example, assessment leaders can address holistic concerns for the work and non-work needs of faculty. Higher education leadership may additionally consider professional development opportunities that inform the ways their practices influence faculty (Iqbal et al., 2022).

Proposed Applications of Leader-Member Exchange Theory in Formal Assessment Processes

While there is literature on applying LMX theory to higher education, there is a gap in the research regarding specific connections to formal assessment processes. Thus far, connections to formal assessment processes in research on LMX theory are tangential or inferential. For example, Iqbal et al. (2022) provides a practical implication that, "organizational leadership must develop self-assessment mechanisms" (p. 18). However, there is no further elaboration on what these mechanisms entail. Horne et al. (2016) discuss the ways higher education leaders can leverage their interactions to promote faculty development but do not provide recommendations for integrating findings from formal assessment. Research in educational leadership has traditionally emphasized specific contexts of learning over the applicability of certain leadership theories (Evans, 2022). Therefore, there is an opportunity to expand the literature through a study that applies the fundamentals of LMX theory to strategies for increasing faculty engagement in formal assessment processes.

Increasing the Perceived Value of Formal Assessment Processes

Although there are strategies for addressing faculty resistance to formal assessment processes, these approaches do not necessarily guarantee that faculty will perceive enough value to sustain their commitment to participation. Minimized resistance and organizational goals that align with personal values contribute to commitment in general organizational contexts (Kotter, 2012; Robbins & Judge, 2014). Therefore, researchers in higher education have studied unique approaches that may increase the value that formal assessment has for faculty. Several studies have demonstrated that faculty commitment to formal assessment occurs as a subtle evolution rather than an immediate shift (Hativa, 2000; Mimirinis, 2019; T. V. Nguyen & Laws, 2016; Noben et al., 2021; Sadler & Reimann, 2018; Van Dyke, 2013). Assessment leaders are also

encouraged to be agents of change who unite disparate discourses (Fuller, 2012; Suskie & Banta, 2009). Over time, research on increasing the perceived value of formal assessment processes has revolved around three strategies.

Meaningful Professional Development in Higher Education

Dedicated professional development on formal assessment is capable of leading to improvements (M. Brown et al., 2022; Noben et al., 2021; Postareff , Lindblom-Ylänne, et al., 2007; Reimann, 2018; Rodgers et al., 2013). Studies on factors that increase the perceived value of professional development in higher education supplement these findings. For example, the alignment of training topics, activities, and objectives is more influential than the competence of the trainers (Gaikwad & Wadegaonkar, 2022; Muammar & Alkathiri, 2021). Faculty also evaluate the potential benefits of new knowledge and the level of effort applied by leadership to implement the training (Gaikwad & Wadegaonkar, 2022).

Context-specific factors are also included in faculty needs for training. Early recommendations acknowledge that educators are capable learners who regularly bring multiple perspectives to managing complex environments (Kennedy, 1991). Literature reviews on faculty training make this complexity apparent by displaying inconsistency in perceptions of the value training has in higher education (Marian et al., 2020).

For example, six reviews covered possible variables in group characteristics, while three others studied theoretical foundations in training faculty. None of the later literature clarifies how contextual factors can be leveraged to meet specific faculty needs. As such, there is a gap in research for the application of context-specific factors in formal assessment training for faculty in higher education.

Evaluating Long-term Outcomes

Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, et al. (2008) observed a loss in learning among faculty despite implementing assessment training. Subsequent research has observed that long-term support for beneficial outcomes of faculty training may be assumed instead of actively built (Chalmers & Gardiner, 2015; Houston & Hood, 2017). In response, the practice of monitoring long-term outcomes in formal assessment training aims to ensure that faculty value the content beyond just the time of delivery.

Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2016) outline four levels of training evaluation: Reaction, Learning, Behavior, and Results. Research focused on long-term evaluation of assessment training has adopted principles covered in these levels (Lee et al., 2018; Myllykoski-Laine et al., 2022; Pham, 2020). Lee et al. (2018) begin by discouraging overreliance on short questionnaires and instead focusing on rigorous behavioral observations. Pham (2020) recommends establishing individual meetings throughout the formal assessment process as a way to gauge faculty learning. Anonymous surveys throughout the assessment cycle can also generate reactions and behavioral observations on how often assessment practices are communicated among faculty. Myllykoski-Laine et al. (2022) proposes a framework for a pedagogical culture of development that also emphasizes faculty regularly sharing insights with each other. This framework can be reinforced by establishing supportive elements in "themes of (1) attitudes and values, (2) principles and norms, and (3) practices and structures in the community in relation to teaching and its development" (Myllykoski-Laine et al., 2022, p. 13).

Providing Incentives for Assessment Work

In the broader field of organizational management, Kotter (2012) recommends preemptively addressing possible barriers to a proposed change. Within the context of formal

assessment, one barrier is diverging definitions of quality and quality assurance due to information received from different sources (Anderson, 2006; Fletcher et al., 2012). Another barrier is the previously discussed misconception that formal assessment processes offer little value beyond bureaucratic demands imposed by accrediting bodies (Cardoso et al., 2019; Deardorff & Folger, 2005). Similarly, there may be apprehension around formal assessment if it appears to restrict instructional autonomy (T. V. Nguyen & Laws, 2019; Redmond et al., 2008). Researchers recommend easing these tensions through collaborative discussions and training on the purpose of formal assessment (Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne et al., 2007; Fletcher et al., 2012).

Extrinsic incentives may also increase the perceived value of formal assessment processes. Smith and Gordon (2018) suggest stipends or course releases for assuming duties in assessment. A follow-up study introduces the possibility of formally recognizing assessment work, such as allowing it to contribute to tenure packages (Smith & Gordon, 2019). However, extrinsic incentives may have varying effectiveness based on contextual factors, such as how often faculty are expected to participate in assessment (Smith & Gordon, 2018). Beyond this literature, there is a gap in research for understanding the general value certain extrinsic incentives have for faculty to engage in formal assessment processes.

Chapter Summary

This literature review clarified the purpose of formal assessment processes and the unique challenges in their implementation. Formal assessment is a practice in higher education where assessment leaders and faculty collaborate to interpret data about student learning and make adjustments can be made for continuous improvement. It is also a practice that accrediting bodies require of IHEs. While formal assessment processes are framed as both a requirement and a collaborative space, various factors for resistance create challenges in gathering faculty support.

Recommendations for reducing this resistance revolve around informing faculty about the true intention of formal assessment and providing resources that allow for the process to successfully occur. The amount of interaction involved in increasing faculty engagement draws attention to the application of LMX theory, which focuses on the interactions between leaders and followers. However, there is a gap in the research in applying LMX theory to implementing formal assessment processes. As such, there is potential to expand the literature through a research study exclusively dedicated to this phenomenon.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Methods

A qualitative phenomenological approach was employed to describe the needs faculty express in formal assessment processes as viewed through the lens of LMX theory. The research elucidated the nature of working relationships between assessment leaders and faculty. Perceptions of interactions with assessment leaders, ideations of positive cultures of assessment, and incentives for participating in formal assessment processes were emphasized. The planned analysis integrated current political and social contexts relevant to IHEs.

Data was gathered by interviewing faculty with questions revolving around the aforementioned elements and addressing the following research questions.

1. How do faculty describe the purpose and implementation of formal assessment processes at their institution?
2. How do faculty describe their role in formal assessment processes?
3. What are faculty members' perceptions of their interactions with assessment leaders while engaged and not engaged in formal assessment work?

Findings then informed strategies that assessment leaders can employ for increasing faculty engagement with formal assessment processes. The results provided a basis for comparison between what assessment leaders and faculty consider influential on trust and understanding of formal assessment.

Qualitative research was utilized due to its inductive approach to data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Inductive reasoning generates themes by organizing data into abstract units of information. Qualitative research also focuses on meanings that participants hold regarding an issue. In this study, it was assumed that interviewing faculty about formal assessment processes

would reveal the meanings they hold; these perceptions were subsequently analyzed for insights on increasing faculty engagement.

Research Design

A qualitative, phenomenological study design engaged a small group of faculty members in the researcher's IHE through interviews that explored their perceptions of assessment activities and their experiences with assessment leaders. Phenomenological research emphasizes lived experiences in a specified situation that is documented by directly interacting with participants in the field (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Maxwell, 2012). Researchers then synthesize these lived experiences into a rich description. The rich description not only captures themes expressed by individuals who have undergone the phenomenon but also integrates multiple sources of data that form a holistic account of the issue being studied. Phenomenological studies tend to be implemented through conducting interviews with open-ended questions (Amedeo Giorgi, 2009; Clark Moustakas, 1994).

Qualitative research, and phenomenological studies by extension, emphasize inductive data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Inductive analysis constructs themes from data by organizing it into abstract units of information. This differs from deductive analysis, where researchers search the data for themes they have previously deemed significant. Qualitative research also utilizes an emergent design process in which some steps may be modified as researchers collect data from the field.

Phenomenological research was deemed applicable to this study as there was an identifiable phenomenon in the form of formal assessment activities and interactions with assessment leaders. Differing influences could then lead to a variety of experiences. Inductive analysis aligned with the study's intention to provide emerging insights that address gaps in

research identified in the literature review. Additional support for applying phenomenological research to this study stemmed from the intent to capture rich descriptions of faculty experiences with interviews.

Assumptions

Researchers make methodological assumptions about the sample population, data collection techniques, and expected outcomes when they choose an approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In qualitative studies, it is generally assumed that all data are descriptive and make sense of participants' lives based on their perceptions and experiences. This results in an attempt to understand multiple realities. Objectivity and truthfulness in the analysis are also based on verification processes rather than traditional measures of validity and reliability.

In this study, one key assumption was that the faculty being interviewed were not modifying their responses to avoid backlash or portray themselves more favorably to the researcher. Another assumption is that the context of the interview empowered faculty to share insights that they normally would not during their formal assessment work and interactions with assessment leaders. Furthermore, it was assumed that the faculty would not discuss their interview experiences amongst themselves. These discussions would otherwise influence not only colleagues who had not yet been interviewed but also power dynamics between participants and their organization. Lastly, there was an assumption that all participants work under the same assessment plan and interact with the same assessment leader. This would increase the comparability of their experiences.

Reflexive Practice

When qualitative researchers engage in reflexive practice, they consider their own role in the study alongside their personal background, culture, and experiences (Creswell & Creswell,

2018; Maxwell, 2012). This practice reveals ways that researchers potentially shape interpretations, such as the thematic categories they identify from the data. A researcher's reflexive practice differs from traditional definitions of bias in two ways (Maxwell, 2012). First, bias involves the uncritical imposition of assumptions and values onto research. Next, bias is recommended to be eliminated. Reflexive practice is instead considered a valuable component of qualitative research that critically informs the ways a researcher approaches their analysis. Researchers engaging in reflexive practice are recommended to maintain a diary that makes their thoughts, feelings, and experiences visible.

In this study, the researcher acknowledged their own positionality as an assessment leader in the same private IHE in California as the target population. The researcher also acknowledged that they have never had working experience as a full-time faculty member. Both items were determined to place the researcher in a different perspective than the intended participants, who were full-time faculty members.

The researcher also intended to share assumptions about findings related to the research questions that may be fueled by their own positionality. It was expected that faculty may not describe the purpose and implementation of formal assessment processes at their institution in a manner aligned with the proposal's working definitions. The researcher also expected conflation between formal assessment processes, assessment for grading purposes, and work performance evaluations. Faculty were also predicted to comment on a lack of clear and accessible resources on formal assessment processes such as websites or onboarding.

Another assumed outcome was that faculty could describe their role in formal assessment processes as mostly dedicated to evaluating evidence of learning. Observations of lived experiences in refining learning outcomes, designing rubrics, and communicating findings with

institutional leaders for continuous improvement were projected to be rare. The researcher assumed that this limitation was driven by unclear institutional policies on roles and responsibilities within formal assessment processes. Additional assumptions included references to competing workloads and a lack of perceived value in formal assessment processes that reduce the capacity for engaging in assessment work. Conversely, the researcher speculated that faculty may mention increased engagement with formal assessment processes given the extrinsic incentives of stipends or inclusion of this contribution into tenure packages.

Lastly, the researcher assumed that faculty members would describe a strong association between the quality of their interactions with assessment leaders and their own level of engagement in formal assessment processes. Positive relationships with assessment leaders were expected to be connected to increased willingness to participate in formal assessment processes. Expectations included recurring comments that interactions outside of work tasks influence the propensity to engage with an assessment leader's requests during work tasks. The researcher presumed that participants may express that assessment leaders are more likely to build a trust-based relationship by being more sensitive to faculty needs and workloads.

Sources of Data

The researcher recruited thirteen faculty members from a regionally accredited private institution in California. The institution contained multiple academic divisions at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Accreditation was necessary due to its associated guarantee that an institution currently implements a formal assessment process (Western Senior College and University Commission, 2013). Recruitment was limited to California to ensure that all participants operate under the same accrediting body, which in this study was WSCUC. According to WSCUC (2013) standards, faculty are involved in formal assessment when they

evaluate program learning outcomes and provide input on potential changes. Departments should then use faculty feedback effectively to improve student learning. WSCUC (2013) also recommends that assessment is discussed during planning and budgeting processes.

The recruitment pool included all divisions at the undergraduate and graduate levels within the institution to achieve representation in perceived experiences. The goal was to recruit a faculty member from each division in order to capture diverse responses regarding faculty members' participation in formal assessment processes and interactions with assessment leaders. There was no requirement regarding the exact subject area each participant specialized in.

One requirement in the recruiting process was that each faculty member holds a doctoral degree. This aligned with the accreditation standard that highly-qualified individuals conduct evaluations in formal assessment (Western Senior College and University Commission, 2013). Each participant was also required to hold the title of professor, associate professor, assistant professor, clinical professor, or visiting professor to verify their current work experience. Adjunct professors were not sampled due to traditionally smaller involvement in administrative activities when compared to full-time faculty (Berlin & Brock, 2021; Danaei, 2019).

Another selection criterion was that participants had engaged with any stage of the formal assessment process within the last three years. This requirement ensured that participating faculty had recent exposure to formal assessment processes. Narrowing the sample with this criterion guaranteed that participants experienced the phenomenon of interest in the study. Furthermore, capturing more recent experiences with participating in formal assessment processes and interacting with assessment leaders increased the likelihood that participants could thoroughly describe their experiences and contribute to a rich dataset.

One exclusion criterion was to avoid contacting faculty members who had previously worked directly with the researcher in formal assessment processes. The researcher engaged with faculty members in formal assessment processes in one department as a part of their regular job duties, including maintaining a list of faculty who have participated. As such, the researcher checked the list of past faculty participants to ensure that no individuals from the aforementioned department were sampled or contacted for the study. The researcher also excluded faculty members with whom they had previous contact for tasks outside of formal assessment processes. Excluding faculty members under these criteria mitigated the risk of providing biased or inaccurate data due to questions that may probe known working relationships. The exclusion criteria also mitigated the risk of coercion that may otherwise be driven by the pressure of personal connections at work.

The proposed source of data exhibited strength in the potential for different experiences in grasping the formal assessment process and interacting with assessment leaders. This variation stemmed from recruiting faculty across a range of working contexts based on their division. Another strength in the proposed data source was the application of WSCUC standards to all participants. This allowed for more consistent comparisons by eliminating confounding factors in pushing faculty toward different accrediting bodies' standards for formal assessment processes.

Sampling Plan

Researchers may employ one or more sampling strategies when developing a sampling plan (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This study combined stratified purposeful sampling and purposive sampling to select approximately 13 full-time faculty members in five divisions of a regionally accredited university in California. Stratified purposeful sampling identifies subgroups and facilitates comparisons based on differences between these subgroups. Purposive sampling is a

nonprobability sampling technique that selects participants based on characteristics deemed necessary to the sample (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2017). Researchers deem that these participants are best for contributing to a rich description of the central phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The choice to sample 13 participants was based on the advice by Creswell and Creswell (2018) that "phenomenology involves a range of 3-10 [individuals]" (p. 301) while including additional participants to achieve saturation.

The combination of stratified purposeful sampling and purposive sampling was selected for this study over random sampling for two reasons. First, the potential for observing differentiated interactions between faculty and their assessment leader may have been informed by variations between subgroups; this aligns with the comparisons that stratified purposeful samples enable. Strata also contributed to a greater likelihood of representation in the target population. Furthermore, purposive sampling ensured that recruited participants met all criteria in the data sources and thus provided valid findings.

The researcher implemented stratified purposeful sampling by creating subgroups that represented all established divisions within the institution. Purposive sampling was utilized by coordinating with the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment at the target institution, who provided guidance on faculty participants who meet the study criteria. The Associate Provost provided potential contacts until sufficient representation across divisions was achieved. The Associate Provost did not correspond with or get mentioned to any potential faculty participants in order to mitigate the risk of coercion.

The researcher shared their contact information in an outreach email so that interested individuals could initiate a confidential call, text, or email. Prior to scheduling an interview, the researcher sent the informed consent document via email for the participants to review

(Appendix B). Requirements for teaching experience and involvement with formal assessment processes were then verified. Subsequently, the researcher asked potential participants if they had any questions and whether they chose to participate. If consent was granted, a date and time with Zoom link will be provided.

Data Collection and Procedure

Data was collected via virtual semi-structured interviews that focused on faculty knowledge of formal assessment processes and their interactions with assessment leaders. Interviews consisted of open-ended questions that allowed additional input based on the responses given (Appendix A). The initial questions captured background information about the faculty member's work experience. All subsequent questions were derived from the research questions and revolved around faculty sharing their knowledge of formal assessment processes, describing their own role in the process, and relaying their interactions with assessment leaders. Since the interview was semi-structured, the script included probing questions that provided various ways to elaborate on a response or ask additional questions.

Interviews with participants were hosted on Zoom, which is a teleconferencing platform. Recording features on Zoom were not used to capture audio of the interview due to its potential to retain identifying information. Instead, the audio of the Zoom meeting was played out loud through the researcher's laptop speakers and captured with the Open Broadcaster Software application. The Open Broadcaster Software application neither collects identifying information nor saves files online. All recordings were stored in the researcher's laptop, which utilized a Symantec encrypted hard drive. Each file was labeled with pseudonyms to provide additional protection for personal identity. Records that linked identity to pseudonyms were stored separately in the researcher's secure locked office.

Audio recordings were transcribed for later analysis using Temi, which is a web-based transcription tool. Transcriptions were also stored on the researcher's encrypted hard drive. Each transcript was cross-referenced with its respective recording for accuracy. Audio recordings were destroyed once their respective transcripts are verified.

Interview Protocol

Once the scheduled interview session began, the researcher repeated logistical details regarding the interview date, time, location, and length. There was also a scripted introduction for greeting the participant, sharing the purpose of the study, reviewing the conditions of the informed consent form, and setting expectations for the progression of a semi-structured interview. After this information was shared, participants were provided an opportunity to express new questions and comments about the study and informed consent. The interview protocol then transitioned to asking the background questions and main questions. Once the interview concluded, the researcher expressed gratitude for each participant and explained how they can be informed of study outcomes.

Human Subjects Considerations

The risks associated with participating in this study were minimal and no greater than those commonly experienced by faculty discussing their working experiences. The target population did not include anyone who is considered a member of a vulnerable population as outlined by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This study was included in category 2 of the exempt status for research studies in Federal Guideline 45CFR 46.104 as it focused on working experiences and relationships of educators (Office for Human Research Protections, 2021). An application for Exempt research was submitted to the IRB and accepted.

Phenomenological studies may be considered invasive as participants may share previously unspoken experiences with a researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2017). In response, the data collection process in this study was designed to be of minimal risk for participants. According to the Office for Human Research Protections (2017), minimal risk means "the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life" (para. 7). Faculty were given a confidential space to describe formal assessment processes and working relationships, which were already a part of their regular routines. The researcher upheld minimal risk by taking measures to ensure that participant confidentiality was continuously maintained.

All participants had an opportunity to provide informed consent for their decision on whether or not they wish to participate (Appendix B). The research purpose and goals were clearly stated in writing so that the process could be fully understood prior to scheduling an interview. These items were also verbally restated at the beginning of the interview to further establish understanding of the process. Participants were informed of their ability to withdraw from the interview at any time without repercussions. Interviews were intentionally scheduled to ensure that participants could participate in a private setting.

Audio recordings and transcripts were confidentially retained as far as permitted by law. Interview data was recorded with the Open Broadcaster Software application on the researcher's encrypted laptop, which was only accessible offline with two designated passwords. Data was redacted before coding and analysis occurred. Personal identifying information obtained during the study was redacted and remained confidential. Participant identities were protected by assigning pseudonyms. The key connecting each pseudonym to the actual participant was secured and stored separately. All data was maintained in an encrypted

computer in the researcher's office until all analysis was completed. All recordings were destroyed once data analysis was complete.

Any instances of identifying information for the subordinates, colleagues, and leaders of the participants were also redacted. This protection was included in the informed consent document. Findings were only reported with pseudonyms. The faculty members' institution was not identified.

Analysis

Qualitative research generally involves inductive reasoning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2017). Inductive reasoning follows a line of logic that is constructed from the data rather than being scaffolded by established principles from a theory or the researcher's perspectives. Researchers who utilize this process sort the data into abstract concepts that then become thematic categories. Existing categories and the data set are cross-referenced until a comprehensive set of themes is established. In this study, data analysis by inductive reasoning occurred alongside the data collection process. Conducting these steps concurrently can reveal the need to revise research questions or data collection strategies (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

This study employed the descriptive phenomenology approach to describe faculty members' experiences in interacting with assessment leaders. Descriptive phenomenology consists of four components: bracketing, analyzing, intuiting, and describing (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). These components do not need to be followed sequentially and may occur simultaneously during a given moment of qualitative analysis. In the end, this approach aims to create an honest and accurate understanding of the phenomenon of interest.

Bracketing is a qualitative researcher's attempt to achieve neutrality (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). This occurs by setting aside prior knowledge and preconceptions about the phenomenon

and focusing instead on the present, lived experience. Three strategies for bracketing are maintaining a reflective diary of the researcher's observations and assumptions, receiving feedback from methodological experts, and staying vigilant about the influence that personal bias has on sensemaking. This study employed all aforementioned strategies for bracketing.

The analyzing component of descriptive phenomenology follows seven steps (Colaizzi, 1978). They begin with reviewing participants' descriptions of the phenomenon to identify significant statements and formulate meanings for them. The formulated meanings are organized into themes that can be integrated into a thorough description of the phenomenon. Findings are then validated and revised as needed. The researcher's reflective journal may be referenced during data analysis. Each of these practices was implemented in this study.

When qualitative researchers engage in intuiting, they aim to understand the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspective (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). This end state is achieved by active listening and thorough efforts to understand another individual's experience. Intuiting can be balanced with bracketing to attempt to value a participant's response without inadvertently acting solely on a researcher's opinion about the phenomenon. The balance between intuiting and bracketing was sought in this study through internal validation by methodological experts.

Describing is the end point of descriptive phenomenology (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). At this point, researchers are able to present a theoretical model that fully represents the phenomenon of interest. Wojnar and Swanson (2007) emphasize that, "if the true structure of the phenomenon is identified, then anyone who has experienced the phenomenon should be able to identify their own experience in the proposed description" (p. 177). This study achieved this state when describing faculty perceptions of interacting with assessment leaders.

All things considered, the faculty interviews were analyzed with the intent to focus on descriptions of their knowledge of formal assessment processes and interactions with assessment leaders rather than concepts such as instructional practices. Data analysis in phenomenology includes coding textual data to help identify themes (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). The method in this study was a combination of *a priori* coding and emergent coding. In *a priori* coding, researchers develop a codebook before they begin interpreting their data (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The initial codes are based on relevant theoretical frameworks, interview questions, or prior knowledge. Researchers employing emergent coding derive codes from the data without the influence of prior assumptions or expectations (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

The coding and interpretation process was assisted by the qualitative analysis software Quirkos. Quirkos can organize, store, and analyze data after it is coded. It also provided clear documentation of actions taken during analysis. A peer coder was engaged in the coding process alongside the researcher to ensure reliability and enable revisions to existing understandings.

Plan to Report Out Findings

Findings from the interviews were planned to be reported in a descriptive narrative form regarding the experiences faculty have in interacting with assessment leaders. Direct quotes from participants supported this rich, holistic description and provided insight into influences on a faculty member's willingness to participate in the formal assessment process after an assessment leader asks them to do so. Findings and supporting quotations follow in Chapter 4 of this dissertation manuscript. Limitations in the study were also highlighted. Study conclusions guided the discussion of implications and recommendations for both scholarship and professional practice. Conclusions, implications, and recommendations will occur in Chapter 5 of the manuscript.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to better understand the lived experiences of faculty in higher education as they participate in formal assessment processes and interact with assessment leaders. The goal is to use findings to inform strategies for increasing faculty engagement with assessment. Chapter 1 explored the notion that formal assessment processes can be hampered by faculty resistance to participation. Existing propositions for resolving faculty resistance in formal assessment processes are not universally applicable due to convoluting factors such as relationships between assessment leaders and faculty. The literature review in Chapter 2 then highlighted the interplay among cultures of assessment, antecedents to resistance in formal assessment processes, and leading change efforts among faculty. A gap in research was revealed for the application of LMX theory to assessment leader-faculty relationships in formal assessment processes; therefore, LMX was chosen as the theoretical framework for the study. The following research questions were posed based on the chosen framework:

1. How do faculty describe the purpose and implementation of formal assessment processes at their institution?
2. How do faculty describe their role in formal assessment processes?
3. What are faculty members' perceptions of their interactions with assessment leaders while engaged and not engaged in formal assessment work?

The researcher sought to answer these questions by employing a qualitative phenomenological study informed by semi-structured interviews as described in Chapter 3. The target population was full-time faculty members at an accredited private IHE in California. Interview sessions utilized open-ended questions that allowed for side conversations and probing

questions (Appendix A). The interview protocol was validated by two subject matter experts prior to implementation. The interviews were transcribed, redacted, and coded for analysis.

Description of Sample and Setting

After securing IRB approval (Appendix C), the researcher recruited participants from the target IHE according to the sampling plan described in Chapter 3. The researcher contacted 255 eligible faculty members across all five divisions of the target IHE. Thirteen faculty members from three divisions consented and participated in the study for a 5.10% response rate. Two of the divisions were not represented because their available pools of eligible faculty were exhausted. Table 2 contains an overview of the research participants who consented and completed their semi-structured interviews.

Table 2

Overview of Research Participants

Pseudonym	Division	Years at IHE
Participant 1	Graduate 1	7
Participant 2	Graduate 2	4
Participant 3	Undergraduate	3
Participant 4	Graduate 2	8
Participant 5	Graduate 2	11
Participant 6	Undergraduate	21
Participant 7	Graduate 2	10
Participant 8	Graduate 1	20
Participant 9	Graduate 2	32
Participant 10	Undergraduate	15

Pseudonym	Division	Years at IHE
Participant 11	Graduate 2	20
Participant 12	Graduate 1	20
Participant 13	Undergraduate	8

Data Analysis Procedure

Prior to viewing the data, the researcher engaged in *a priori* coding by creating an initial codebook (Appendix D). The codebook contained definitions and references for each code. The researcher then recruited a colleague who reviewed the codebook for clarity and participated in coding to help establish reliable results. After coding Participant 1 separately, the researcher and colleague convened for a calibration session. The researcher implemented emergent coding at this point of the process by adjusting codes and definitions based on information derived from studying the interview data. Coding for the rest of the participants commenced after the calibration session concluded.

Intercoder reliability (ICR) was calculated to determine the consistency of the coding. Calculations for ICR followed the methods described by McHugh (2012). This method involves a matrix consisting of data variables and reviewer responses. Agreements are labeled with a "0" and disagreements are marked with a "1." ICR is then calculated by dividing the number of agreements by the total number of variables. In this study, ICR ranged from 80.00% to 88.89%. The researcher resolved instances of disagreement for usage in analysis by making informed final decisions after reviewing the data point alongside the codebook and literature.

Scholars recommend that coders are in agreement at least 80% of the time in order to establish sufficient qualitative reliability (McHugh, 2012; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Since every ICR was at least 80%, the coding process was considered reliable.

Results

After establishing intercoder reliability, the researcher reviewed the data to identify overarching thematic categories and related themes that addressed the research questions. Table 3 below displays the overarching thematic categories , a brief description of each category, and the related research questions. Subsequent sections further describe each category with a distribution of codes and direct quotes from participants.

Table 3

Emergent Thematic Categories

Thematic Category	Brief Description	Research Question
Journey to Assessment	The process of developing knowledge of formal assessment processes, including initial challenges	1
Importance of Faculty	The valuable roles that faculty perceive themselves playing in assessment	2
Dominance of Compliance	The presiding influence that a culture of compliance holds over formal assessment processes	1, 2
Struggle for Motivation	The interplay between motivating and demotivating factors for participating in formal assessment processes	1, 2
Quality of Relationships	The range of assessment leader-faculty interactions and their impact on formal assessment work	3

Journey to Assessment

The first research question in this study focuses on the faculty members' knowledge of the purpose and implementation of formal assessment processes in higher education. *Journey to Assessment* captures findings that participants are knowledgeable about the intent behind formal assessment processes and best practices in conducting assessment. Codes related to this thematic category focused on statements about formal assessment processes as a general concept. Table 4

lists the codes, frequencies, and number of participants represented when discussing this thematic category.

Table 4

Journey Toward Assessment

Code	Frequency	Number of Participants Represented
Assessment_Knowledge	151	13
Assessment_Gap	34	7

Knowledge of Assessment. All 13 participants indicated an understanding of the formal assessment process that revolved around student learning outcomes and continuous improvement.

> So, my interpretation of the purpose of formal assessment process is to make sure that degree programs are designed to meet certain student learning outcomes and objectives and goals. And that we are measuring the, the, the actual and assessing the student's progress throughout the program. So the idea being that you assess it at, you know, different phases throughout the program so that they are not only just developing and expanding their knowledge, but also showing mastery of their knowledge by the time that they complete the program. (Participant 1)

> We're supposed to have sort of goals in terms of educational goals for the students. And it's supposed to assess to the extent to which we are meeting those sort of educational goals. You know, what is it you want students to learn and, and indeed to, to figure out whether they are learning them. And then ideally if they're, you know, sort of provide a feedback loop, right? (Participant 5)

> A formal assessment, I believe is designed to help us teach our students well. Right?

> That's the main goal in my mind. A formal assessment allows us to see if we're meeting our objectives, our learning objectives for the students, and how the students are learning the material, of course. And so it serves a pivotal role in the life of an institution to know how are we doing in the important mission of, of teaching our students well. (Participant 8)

Participant 3 initially delivered a response that conflated formal assessment processes with performance evaluations related to the tenure process in higher education. However, they corrected their response into one more aligned with the study after asking the researcher a clarifying question.

> [Formal assessment processes are] for promotion and tenure. You know, they enable us to move up the ladder. I'm sure that the university is getting high quality people who are maintaining good pedagogy and scholarship. (Participant 3)
>
> We keep a, and its depending on the course, of course, but we keep lots of assessments of the students as they progress through the class in terms of their own self-assessments, peer assessments, and and we write the syllabi with all the student learning outcomes and how we're gonna meet them. So great detail on that end. and the we, the student learning outcomes, we talk about those from the university, from our division. And for the class specifically or the, the topic area. (Participant 3)

Learning Curves in Assessment. Seven participants made additional remarks highlighting an initial gap in knowledge regarding formal assessment processes when they were new faculty. Possible contributors to the gap in knowledge included a lack of exposure to formal assessment processes prior to beginning faculty positions and limited guidance on assessment.

> I didn't know what student learning assessment was at that point. I really didn't even know. I'd never had to do it in graduate school. I was very minimally engaged. And in my second, in my first and second year, almost nothing. And I remember saying like, I'm happy to help, but I really don't know what this is or how to do it at all. (Participant 10)
>
> I didn't even know how to develop a rubric in grad school. We didn't sit down and learn how to [...] So some of that work that you learn, how do you write a syllabus? How do you write a learning objective? How do you write a, a program learning objective? How do you participate in understanding how do articulate things within a committee? How does that happen? That is learned on the job. (Participant 11)
>
> Like before I was the assessment coordinator, I knew zero about it. Like nothing. So when I took it over I wasn't given a ton of guidance, so I just kind of figured it out as I went along. (Participant 13)

Participant 13 emphasized that an initial lack of exposure to formal assessment processes may have reflected their IHE's intent to protect junior faculty instead of an oversight in mentorship.

> I think it was also part of being a junior faculty where they wanna protect your time for research and so they kind of like shield you from anything that's considered service. So I don't think it was like a failure institutionally. (Participant 13)

In summary, all 13 participants articulated understandings of formal assessment processes that highlighted the use of data on student learning outcomes for continuous improvement. Seven of the faculty members noted an initial gap in knowledge of formal assessment processes that was gradually addressed along a learning curve.

Importance of Faculty

The second research question in this study focuses on the roles that faculty members perceive for themselves in formal assessment processes. *Importance of Faculty* reflects statements that faculty are key personnel in the formal assessment process at their IHE who fill a variety of roles. Codes in this thematic category narrowed in scope down to IHE-specific implementation of formal assessment. Table 5 lists the codes, frequencies, and number of participants represented when discussing this thematic category.

Table 5

Importance of Faculty

Code	Frequency	Number of Participants Represented
Institution_Knowledge	200	13
Institution_Gap	60	9

Faculty Roles in Assessment. All 13 participants expressed that faculty are regularly involved in the formal assessment process at their IHE. Contributions ranged from input in constructing learning outcomes to fulfilling a responsibility to incorporate feedback for improvement.

> Individual faculty are all responsible for assessing their students in terms of the institutional process, we have multiple different layers where faculty interact. One layer is we have an as assessments committee and faculty serve on the assessment committee. And for that we'll probably have specific faculty responsible. (Participant 2)
>
> [Faculty] need to communicate this is how, and this is where you can look to assess what I'm doing in the classroom, and also identify those outcomes that can be measured. (Participant 9)

> And then as a faculty committee, we sort of reflect on the overall program. What did we achieve? Did we achieve the projection of performance that we planned for, or were there any negative variances that we need to adjust the program in order to try to close that or the subsequent year or cohort or, you know, where have we perhaps overachieved or still satisfied with that? Did we have the measurement at the right spot et cetera. So the faculty does a comprehensive review and evaluation of the results. (Participant 12)

Three participants elaborated on the importance faculty place on ensuring that assessment is conducted by subject matter experts such as themselves.

> And the reason is you know, faculty have not only academic freedom and discretion to teach their class how they want, but they're always going to be the subject matter expert in their areas. (Participant 2)

> And then as faculty members or experts in our, in our field, we need to analyze the data that is generated by measuring student artifacts against a rubric to determine how well our students are reaching those outcomes. (Participant 10)

> It was a really odd situation 'cause there was a lot of turnover in our major and the person, like actually doing our assessment was not someone who taught in the major. And you can imagine that that's like kind of, I don't know, kind of weird a little bit. (Participant 13)

Unequal Faculty Involvement. Five participants clarified that while formal assessment processes can regularly involve faculty members, not every single individual is involved. Possible reasons for the uneven involvement varied. For example, Participant 3 noted that assessment leaders at their prior institution did not reach out to every faculty member regarding assessment.

> [Assessment] was on the syllabus, if I recall correctly, but nobody was asking for any data. I mean, I knew what they were and I'd kind of go, “Okay, whatever. I'll just teach my class,” because nobody was following up. (Participant 3)

Meanwhile, Participants 1 and 10 referenced dynamics surrounding the division of labor in formal assessment processes that lead to excluding certain individuals.

> I think that fair division of work, so like basically making sure that all the faculty are doing their part and that we're not overburdening specific faculty is a really good strategy. (Participant 1)

> You have people that, you know, I've seen from my own experience, you'll have people kind of purposefully mailing it in or weaponizing incompetence. Like, oh, I'm gonna do a terrible job because what are you gonna do? You know, like, then maybe you won't ask me to do this anymore. (Participant 10)

Participants 4 and 5 expressed that assessment committees, chaired by select individuals, handle assessment-related tasks for all faculty. In turn, faculty who do not sit on assessment committees may not have a comprehensive understanding of the way their division implements formal assessment processes.

> So I have not been on that committee, but my understanding is if the faculty who participate in that have an equal role in creating [assessment procedures] and communicating them. And again, like I haven't been on that committee, so I don't know whether there is. (Participant 4)

> I haven't been involved in sort of that step of it then does it actually change the way we're teaching or not? I, I haven't seen that, but, but again, that might be occurring in classes

that I'm not, I'm not familiar with because you know, again, I'm not on that committee. (Participant 5)

Overall, all 13 participants shared that faculty members fulfill a variety of roles in formal assessment processes. These roles included designing learning outcomes, identifying signature assignments, developing rubrics, scoring evidence of learning, analyzing data, and discussing implications from the data. Five of the participants emphasized that while formal assessment processes include faculty members, not every individual is involved. Explanations given included a lack of contact by assessment leaders, work dynamics during the division of labor, and relegation of assessment-related tasks to committees.

Dominance of Compliance

Cultures of assessment are connected to the first two research questions of this study given their common focus on the ways that formal assessment processes are implemented and perceived. *Dominance of Compliance* addresses statements on the prevalence of a culture of compliance in the target IHE and its interplay with a culture of student learning and a culture of fear. Codes in this thematic category reflected the three cultures of assessment covered by Fuller (2013). Table 6 lists the codes, frequencies, and number of participants represented when discussing this thematic category.

Table 6

Dominance of Compliance

Code	Frequency	Number of Participants Represented
Culture_Compliance	132	13
Culture_Learning	111	13
Culture_Fear	32	7

Valuing Student Learning. All 13 participants gave responses referencing elements of a culture of student learning when initially describing the intent of formal assessment processes.

> We're telling the students at the outset what, what we intend them to learn, and so they can evaluate whether that actually happened. And so our professors can evaluate whether the students actually learned. (Participant 2)
>
> And we do meet regularly and discuss issues with the class, ways to improve the class, what we think is getting out of it. (Participant 3)
>
> The committee takes a look at the outcomes, what, how they're set up, how they meet the goals of the, of the program, and the learning objectives for students. Then I, as the director again, summarize that data annually, and I calculate any kind of statistics we need for measuring and determining progress or lack of progress or variance from the goals and that sort of stuff. (Participant 12)

Four participants further noted that they held a personal belief in assessment for student learning.

> I'm also responsible for if there are weaknesses in my courses, right? If I notice trends where there, you know, students are not performing of making sure that I am enhancing my course right and designing improvements for my specific course. That's my individual faculty role ongoing. (Participant 1)
>
> I think that the best and most aspirational view, the purest least cynical view of assessment processes in higher education is to improve pedagogy with the ultimate goal of improving learning outcomes. And and I am a big believer in that. (Participant 7)
>
> And we need to be very good about adapting in progress. So in as much as I look at the objectives as being white lines in the ground that we've collectively agreed to, that serves

as a steering mechanism between myself and a student on the journey that we're gonna embark on for weeks, right? (Participant 11)

The hardest thing was to kind of say, this is not about how well students are doing. This is about how well you're doing teaching them and, and how well we are, how well they're like meeting objectives, not necessarily their grades. I think that I hope that like, I don't know, like that assessment can somehow be sold as like a, a form of communicating all the good things that are happening in majors across the school. (Participant 13)

Considerations for Compliance. When the topic shifted to perceptions on the implementation of formal assessment processes, all 13 participants discussed the balance between compliance with accreditation standards and student learning for continuous improvement.

It is the expectation of both our accreditation bodies, and those are the Western colleges, what used to be called WASC and [redacted], that we are routinely, regularly assessing student outcomes. And when I say outcomes, I mean student educational outcomes. We do this by having a series of institutional program institutional learning outcomes. Those are kind of like big picture goals that the university wants are all of its educational wings to accomplish. (Participant 2)

So I think with the, with my leaders, we were always trying to be conscious of accrediting agencies and all that accreditation, of course is an important part of this process. And I think the, the message that I got from the people who were leading me was, yeah, we need to do right by our accreditors, right? (Participant 8)

It has been a long process over the years where it started with more education about why we want to do this, why we need to do this. Some of it is for purposes of just making sure

> that as an institution we are achieving our goals in terms of the student outcomes. And then the other purpose, of course, is accreditation institutions that require us to do that. (Participant 9)
>
> And, and so that's how you do the learning outcomes. So we do it for accreditation purposes, but also for program evaluation purposes. (Participant 12)

Ten participants then voiced concerns that obligations for compliance overshadowed a genuine pursuit for student learning in formal assessment processes.

> We have to gather the data and we have to give it to, we have a faculty member who whose role or service job is to keep track of all this assessment data and put it into usable forms for accreditation purposes. So I think we're very driven by accreditation in our division. If we weren't accreditation driven, I don't know if it would be as intense. (Participant 3)
>
> The problem was, it, it, there wasn't the effort made to do sort of the buy-in about [formal assessment]. Instead it was just an order, and as a result it becomes, and I don't think just here, I think in most schools, it just becomes a check the box thing, right? So we do it, we comply with the thing. I don't think there's really been any educational benefit out of it. (Participant 5)
>
> I'll speak for myself, but I do think that this sentiment is shared, and that's the, the sense that it's busy work and it's, it's kind of a bureaucratic burden that, okay, we have to do this. And then the worst of it is that it might not lead to anything. So, okay, you do this, you write the report, you collect this data, you write the report, and then nothing gets done with it. (Participant 6)

> I think generally it, it can be a sense that this is just merely bureaucratic that doesn't actually change much on the ground. That it is a lot of checking off bureaucratic boxes to satisfy some external inspector. And that it really, that these kinds of processes don't really have much influence on actually what we do that typically professors are going to do what they're going to do with a goodwill and then explain that in terms of assessment rather than having assessment sort of shape and design what they're doing. (Participant 7)

Fear of Assessment. Seven participants additionally discussed ways in which formal assessment processes create a culture of fear. Fears spanned from uncertainty about the intentions of the process to impositions on academic freedom.

> If people have been through this before, and they, and that was their experience, that, "Hey, I do all of this work," and then it really didn't add up to anything that's gonna profoundly disincentivize them or be a, the opposite of motivation to do it again. Like then this really is just a, an exercise in futility. (Participant 6)

> I think the attempt to quantify in measurable statistical terms all of our attempts to achieve those things really sucks the life out of, of a program or the creativity of a program or a teacher's ability to, to innovate and do all of those things. (Participant 7)

> [Faculty] believe that, that they are getting the outcomes that they want in most cases. And so many faculty members view [formal assessment] as maybe even stepping on their academic freedom by having to detail some of this and participate in the measuring. (Participant 9)

> In the beginning, [formal assessment] probably to me felt like an itchy sweater. Right? Yes. I didn't know what I didn't know and felt like I was always bumping into walls. And

so I think what happens is when we're new, the mechanistic parts of it feel daunting, right? (Participant 11)

In brief, every participant acknowledged that formal assessment processes aim to facilitate a culture of student learning. Four individuals highlighted student learning as a part of their philosophy as faculty members. Every participant also acknowledged that formal assessment processes include a component of compliance with accreditation standards that interacts with the pursuit of student learning. Ten faculty members then fielded concerns that compliance with accreditation standards has upstaged endeavors in analyzing student learning for continuous improvement. Seven participants continued with ways that faculty may come to fear formal assessment processes, including unfamiliarity with intentions and clashes with academic freedom.

Struggle for Motivation

Resistance and motivation regarding formal assessment processes are influenced by implementation and perception. These phenomena thus address the first two research questions in this study. *Struggle for Motivation* covers driving forces behind resistance toward formal assessment processes and factors that may affect engagement. Codes connected with the thematic category identified points of resistance and items serving as intrinsic or extrinsic motivators. Table 7 lists the codes, frequencies, and number of participants represented when discussing this thematic category.

Table 7

Struggle for Motivation

Code	Frequency	Number of Participants Represented
Resistance	96	11

Code	Frequency	Number of Participants Represented
Intrinsic	81	12
Extrinsic	53	10

Antecedents for Resistance. Nine participants cited workload implications as an influence against faculty participation in formal assessment processes. Recurring descriptions included assessment as a burden or overwhelming demand.

> I was able to observe that faculty do tend to be a bit frustrated having an extra layer of assessment that they need, that they have to complete on top of what they're probably doing already for the courses and not really understanding the role of it. (Participant 1)
>
> But to me, the big, the big, big, big resistance and, and it's, it's an inertial resistance. It's not like it's theoretical. It's not like they think, “Oh, that's horrible. I'd never wanna do that.” It's just a tremendous amount of work. (Participant 2)
>
> I would speculate that faculty are busy, so they may be, you know, just not really tuned into these conversations. (Participant 4)
>
> The sense that [assessment is] busy work and it's, it's kind of a bureaucratic burden that, okay, we have to do this. And then the worst of it is that it might not lead to anything. (Participant 6)

Five faculty felt that disparities between the intent and reality of assessment leaders detracted from formal assessment processes. Incidents ranged from actions misaligned with proclaimed goals to unclear work expectations.

> Little did I know I was doing it for this individual assessor, but that other assessor doesn't like the way that that person's doing it. And so then that's not a standard set of values or

> methodology that's just driven by people's personality and, and then you kind of lose faith in the assessment process. (Participant 6)
>
> So I think that there's a resistance between what's really happening and what assessment and accreditors say must happen, which then creates a divide. And I think that there's too little trust that people actually know what they're doing. And that creates some resentment along the way. (Participant 7)
>
> For example, they gave us this timeline at the beginning of the year and all of a sudden, like mid-fall, they wanted the whole timeline pushed up by a month. And I was like, "I am not gonna have this program ready until you told me like what my deadline was." And that was really disorienting (Participant 13)

Three participants identified a lack of immediate or visible benefits from completing formal assessment processes as a contributor to faculty resistance.

> So we do it, we comply with the thing. I don't think there's really been any educational benefit out of it. I don't know anyone who, I shouldn't say anyone, but, but anyone who I know at least doesn't really, the, the writing of the learning outcomes and so on hasn't affected the way they've taught it hasn't affected the way they've thought about the course or anything like that. (Participant 5)
>
> And also, I should say, if people have been through this before, and they, and that was their experience, that, "hey, I do all of this work," and then it really didn't add up to anything that's gonna profoundly disincentivize them or be a, the opposite of motivation to do it again. (Participant 6)
>
> I think that's probably the number one reason that people feel cynical or resistant about it

> because they feel like it's somewhat of a waste of time if it isn't actually meaningful. (Participant 7)

Participant 5 emphasized that assessment leaders did not make efforts to secure faculty buy-in prior to introducing a formal assessment process, which thereby did not actively encourage participation.

> And again, not because they're cynical about it, but just because the faculty hasn't, you know, that didn't buy into it. They were sort of ordered to do this. So, so I think that's what's become, so it's really just become this administrative thing where I don't think there's really been educational benefits to it, which is too bad. (Participant 5)

Intrinsic Motivation in Formal Assessment Processes. Twelve participants provided various recommendations regarding intrinsic motivation after being asked about alleviating resistance to formal assessment processes. Six faculty specifically focused on highlighting tangible benefits that formal assessment processes have on a large scale, such as a program's standing or student development.

> I think people work best when they are motivated by some kind of positive outcome in the future. Like, I'll endure the unpleasant means to get to a positive and enjoyable end. (Participant 6)

> I think the motivation is simply are we helping our students to learn what we want them to learn, right? So it's kind of the, the heart of a teacher right. So that they do it because they want to help ensure that we are helping the students learn what they should be learning as reflected in the student learning outcomes. (Participant 8)

> I think, you know, most of the faculty are, are committed to the program's success, and so they understand that you know, part of the future of the programs, our ability to validate

> what we say we do and show how it is delivered, and then we're able to use that data to promote the program and you know, share with incoming students or incoming candidates why this is a good program. So our faculty take a great deal of ownership, just personally and intrinsically. (Participant 12)

Participants 1 and 10 referenced various approaches for faculty to apply formal assessment processes to their own professional development, such as improving instruction or utilizing research material.

> I'm also responsible for if there are weaknesses in my courses, right? If I notice trends where there, you know, students are not performing of making sure that I am enhancing my course right and designing improvements for my specific course. That's my individual faculty role ongoing. (Participant 1)

> Then also let the faculty member classify assessment where they want to, if they wanna classify under teaching or if they want it to be part of their research and to write, you know, conference papers or part of their own, you know, publications on assessment. Or if they say, “Okay, this is my service to an institution, I wanna put it in the service category”. Like, let them, make it up to them where they want to apply it and that might be helpful. (Participant 10)

Participants 5 and 9 focused on opportunities for leaders or mentors to have clear and intentional conversations about the importance of participating in formal assessment processes.

> If you really wanted people to do it, they had to do a lot more work on convincing people this is worth doing and, you know, getting 'em in the process. (Participant 5)

> it really, I believe, has to be a one-on-one conversation, which is that with somebody who, who understands assessment, listening to the to the faculty member who's trying to

> say, this is what I use. So that they can say, well, have you ever thought about trying this? Or, if you did this, what do you think you would find? (Participant 9)

Participants 7 and 13 explored the emphasis on quantitative measures in their formal assessment processes and ways to alter these measures into something that more holistically captures lived experiences with teaching.

> I would like to see assessments be driven more by qualitative than quantitative assessments toward identifiable goals and objectives and standards, rather than very specifically prescribed language. Because I think the prescribed language is useful for the quantitative researchers, but that doesn't actually really fit what most people are doing on the ground. (Participant 7)

> I think those are the two things that bug faculty is like the, the fact that it all has to fit inside these kind of categories or like these ways of quantifying things or ways of talking about things. And that they feel already pretty like, like, "I know what's working and what's not. I can tell immediately in a class what's not working and then I fix it the next semester. So what's the big deal?" (Participant 13)

Extrinsic Motivation in Formal Assessment Processes. Ten participants provided responses concerning extrinsic motivation in formal assessment responses. Three participants revisited the topic of workloads in formal assessment processes and stated the importance of reducing perceived burdens or creating avenues for streamlining.

> I think that fair division of work, so like basically making sure that all the faculty are doing their part and that we're not overburdening specific faculty is a really good strategy. I think that the automation of the collection of the, the feedback and assessments is fantastic. (Participant 1)

> If they don't know that that end is positive, then they have then the work better be short. (Participant 6)
>
> Well, one [strategy] is doing a lot of the work for them. (Participant 9)

Three other participants focused on ways to increase knowledge of and comfort with assessment-related tasks, including clear communication, access to resources, and mentorship.

> I think sort of being transparent about what their work entails, what they're involved in, what stage of the process they're at whether they're open to feedback outside of the committee reaching out to maybe individual faculty members at every single one and asking them for specific engagement might help. (Participant 4)
>
> So the more assistance that others can provide, like people in the library, provost's office, registrar's office, the dean's offices that's all really important in actually making this happen. (Participant 9)
>
> So I would suggest that support is put in place and the support is appropriate to where the instructor is in their career path. (Participant 11)

Four participants did not mention workloads, but instead considered formal recognition for conducting assessment work such as payment or praise.

> I mean, it's an expectation of their job, or if it's not an expectation of their job, that they'd get paid extra. (Participant 2)
>
> And our salaries are tied to the accreditation, so there's incentive. (Participant 3)
>
> I mentioned earlier there was a little bit of monetary compensation, but that was that was quite, you know, not a huge amount of money, but there was a little bit of monetary compensation, recognize the amount of time and effort that goes into writing, for example, an annual report. (Participant 8)

> I think if you can reward assessment leaders or, you know, acknowledge assessment leaders in a more formal way, that's a great way to promote a culture of assessment. (Participant 10)

To summarize, 11 participants articulated possible explanations for faculty resistance in formal assessment processes. Nine faculty members within this group cited assessment as a workload burden. Other reasons included inconsistencies in the stated intentions and actual practice of assessment and a lack of clarity in the value formal assessment processes can have for faculty.

Six participants focused on intrinsic value and the tangible impact of formal assessment processes when asked about strategies for increasing motivation to participate in assessment. Responses involving intrinsic motivation also captured the use of formal assessment processes for professional development, communicating the importance of assessment work, and diverging from rigid quantitative measures. Meanwhile, conversations on extrinsic motivation revolved around workload reduction, preparation for streamlining assessment-related tasks, and formal recognition of contributions to assessment.

Quality of Relationships

The third research question in this study the working relationships between faculty and assessment leaders inside and outside the context of formal assessment processes. *Quality of Relationships* encapsulates responses on the frequency of faculty interaction with assessment leaders and its impact on perceptions of formal assessment processes. Codes in this thematic category captured the various types of assessment leader-faculty relationships mentioned during the interviews. Table 8 lists the codes, frequencies, and number of participants represented when discussing this thematic category.

Table 8

Quality of Relationships

Code	Frequency	Number of Participants Represented
Collaboration	117	12
Trust	95	13
Tension	38	6
Distance	32	6
OneTime	20	6

Frequency of Collaboration. Twelve participants mentioned that assessment leaders collaborate with certain faculty members in formal assessment processes.

> So everything, everyone is aware that there is an assessment committee. I, I think they, they choose people who I think will, that they think will be supportive of the work and cooperative, you know, so-and-so, I'd say the typical professor probably is, they're aware they exist, they're aware that they have to have certain learning outcomes in their syllabus. (Participant 5)

> And we have a robust committee system. So faculty committees run most of the academic side of [redacted]. So we have curriculum, academic standards global programs many, many faculty committees that are governing. We have very intense shared government at [redacted]. (Participant 7)

> Our academic division has an assessment liaison who is a faculty member who provides some release time to work closely with [redacted] to help keep us on track, for example, making sure that we're assessing an outcome per year, making sure that we have what we

> need, the formats, the rubrics, the templates for the program reviews, and also the annual student achievement report. (Participant 10)

After the interview questions narrowed the scope of collaboration to the interviewees and their assessment leaders, 10 participants stated that they have collaborated with assessment leaders in the past.

> [Assessment leaders] regularly not only communicate with me as chair of our program committee, but also attend our committee meetings. So they come to our committee meetings with any kind of announcements or ongoing things so that there's a direct connection between the assessment team and the program committee that's in charge of implementing it, right. (Participant 1)
>
> So I hear from this committee once a semester to review my syllabi and also I hear from them when they've updated their outcomes and given us sample language and they've given a sample language and are willing to do that for every single one of the courses that we teach. So we hear from them often. (Participant 4)
>
> You know, not everybody's best friends, but we meet monthly and we have routine lunches together and events. (Participant 7)
>
> I found [redacted] really helpful, like and not kind of trying to put extra random things on my plate necessarily. Even like the year of the program review there, we talked a lot more where there was like a, a timeline of things and like what needs to happen when so that year we, we emailed a lot. (Participant 13)

Six participants then added that their collaboration with assessment leaders was not always on a frequent basis.

> So my only communication with them would be the receipt of the email and possibly a reminder of when the deadlines are coming up. (Participant 1)
>
> [Assessment] was on the syllabus, if I recall correctly, but nobody was asking for any data. I mean, I knew what they were and I'd kind of go, “Okay, whatever. I'll just teach my class,” because nobody was following up. (Participant 3)
>
> I don't have a lot of interaction with the assessment leaders. (Participant 4)
>
> I mean I think that that was probably the only time I've ever seen them in person was like when they came and did that. And that only happens once every few years when some big change is kind of afoot. (Participant 13)

Three individuals surmised that most other faculty members do not regularly interact with assessment leaders.

> Unless I'm on the committee or unless they ask particular professors in areas, “Hey, can we use your class?” You know, or, or one of your things you don't have any role in, in it. So most professors, I don't think here have any role in it. (Participant 5)
>
> And the faculty as, an entity, the faculty, as a committee of the faculty have almost no role in [assessment] except that if a, if a proposal comes out of one of those program reviews, then the faculty would consider the proposal (Participant 7)
>
> So if that's who you're referring to as the assessment leader, faculty probably have very little contact with that person and very little interaction with that person. (Participant 12)

Presiding Trust. All 13 participants included elements of trust while analyzing their working relationships with assessment leaders. Examples included expecting good faith efforts and understanding that formal assessment processes are not designed to be intrusive.

> There's an assumption you're assigned to a committee and you, you know, put good faith effort into participating in that committee. And, and others on other committees are doing the same. (Participant 4)
>
> I think the librarians as a focal point is a good idea because they are supporting all of the academic side. (Participant 9)
>
> You know, they're by no means are they leaning in and discussing pedagogy. They're not auditing a, a lecture and activity or reporter or grading process. (Participant 11)
>
> We meet routinely you know, throughout the year as we do that. We're also professional colleagues and industry colleagues because we teach in a specialized area. That's, you know, common amongst us. So we have that respect. (Participant 12)

Four participants emphasized positive developments such as praise and friendship when describing trust in their assessment leaders.

> Oh, I would say very positive. So I've become very close with the team during the curriculum revision process that we just went through. I would say to the point of developing friendships. So our informal interactions are very positive (Participant 1)
>
> Oh, I'm so grateful that this is her role in the department. I consider her a very friendly colleague. I’m as congenial with her as anybody else within the division. (Participant 3)
>
> I love the person who's the head of our assessment committee, has been at it for 10 years. She's very sincere and does a good job. (Participant 5)
>
> I've always found the people that I've engaged with about assessment to be very helpful in understanding. And, and so I think they've always been very good about doing that. And, and working individually and not just saying, “We have to do this.” (Participant 9)

In the midst of this trust, three participants shared about moments of conflict that occurred in their work with assessment leaders.

> And again, not because they're cynical about it, but just because the faculty hasn't, you know, that didn't buy into it. They were sort of ordered to do this. (Participant 5)
>
> Well then, you know, okay, one assessment leader wants to do it this way, another assessment leader wants to do it that way. So that's where the, the kind of bopping around. And then faculty are like, “What am I supposed to do? Okay, I was doing it. Little did I know I was doing it for this individual assessor, but that other assessor doesn't like the way that that person's doing it. And so then that's not a standard set of values or methodology,” (Participant 6)
>
> So sometimes it's like, why are we even doing this? Like, don't they know that we're doing this and we're taking our, like, we're taking work seriously and we're, you know, we're we're meeting these goals and stu like, we know that our alumni are placing incredible places. (Participant 13)

The same participants explained that their feelings of tension were not directed toward their assessment leaders as people, but rather observations of expectations and reality in formal assessment processes.

> It's the person's doing the best they can, given that nobody really wants to do it. It's relevant and important for the functioning of an institution. So I feel like they're in a bit of a difficult position to start with. (Participant 5)
>
> I think an assessment leader is a little bit like a, you know, a dentist or a you know the, the tax man, they don't occupy positions that you're, that they're loved. I engage with

> them like, “Hey, you have a tough job. You're unpopular, but it's an important job.” (Participant 6)
>
> There's sometimes there are miscommunications, but that happens in any, anything where you're working together. (Participant 13)

Overall, 12 participants shared that assessment leaders and faculty have collaborated on formal assessment processes. 10 participants were personally involved in this collaboration. Collaboration did not always occur on a regular basis, as six participants mentioned that their interactions with assessment leaders are infrequent or nonexistent; three participants believed that their faculty colleagues had similar experiences.

Meanwhile, all 13 participants indicated that there was trust in interactions between assessment leaders and faculty. Four participants felt that this trust garnered praise and could develop into friendship. Three participants indicated that they had previous moments of tension with their assessment leaders; they all clarified that these feelings were more connected to the formal assessment process than the assessment leaders themselves.

Chapter Summary

After securing IRB approval, the researcher recruited a final sample of 13 participants across three divisions from the target IHE. Each participant completed their semi-structured interview. The researcher coded the interview transcripts alongside a colleague and established intercoder reliability. After analysis, five overarching thematic categories emerged: *Journey to Assessment*, *Importance of Faculty*, *Dominance of Compliance*, *Struggle for Motivation*, and *Quality of Relationships*.

Journey to Assessment captured that all participants understood the purpose of formal assessment processes and common practices in assessment work. Seven individuals added that

there was a learning curve to formal assessment processes that was gradually addressed. *Importance of Faculty* covered each participant's understanding that faculty members have roles in various stages of the formal assessment process. Five participants further discussed unequal faculty involvement in the process and possible explanations. *Dominance of Compliance* revolved around the interplay between the culture of compliance, culture of student learning, and culture of fear. All participants connected the intent of formal assessment processes to facilitate a culture of student learning. 10 individuals elaborated on ways that a culture of compliance may have overshadowed a culture of student learning in their IHE.

Struggle for Motivation focused on faculty resistance in formal assessment processes and motivating factors that could encourage participation. 11 participants cited workload balance, inconsistent practices, and unclear expectations as factors generating resistance to participating in formal assessment processes. When asked about possible motivators for participation, six responses revolved around creating intrinsic value through observable benefits from formal assessment processes, professional development, and redefining measures. 10 responses included extrinsic motivators such as alleviating workloads and recognizing assessment work via payments or commendations

Finally, *Quality of Relationships* explored the nature of interactions between assessment leaders and faculty. 12 participants noted that assessment leaders collaborate with faculty when completing formal assessment processes. 10 of the participants had personally experienced this collaboration before. Six individuals believed that they had infrequent or nonexistent interactions with assessment leaders, with three people in this group extending this belief to their faculty colleagues. All 13 participants felt that their interactions with assessment leaders include elements of trust. Three participants brought up past conflicts with their assessment leaders; this

tension was framed as typical miscommunication or flaws within formal assessment processes instead of an issue with the assessment leaders as people.

Conclusions on these findings will be presented in Chapter 5. Implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research follow thereafter.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Review of Problem and Purpose

The target issue in this study is faculty resistance to participation in formal assessment processes. Phenomena such as assessment leader-faculty relationships have not been fully explored, thereby limiting the applicability of solutions to the problem. Faculty involvement in formal assessment processes cannot be immediately substituted without either compromising the validity of the process as defined by accrediting bodies or expending resources on hiring external consultants.

In response, this qualitative study captured the lived experiences of faculty in higher education regarding formal assessment processes and interactions with assessment leaders. The goal was to better understand faculty members' knowledge and perceptions of formal assessment processes while filling gaps in research on interactions with assessment leaders. Key findings would then inform new or existing strategies for assessment leaders to alleviate resistance and increase faculty engagement in formal assessment processes. The research questions were:

1. How do faculty describe the purpose and implementation of formal assessment processes at their institution?
2. How do faculty describe their role in formal assessment processes?
3. What are faculty members' perceptions of their interactions with assessment leaders while engaged and not engaged in formal assessment work?

Review of Theoretical Framework

The study utilized Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory as a framework to qualitatively explore faculty participation in formal assessment processes and assessment leader-faculty relationships. LMX Theory involves interactions between leaders and followers in an

organization (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden et al., 1997; Rockstuhl et al., 2012). The aforementioned interactions are studied for their implications for organizational outcomes. The literature review in Chapter 2 found studies that have applied LMX theory to faculty in higher education (Horne et al., 2016; Iqbal et al., 2022; P. D. Nguyen et al., 2022). This study applied LMX Theory by considering faculty members as followers of their assessment leaders. Organizational outcomes were represented through participants' perception of and willingness to participate in formal assessment processes at their IHE. Findings within these organizational outcomes would be presented as implications and recommendations for assessment leaders.

Review of Methodology

The researcher chose a qualitative, phenomenological approach to the study. Phenomenological research considers lived experiences in situations that are documented by direct interactions with participants, such as interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Maxwell, 2012). Researchers then synthesize these lived experiences into a rich description that captures themes in the findings and integrates various sources of data to form a holistic account of the issue being studied. Phenomenological research was chosen for this study since there was an identifiable phenomenon in the form of formal assessment activities and interactions with assessment leaders as well as an intent to capture rich descriptions of faculty experiences with interviews.

The researcher gathered a sample by recruiting full-time faculty members from one accredited private IHE in California according to the sampling plan described in Chapter 3. The final sample was 13 faculty members from three divisions in the target IHE. Each participant underwent an informed consent process prior to participating in semi-structured interviews.

After interviews concluded, the researcher transcribed and redacted the data before analyzing it through a combination of *a priori* coding and emergent coding. Coding included the work of a colleague to establish reliability. Once coding ended, the researcher identified emerging thematic categories among the codes supported by key findings and evidence from direct quotations.

Review of Key Findings

Five overarching thematic categories emerged after analysis: *Journey to Assessment*, *Importance of Faculty*, *Dominance of Compliance*, *Struggle for Motivation*, and *Quality of Relationships*. *Journey to Assessment* describes the understanding that participants had regarding the goal of formal assessment processes and its associated processes. Half of the responses mentioned developing assessment knowledge over time along a learning curve. *Importance of Faculty* concerns sentiments that faculty members normally play vital roles in the formal assessment process. Five individuals noted that faculty may not necessarily be equally involved in assessment-related tasks.

Dominance of Compliance discusses participants' perception that while formal assessment processes intend to promote a culture of student learning, a culture of compliance prevails instead. *Struggle for Motivation* explored resistance to formal assessment processes, where multiple participants cited workload burdens, inconsistent practices, a lack of perceived benefit. The interviewees also suggested highlighting tangible benefits, integrating assessment into professional development, streamlining assessment-related tasks, and nurturing comfort around assessment as motivators that could alleviate resistance. Lastly, *Quality of Relationships* considers notions that faculty collaborate with assessment leaders on formal assessment processes, though not always on a regular basis. Every participant felt that there was trust in their

interactions with assessment leaders. Three participants mentioned that while they have experienced tension with their assessment leaders, these conflicts arise from aspects of the formal assessment process rather than problematic working relationships.

Study Conclusions

The researcher formed five conclusions for this study after reviewing findings, emerging thematic categories, and the literature review. The upcoming discussion for each conclusion is supported by references to the data and comparisons to prior literature. The main conclusions and their associated research questions are displayed in Table 9 below.

Table 9

Study Conclusions and Associated Research Questions

Conclusion	Associated Research Question(s)
1 - Faculty knowledge of assessment may not be smoothly developed	1
2 - Faculty can be unequally involved in assessment	2, 3
3 - Faculty may observe clashes between cultures of student learning and compliance	1, 2
4 - Workloads, practices, and impacts are key to faculty engagement	1, 2
5 - Faculty have tensions with processes, not assessment leaders	3

Faculty Knowledge of Assessment May Not be Smoothly Developed

Faculty members generally have an understanding of the purpose of formal assessment processes that is aligned with best practices in the literature. One finding supporting this conclusion is that every participant described formal assessment processes as a phenomenon intended to evaluate student learning and inform future improvements. Such descriptions aligned with definitions from established guidelines on assessment (Maki, 2012; Suskie & Banta, 2009). None of the responses conflated formal assessment processes with faculty performance evaluations or grading for the classroom. The absence of corrections needed when describing the intent of formal assessment processes reinforces the notion that faculty have an accurate understanding of the concept.

However, faculty may not always have a straightforward path to developing knowledge on formal assessment processes. Seven participants described beginning their positions without any prior understanding of or training on formal assessment processes. Instead, their experience gradually accrued through trial-and-error and self-directed inquiry. This outcome aligns with previous interviews with faculty noting that not every IHE provides training on formal assessment processes (Fletcher et al., 2012; Hutchings, 2010; Sasere & Makhasane, 2020). Other studies similarly cite a lack of training on formal assessment processes when studying faculty feedback for their IHEs (Maggs, 2014; Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, et al., 2007; Postareff, Katajavuori, et al., 2008; Tierno-García et al., 2016). In turn, implications on the ways faculty learn about formal assessment processes arise.

Faculty Can be Unequally Involved in Assessment

Initially, it seems straightforward to conclude that all faculty members in an IHE regularly participate in formal assessment processes based on findings in this study. Every

participant stated that formal assessment processes at their IHE invite faculty to engage with multiple responsibilities, and three individuals emphasized that faculty should be considered vital roleplayers in assessment-related tasks. These observations reflect literature regarding faculty roles in formal assessment processes (Astin & Antonio, 2012; Germaine & Spencer, 2016; Maki, 2012; Savickiene, 2005; Suskie & Banta, 2009; Timm et al., 2013).

However, additional analysis of study results shows instances of disproportionate faculty involvement in formal assessment processes. Five individuals mentioned that faculty responsibilities regarding assessment are not always equally distributed. For example, there were instances of assessment leaders working only with specific faculty members every assessment cycle. These participants also remarked that there was no set routine for participating in formal assessment processes. There were no definite explanations provided for this phenomenon, but Participant 10 highlighted perceptions of competence as a potential influence in selecting which faculty engage with assessment-related tasks. Furthermore, six other individuals described their own working relationship with their assessment leader as minimal or nonexistent. These participants did not elaborate on why they felt that they had little to no communication with their own assessment leader. Factors behind the lack of a working relationship between assessment leaders and certain faculty members may present themselves as an emerging area of research on formal assessment processes.

A prior study's interviews with assessment leaders revealed unwillingness to work with certain faculty members (Baas et al., 2016). Comments included a perceived propensity for resistance. Although Baas et al.'s (2016) study may be dependent on specific individual contexts, its findings on the ways assessment leaders may view certain faculty draws similarities to Participant 10's comments on how competent a faculty member is thought to be. Otherwise,

existing literature does not comment on influences in establishing relationships between assessment leaders and faculty, thus reinforcing possibilities for a new thread of research.

Faculty May Observe Clashes between Cultures of Student Learning and Compliance

The data also suggest that faculty can perceive fluctuating priorities between student learning and compliance in formal assessment processes. As previously noted, all participants demonstrated an accurate understanding of the purpose of formal assessment processes. The stated intent of measuring student learning outcomes and applying findings for continuous improvement aligns with Skidmore et al.'s (2018) definition of a culture of student learning. Four participants further declared a personal belief in assessing learning outcomes, similar to the appreciation of assessment practice in Timm et al.'s (2013) description of a culture of student learning.

Every participant then highlighted that there were elements of complying with accreditation standards while completing formal assessment processes. Ten participants in this group elaborated that their formal assessment process felt more like completing objectives for compliance with accrediting bodies than pursuing insights on student learning; in turn, they expressed concern that this would detract from the meaning of assessment work. This sentiment reflects recurring statements in the literature review that a culture of compliance involves completed formal assessment processes, but not necessarily buy-in or perceived value (Fuller & Skidmore, 2014; Fuller et al., 2015; Skidmore et al., 2018). Similarly, cultures of compliance involve a motivation to complete tasks because they are mandatory (Shockley et al., 2011). This phenomenon was observed in three responses that mentioned "checking the boxes" as a result of ensuring the implementation of specific practices.

Observations about shifting priorities in formal assessment were additionally supported by seven participants' responses progressing toward a culture of fear. Comments included removing creativity from instructional planning for the sake of alignment with accreditation standards and futility in assessment. Existing literature supports this idea through the establishment that cultures of fear include lopsided power and undesirable directions (Fuller & Skidmore, 2014; Fuller et al., 2015; Skidmore et al., 2018). Moskal et al. (2008) also describe how loss of academic freedom and creativity can foster perceptions of fear among faculty. In the end, participants' association of specific actions with certain cultures of assessment presents implications and opportunities for research on inflection points in transitioning between cultures of assessment.

Workloads, Practices, and Impacts are Key to Faculty Engagement

Another conclusion is that faculty members consider workloads, consistent practices, and tangible outcomes as major influences on engaging in formal assessment processes. Nine participants referenced workload burdens as a deterrent in assessment-related tasks. Likewise, multiple scholars have identified a clash between faculty responsibilities and the demands of formal assessment processes as a point of resistance (Anderson, 2006; Cardoso et al., 2019; Deardorff & Folger, 2005; Dunn et al., 2020; Pham, 2022; Rawlusyk, 2018). Three individuals who mentioned workload burdens subsequently discussed streamlined tasks as a change that would incentivize participation. This proposition aligns with Smith and Gordon's (2018) recommendations for increasing faculty engagement in formal assessment processes and presents itself as an implication for assessment leaders.

Inconsistencies between the intent and actions of assessment leaders was another recurring reason for low faculty engagement in formal assessment processes. Five participants

described discrepancies such as constantly shifting methodology and repeated mentions of compliance for accreditation despite a stated intent to focus on student learning. Prior literature aligns with this finding as past studies have also yielded results that inconsistencies in formal assessment processes lead to resistance via a loss of legitimacy (Bin Othayman et al., 2022; Emil & Cress, 2014; Fletcher et al., 2012; Liu, 2013; Rawlusyk, 2018; Tierno-García et al., 2016). No participants considered ways for assessment leaders to reflect on consistent implementation of formal assessment processes as a strategy for motivating faculty participation. However, it is possible that this is part of an assumed responsibility that any leader should be consistent with their statements and actions.

Beneficial impacts of formal assessment processes initially seemed like an infrequent topic, as only three participants discussed this concept as a point of resistance. In reality, six faculty members focused on visible outcomes from assessment once they began talking about motivations for faculty engagement. Ideas included clear narratives about program performance and student trajectories after graduation. Prior literature discusses meaningful integration of assessment results into decision-making processes as an influence in the value that faculty members prescribe to formal assessment processes (Anderson, 2006; Cardoso et al., 2019; Rawlusyk, 2018). However, there are not specific discussions on strategies for framing beneficial outcomes in formal assessment processes, thus indicating a potential new area for research and practice.

Overall, participants repeatedly mentioned the legitimacy of formal assessment processes as an intrinsic motivator for faculty participation. Influences included consistent beliefs and practices by assessment leaders and visible demonstrations of beneficial changes due to

assessment-related tasks. Meanwhile, participants framed streamlined workloads as an extrinsic incentive for faculty engagement in formal assessment processes.

Faculty Have Tensions with Processes, not Assessment Leaders

Lastly, faculty members tend to approach interactions with assessment leaders with trust that can surpass whatever tensions arise. One supporting finding is that all 13 participants discussed assessment leader-faculty relationships in a positive way. For example, four participants praised their assessment leaders and revealed they had developed friendships. Other participants acknowledged that their assessment leaders were intentional about establishing faculty as subject matter experts and avoided unnecessary burdens whenever possible.

The observation that no participants explicitly described a negative relationship with their assessment leaders or viewed them as incompetent additionally supports the conclusion that assessment leader-faculty relationships have a basis in trust. Likewise, three participants who described conflicts with their assessment leaders clarified that their tension was more based on the demands of formal assessment processes. Acknowledgments included assessment leaders assuming difficult responsibilities or being confined by accreditation standards.

While the literature review identified a gap on assessment leader-faculty relationships through the lens of LMX theory, there are potential supporting connections. Dunn et al. (2020) recommends that assessment leaders favor a trust-building mindset over a deficit mindset as they interact with faculty. Other studies include interviews with assessment leaders on their perceptions of the formal assessment process (Holzweiss et al., 2016; Lock & Kraska, 2015). Neither of them consistently mentions dysfunctional relationships between assessment leaders and faculty as phenomena contributing to resistance.

Implications

Discussions on implications for scholarship and practice based on findings and conclusions proceed in the following sections. Implications for scholarship will focus on developments in applying LMX Theory to assessment leader-faculty relationships. Afterward, implications for practice will cover actions that assessment leaders may implement to promote faculty engagement in formal assessment processes.

Scholarship

One implication in applying LMX Theory to formal assessment processes explores needs that assessment leaders have before establishing working relationships with faculty members. Six participants observed unequal faculty involvement in assessment and infrequent faculty contact with assessment leaders. Proposed explanations include assessment leaders' preferences in reaching out to certain individuals; these determinants can be associated with the principle of reciprocity in LMX Theory. Reciprocity involves needs that leaders and followers hope to fulfill for themselves through establishing a working relationship (Liden et al., 1997; Premru et al., 2022). For assessment leaders, there are two needs they may hope to be reciprocated. One area is seeking individuals who can help promptly fulfill compliance deadlines. Observations supporting this need stem from all 13 participants mentioning ways in which their assessment leaders remained conscious of accrediting bodies' demands in their work. The other need is recruiting faculty who seem competent and interested in producing meaningful analysis of student learning. Related findings include two participants who discussed assessment leaders' perceptions of faculty effort and dedication toward assessment. Continued scholarship may outline additional needs that assessment leaders have as well as further define reciprocity in the context of formal assessment processes.

Another expansion in applying LMX Theory to formal assessment processes revolves around the faculty perspective of reciprocity in their interactions with assessment leaders. One possible need for faculty is perceived consistency and benefits resulting from formal assessment processes. Related findings include eight participants mentioning consistent practices and tangible benefits in formal assessment processes as intrinsic motivators for completing assessment-related tasks. Similarly, one participant described the importance of securing buy-in among faculty. Additional needs may be found in perceived value from extrinsic incentives. Supporting findings include four participants discussing attaching stipends to assessment-related tasks and three participants suggesting the integration of faculty development and formal assessment processes. Further scholarship could elaborate on the comparative influence of extrinsic incentives to intrinsic motivators for faculty in formal assessment processes.

Other implications for applying LMX Theory to formal assessment processes involve what assessment leaders and faculty members define as positive organizational outcomes due to assessment. In general, LMX Theory associates positive organizational outcomes with high-quality relationships that benefit both leaders and followers (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden et al., 1997; Rockstuhl et al., 2012). Based on this study, one desirable outcome may be fulfilling accreditation standards to satisfy external demands. All 13 participants acknowledged the completion of formal assessment processes to meet accreditation standards, which have further implications for an IHE's operation. Another potential outcome of interest is the use of assessment results to highlight program success. Supporting findings include nine participants exploring possibilities for connecting assessment results to measures such as program enrollment or school ranking. Ongoing scholarship may uncover other positive organizational outcomes as well as their value relative to each other.

Finally, assessment leader-faculty relationships, as viewed through LMX Theory, could be generally viewed as one initially established with trust that also overcomes conflicts. This basis is derived from findings that all 13 participants indicated trust in their assessment leaders; in particular, three individuals described looking beyond tensions and maintaining positive interactions. Subsequent scholarship could then focus on ways assessment leaders might influence the quality of their interactions with faculty and thereby their levels of trust. Examples include understanding what actions are viewed as interference with academic freedom. While the study results do not indicate that assessment leader-faculty relationships are initially framed with animosity, influences toward such negative circumstances could also be studied.

Practice

One practical implication from the findings addresses the ways faculty members develop knowledge about formal assessment processes. Seven participants indicated that faculty members did not always have prior training or accessible resources regarding assessment, creating a steep learning curve. In response to such a gap, assessment leaders can consider reviewing the ways faculty at their IHE learn about formal assessment processes. They can then address identified gaps by using feedback from their own faculty or observations from peer institutions to implement resources that reduce the learning curve in formal assessment processes. Possible applications mentioned by participants include assessment-related mentorship among faculty, training during onboarding, sponsorship for assessment-related conferences, and establishing a point of contact for learning about assessment.

Another consideration for practice revolves around five participants who indicated unequal faculty involvement in formal assessment processes. Explanations included assessment leaders making preferential selections for collaborating with faculty members and assessment

committees keeping assessment-related information exclusive. In response, assessment leaders may consider reflecting on their own process in selecting faculty for participation. Reflections can focus on reasons that specific individuals are included while others are excluded. If this unequal involvement fuels inequity among faculty service time, then assessment leaders may consider actions that allow the formal assessment process to be more inclusive. Similarly, assessment leaders may also consider the transparency of information from assessment committees and how it may be associated with barriers to participation.

Perceptions from every participant regarding fluctuations between a culture of student learning and culture of compliance may call assessment leaders to make similar discernments. In particular, 10 participants noted concerns that formal assessment processes may emphasize compliance over student learning, while seven individuals described clashes with academic freedom akin to a culture of fear. As such, assessment leaders may focus on which culture of assessment their statements and actions reflect, with particular attention on the use of results. Any items identified under a culture of compliance or fear can be marked for intervention. It may also be important to gather faculty feedback in case there are oversights driven by bias.

Reflections on the implementation of formal assessment processes can be supplemented by comments from nine participants regarding the association of impact, consistency, and workloads with the motivation to contribute. Based on six participants' responses, demonstrating beneficial impacts of formal assessment processes is preferred over completing assessment just for compliance with accrediting bodies. In turn, assessment leaders can consider the narrative they are weaving around the purpose assessment-related tasks. Meanwhile, five participants noted how inconsistent practices detracted from the legitimacy of the formal assessment process. Assessment leaders may respond to such concerns by evaluating the consistency of their own

practices alongside ways to streamline assessment-related tasks without compromising validity. Again, faculty feedback can be essential for capturing a complete understanding of whether or not needs are being met.

Lastly, findings that all 13 participants held trust in their assessment leaders can inform ways to begin conversations surrounding formal assessment processes. If assessment leaders begin conversations with faculty members in good faith, they can expect mutual trust. Furthermore, tension and resistance from faculty will not necessarily preclude assessment leaders from building positive working relationships with faculty. This notion is reinforced by three participants who noted that they respect their assessment leaders even after conflicts and instead have issues with the formal assessment process. In response, assessment leaders may look to hold open conversations with faculty about refining the formal assessment process without the possibility of being actively hampered by negative intent.

Study Limitations

One of the limitations in the study was, as mentioned in Chapter 4, the inability to represent every division in the target institution from the sample drawn. Two divisions were not represented because the researcher exhausted the available pool of faculty after accounting for rejections and extended nonresponses. This effect was exacerbated by the divisions having a small population of full-time faculty who qualified for the study. The exclusion of two divisions from the final sample, along with a 5.10% response rate, similarly introduces a limitation that the study may not be representative of the population of faculty at the target institution.

Another study limitation was the possible lack of representation for faculty who feel strong discomfort on the topic of assessment. During recruitment, the researcher encountered two rejection notices stating that formal assessment processes were too sensitive of a topic to be

discussed even in the space of a confidential interview. Out of respect for the faculty members' refusal to provide consent and to avoid coercion, the researcher did not attempt to follow up for more information.

Lastly, this study captures data from one private IHE under one accrediting body. Thus, the scope of analysis could not include comparisons between public and private IHE contexts. Furthermore, comparisons to IHEs working under other accrediting bodies were not possible. There were also unforeseen variations in accrediting standards caused by faculty whose departments worked with specialized accrediting agencies. While the study attempted to focus on assessment as a WSCUC expectation only, there was no differentiation for responses that may have been influenced by the ways specialized accreditors define formal assessment processes and enforce standards on them.

Internal Study Validity and Reliability

Study internal validation was established using the methods of a validated interview protocol, bias clarification, and a rigorous process for ensuring reliable interpretation. The interview protocol was validated by content experts. In this case, two colleagues with expertise in formal assessment processes served as the experts. Their feedback specifically confirmed that the interview questions adequately reflected content in faculty knowledge of formal assessment and their interactions with assessment leaders as expressed in the research questions. The content experts then participated in pilot interviews that established the length of an interview session. The pilot interviews also provided an opportunity to test the quality of audio recordings with the Open Broadcaster Software application and transcriptions provided by Temi.

One aspect of building reliability in the study was using qualitative analysis software to clearly document how interview data is interpreted. A code book was developed and maintained

as thematic categories were observed. Interview transcripts were reviewed multiple times and occurred concurrently with data collection.

Reliability was further supported through peer coding during the coding procedure. The researcher created an *a priori* codebook and shared it with their colleague to make initial refinements. After the first round of refinements, the researcher and colleague coded one transcript that underwent a calibration session. The session facilitated emergent coding by making refinements to possible codes, each code's definition, and their sample applications based on a review of the data. Once coding concluded, the researcher calculated intercoder reliability according to McHugh's (2012) methods. The intercoder reliability in each transcript was at least 80%, which met the criteria for good qualitative reliability (McHugh, 2012; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Instances of disagreements in coding were resolved by the researcher's final decision after reviewing the data point against the codebook and literature.

Follow-up on Reflexive Practice

Research bias was clarified through reflexive practices. The researcher acknowledged personal work experience with faculty resistance to formal assessment processes and a lack of their own work experience as a full-time faculty member. Thus, this experience was recognized as a potential point of bias. Reflexive practices continued with the disclosure of assumptions potentially connected to the researcher's positionality, thus influencing interpretations.

The researcher assumed faculty would describe formal assessment processes and faculty roles in assessment in ways that do not align with working definitions in the study. This assumption has been debunked by the finding that all 13 participants accurately described formal assessment processes and faculty involvement in assessment-related tasks. The researcher also assumed that participants' willingness to participate in the formal assessment process would be

associated solely with having positive interactions. Findings on faculty members' trust in assessment leaders even beyond tensions also counter this assumption, as it demonstrates positive working relationships despite the presence of conflicts.

Recommendations for Future Research

Additional research on the various strategies IHEs employ in training faculty members on formal assessment processes may inform future practices for assessment leaders. Initial inquiries may begin as a survey across different IHEs that gather a list of strategies implemented for assessment training. Results would then highlight the frequency of certain strategies. Follow-up interviews with assessment leaders and faculty might then provide insights on the efficacy of each approach in a given context.

Another potential study could focus on dynamics prior to the establishment of assessment leader-faculty relationships as a way to understand unequal faculty involvement in formal assessment processes. Inquiries include ways that faculty members first hear about or interact with assessment leaders. The research could also explore assessment leaders' methods in faculty outreach to determine factors in which individuals are chosen to participate in the assessment leader-faculty relationship.

Other research could target existing assessment leader-faculty relationships and explore faculty members' needs and points of resistance when asked to engage in assessment-related tasks. Transparency in communicating about the aforementioned items and perceptions of the ways assessment leaders follow up on such conversations would be emphasized. Interviews in this study could also clarify specific actions from assessment leaders that faculty believe lead to a culture of student learning or a culture of compliance. Findings could then be interwoven with

organizational change theory to determine actions for progressing toward and sustaining a culture of student learning.

Observations that faculty members desire to more clearly witness the beneficial outcomes of formal assessment processes may drive additional scholarship. Questions could revolve around the types of benefits or impacts that faculty desire from formal assessment processes. Results then prospectively inform assessment leaders about ways to write narratives or present data that generate intrinsic motivation among faculty.

One last possibility for future research is to conduct a quantitative study that surveys faculty members about the ways they perceive formal assessment processes and interactions with assessment leaders. The survey can target specific aspects of the phenomenon, including ones that were not mentioned during the interviews. In addition, the anonymity and lack of synchronous interactions in surveys may encourage responses from faculty members who otherwise have strong discomfort toward being interviewed.

Closing Comments

The researcher acknowledges that they have gained a great deal of insight about faculty members that will benefit their own work in formal assessment processes. One set of insights addresses the negation of assumptions that result in attributing more knowledge and agency to faculty. The assumption that faculty may inaccurately describe the purpose and implementation of formal assessment processes was debunked, as there was no conflation between formal assessment processes, assessment for grading purposes, and work performance evaluations. Faculty also described a variety of roles in formal assessment processes beyond just evaluating evidence of learning, thus disproving another assumption. Participants further showed trust and respect for their assessment leaders regardless of conflicts, which challenged the assumption that

assessment leader-faculty relationships may be dependent on the quality of implementation in the formal assessment process.

In closing, the researcher has gained a greater appreciation for their own work and relationships with faculty members. Findings on the trust that faculty maintain in assessment leaders provide encouragement that there is interest in each other's work and how it may benefit students. Ideally, this study will nurture a new branch of research that increasingly promotes positive assessment leader-faculty relationships and faculty engagement in formal assessment processes as a realistic and attainable goal, even through challenges that may arise.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

Basic Information

Interviewee	
Location	
Date and Time	
Length of encounter **(approximately 45 minutes)**	

Introductory Checklist

Greeting	
Review Study Purpose and Interview Structure	
Review Informed Consent	
Participant Questions and Comments	
Finalize Informed Consent	

Opening question

1. Tell me about your role in your institution.

Central questions

2. What do you know about the purpose of formal assessment processes in higher education?

   a. The interviewer will make a distinction from assessment for grading purposes and performance evaluation based on the response.

3. How is formal assessment implemented in your institution?
4. What role do you play as a faculty member in formal assessment processes?
5. Describe your interactions with assessment leaders while engaged in formal assessment work.
6. Describe your interactions with assessment leaders outside of formal assessment work.

Potential Probing Questions

Tell me more about…

Could you explain your response in more detail?

What do you mean by…

Is there anything more you would like to share with me?

Closing instructions checklist

Express gratitude	
Follow-up to clarify any other responses	
Study results	

Adapted from Creswell & Creswell (2018)

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

Graduate School of Psychology and Education

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

FORMAL STUDY TITLE

Understanding Needs: Facilitating Faculty Support for Program Assessment in Higher Education

AUTHORIZED STUDY PERSONNEL

Principal Investigator: Terrance Cao, M.Ed Office: (310) 568-5656
Dissertation Chair: Jennifer Miyake-Trap, Ed.D Office: (310) 258-2891

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by (Terrance Cao, MEd, principal investigator, and Jennifer Miyake-Trapp, Ed.D, Dissertation Chair) at Pepperdine University because you are a **full-time faculty member with experience participating in formal assessment processes for your institution**. Your participation is voluntary. Your decision around whether or not to participate in this study will not be communicated with any third party.

You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything that you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends. If you decide to participate, you may notify the Principal Investigator of your interest. You will also be given a copy of this form for your records.

KEY INFORMATION

If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:
_ Full-time faculty with at least three years of teaching experience
_ Procedures will include a semi-structured Zoom interview regarding experiences with formal assessment processes
_ One interview is required
_ This interview will take approximately 45 minutes total

_ There are no risks associated with this study
_ There is no monetary compensation for your participation
_ You will be provided a copy of this consent form

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this qualitative study is to describe the lived experiences of faculty in formal assessment processes with emphasis on interactions with assessment leaders. The study will aid in understanding the perceptions faculty have regarding formal assessment. This information will further inform ways that assessment leaders can leverage working relationships with faculty to increase engagement with formal assessment processes.

STUDY PROCEDURES

Your volunteer participation involves answering questions regarding your experience with formal assessment processes at your institution as well as your interactions with assessment leaders. Your answers will aid in the understanding of the perceptions faculty have regarding formal assessment. You will be asked to complete an online interview regarding formal assessment processes and interactions with assessment leaders. You will receive a URL from the Zoom Conferencing System to complete the interview. The researcher will conduct interviews from a secure, locked office. Audio from the interview will be recorded via the Windows Voice Recording application capturing sound played out loud through the researcher's laptop speakers. There will be no video recording. Your participation is on a voluntary basis and you can refuse to participate at any point.

USAGE OF DATA

All identifying information in your data will be removed. Your data will not be sent to researchers outside of Pepperdine University.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no potential and foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study. There is no information being collected that would pose a risk to any personal employee outcomes at work. Participant's response to these questions should not pose any risks to the participant's reputation, employability, financial standing, and educational advancement. Again, your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and your decision on whether or not to participate will not be communicated with any third party.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

While there are no direct benefits to the study participants, there are the anticipated benefits to society which include:

The benefit of this work to society is the increased understanding of the lived experiences of faculty in formal assessment processes with emphasis on interactions with assessment leaders. This may aid not only the successful completion of formal assessment processes in institutions of higher education but also improved working relationships between faculty and assessment leaders. In turn, the quality of education provided by the institution would increase by improving the capacity to assess practices in the institution and adjust them for the future. Ultimately, students attending an institution of higher education would benefit as they receive higher-quality education.

COST OF PARTICIPATION

There is no cost to you for being a participant in this research study.

PAYMENT/COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

You will not receive any payment or compensation for being a participant in this research study.

CHALLENGES AS A RESULT OF THE STUDY

Your welfare is the major concern of every member of the research team. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact one of the authorized study personnel listed at the beginning of this consent form.

CONFIDENTIALITY

I will keep your records for this study confidential as far as permitted by law. However, if I am required to do so by law, I may be required to disclose information collected about you. Examples of the types of issues that would require me to break confidentiality are if you tell me about instances of child abuse and elder abuse. Pepperdine's University's Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) may also access the data collected. The HSPP occasionally reviews and monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects.

The data will be stored on an encrypted and password-protected computer in the principal investigator's office. The data will be stored until after the completion of data analysis. The data collected will be coded, de-identified, and analyzed. The interview data will be recorded by the Windows Voice Recorder application through audio played out loud. The Principal Investigator will conduct this interview in a secure, locked office. Audio files will be transcribed by the Temi transcription service. Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. Your responses will be immediately coded with a pseudonym and transcript data will be maintained separately. The audio files will be destroyed when data analysis is concluded.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION

The alternative to participation in the study is not participating or completing only the items which you feel comfortable with.

EMERGENCY CARE AND COMPENSATION FOR INJURY

If you are injured as a direct result of research procedures you will receive medical treatment; however, you or your insurance will be responsible for the cost. Pepperdine University does not provide any monetary compensation for injury.

INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

I understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may contact (Terrance Cao, [redacted] or Jennifer Miyake-Trapp, Dissertation chair at [redacted]) if I have any other questions or concerns about this research.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

Phone: 1(310)568-2305
Email: gpsirb@pepperdine.edu

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK SURVEY

To meet Pepperdine University's ongoing accreditation efforts and to meet the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs (AAHRPP) standards, an online feedback survey is included below:

https://forms.gle/nnRgRwLgajYzBq5t7

FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANT USE ONLY

I have read the information provided above. I have been given a chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

FOR INVESTIGATOR USE ONLY

I have explained the research to the participants and answered all of his/her questions. In my judgment, the participants are knowingly, willingly and intelligently agreeing to participate in this study. They have the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study and all of the various components. They also have been informed participation is voluntary and that they may discontinue their participation in the study at any time, for any reason.

APPENDIX C

IRB Approval

Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263
TEL: 310-506-4000

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: June 07, 2023

Protocol Investigator Name: Terrance Cao

Protocol #: 23-04-2150

Project Title: Understanding Needs: Facilitating Faculty Support for Formal Assessment Processes in Higher Education

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Terrance Cao:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research

APPENDIX D

Codebook

Code Name	Definition	Examples	References
Assessment_ Knowledge	An expressed understanding of the formal assessment process as a concept	"Formal assessment processes aim to inform continuous improvement in an institution. They begin with designating learning outcomes and assignments that can serve of evidence of this learning. Then, we may develop rubrics to help determine what level of mastery someone has had. Afterward, we work with subject matter experts to score the rubrics and analyze the results to see where students stand. This analysis provides an opportunity to identify strengths and areas of improvment for the future." NOTE: The response doesn't need to cover every single aspect mentioned in the example, but if the participant has an overall gist of the example, you can assign this code NOTE: Some participants might initially answer something related to job performance or assessment just for the sake of grading. I make a clarification in the interview. If they redirect themselves back to the example in this code, assign this code. If they are unable to course-correct, assign them with "Assessment_Gap"	Biggs and Tang (2011), Holzweiss et al. (2016), Maggs (2010), Maki (2010), Reimann (2017), Sadler and Reimann (2016), Sasere and Makhasane (2020), Suskie and Banta (2009), Walvoord (2010)
Assessment_ Gap	An expressed lack of knowledge or clarity around formal assessment processes as a concept	"To be honest, formal assessment is something I don't know much about" "I do know that formal assessment is meant to aid continuous improvement, but I have been fuzzy	Biggs and Tang (2011), Holzweiss et al. (2016), Maggs (2010), Maki (2010), Reimann (2017), Sadler and Reimann

		about its validity and reliability" "I know that we do assessment for WASC, but I don't have any idea about why this should be a required practice"	(2016), Sasere and Makhasane (2020), Suskie and Banta (2009), Walvoord (2010)
Institution_Knowledge	An expressed understanding of the way formal assessment processes occur within an institution	"So in my institution, we have a [ROLE] who oversees the process. Every so often, they will reach out to the faculty to collect work samples. Then they assign scorers from among the faculty to be anonymous evaluators. These results are then collected so that they can be shared with leadership and the rest of the faculty." NOTE: The response doesn't need to cover every single aspect mentioned in the example, but if the participant has an overall gist of the example, you can assign this code	Biggs and Tang (2011), Holzweiss et al. (2016), Maggs (2010), Maki (2010), Reimann (2017), Sadler and Reimann (2016), Sasere and Makhasane (2020), Suskie and Banta (2009), Walvoord (2010)
Institution_Gap	An expressed lack of knowledge or clarity around the way formal assessment processes occur within an institution	"I'm not entirely sure; I just get asked to provide some things or score some rubrics and that's it" "You know, I only know the person who coordinates assessment and haven't thought about what else goes on" "From what I know, we get data on a regular basis so we can keep reporting it to WASC" NOTE: WASC only makes sure assessment is happening, they actually aren't privy to the exact details of what our assessment has found	Biggs and Tang (2011), Holzweiss et al. (2016), Maggs (2010), Maki (2010), Reimann (2017), Sadler and Reimann (2016), Sasere and Makhasane (2020), Suskie and Banta (2009), Walvoord (2010)
Culture_Learning	A perception that formal assessment processes are intrinsically valuable efforts that aid continuous improvement for student learning	"We use our assessment results to keep ourselves informed about what goes well, what doesn't go so well, and how that can all be improved for the sake of future students" "Formal assessment is an important tool to make sure our programs are continuing to help students	Bishop et al. (2015), Fuller (2013), Fuller and Skidmore (2014), Goss (2022), McMillan et al. (2020), Moskal et al. (2008), Redmond et al. (2008), Skidmore et al. (2018)

		achieve the outcomes that we intend them to reach" "To me, everything we do needs to keep student learning at the center of the focus and consider how we continue to emphasize that in our assessment processes"	
Culture_Compliance	A perception that formal assessment processes are just a task to be completed to meet external demands	"From what I can tell, most of the time we're just checking off the boxes" "I think we're just doing assessment so the institution can continue to meet the standards that the accrediting bodies have established" "If my dean says it needs to happen, I'll do it because they said so"	Bishop et al. (2015), Fuller (2013), Fuller and Skidmore (2014), Goss (2022), McMillan et al. (2020), Moskal et al. (2008), Redmond et al. (2008), Skidmore et al. (2018)
Culture_Fear	A perception that formal assessment processes impose on academic freedom or professional growth	"To me, developing assessment rubrics feels restrictive because now I'm forced to create an assignment only in a way that WASC or my assessment people deem fit" "I know people say that assessment is just focused on student learning, but I can't help but wonder if it still subtly influences perceptions of my performance" "Once assessment comes around I'm thinking 'Oh great, here we go again' because I'm about to hear more philosophical waxing about something that's ultimately stopping me from following through on other aspirations"	Bishop et al. (2015), Fuller (2013), Fuller and Skidmore (2014), Goss (2022), McMillan et al. (2020), Moskal et al. (2008), Redmond et al. (2008), Skidmore et al. (2018)
Resistance	A perception or action resulting in reduced faculty engagement in formal assessment processes	"I've seen people be unwilling to participate in assessment because of the workload it creates" "I don't normally engage in assessment because I think it has an unclear purpose" "Some faculty find ways to avoid being contacted or selected for assessment work"	Day et al. (2018), Deardorff and Folger (2006), Emil and Cress (2013), Fletcher et al. (2012), Guetterman and Mitchell (2016), Postareff et al. (2012), Rawlusyk (2018),

			Samnuelowicz and Bain (2002)
Intrinsic	A focus on the internalized personal and/or professional value that formal assessment processes may have for an individual	"To me, formal assessment processes have value in showing me how I can keep striving for excellence as an educator" "Perhaps an assessment leader would find me more enthusiastic about formal assessment if they had a way to show tangible results or at least weave together a narrative showing the long-term impacts our adjustments have made" "It's great when assessment helps everyone understand why students are producing work a certain way. It'd be even better if faculty had continuous, long-term access to the results and how they can apply to their own success"	Lee et al. (2018), Muammar and Alkathiri (2021), Sadler and Reimann (2016), Smith and Gordon (2019), Van Dyke (2012)
Extrinsic	A focus on external factors that create value in formal assessment processes for an individual	"Oftentimes, we've seen assessment leaders encourage us through a combination of committee work or course release time" "Show me the money, and I'll be happy to take on the extra work for assessment" "Recently, I've seen faculty take more interest in assessment tasks because I've heard that people are starting to give it more weight in tenure review"	Lee et al. (2018), Muammar and Alkathiri (2021), Sadler and Reimann (2016), Smith and Gordon (2019), Van Dyke (2012)
Collaboration	An indication that a faculty member and assessment leader consistently work together with mutual interest	"I'm a big fan of our assessment leader; I'm constant contact with them on assessment tasks and improvements" "I'd say that we have a positive relationship where we keep in touch regularly and have no hiccups in our workflow"	Bess and Goldman (2001), Fuller and Skidmore (2014), Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), Horne et al. (2016), Sun et al. (2022)

		"Our working relationship has lasted for several years and, in my opinion, it has helped produce several useful assessment reports in a smooth fashion"	
Trust	An indication that a faculty member is confident and assured by the intentions of an assessment leader	"There are specific things that either I or the assessment leader don't know, and we rely on each other to fill in those gaps" "If I have any questions about an area of improvement, I know that I can always go straight to the assessment leader and not feel bad about asking" "I know what my assessment leader intends even with the circumstances around WASC and shifting standards, and I am confident in the shots that they call"	Bess and Goldman (2001), Fuller and Skidmore (2014), Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), Horne et al. (2016), Sun et al. (2022)
Distance	An indication that a faculty member and assessment leader have limited or no contact for building a working relationship. NOTE:Differs from "OneTime" in that "OneTime" assumes a working relationship already exists, while "Distance" focuses more on the lack of a working relationship or inability to establish a working relationship	"I only hear from the assessment leader when it's time to complete tasks and have no relationships beyond that" "So the assessment leader assigns tasks to our department chairs, who then do all the coordinating with faculty like us. I don't think I've ever talked with that assessment leader before" "I have no idea who the person running assessment is, oftentimes I'm told that we're just making a submission for WASC or a specific office"	Bess and Goldman (2001), Fuller and Skidmore (2014), Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), Horne et al. (2016), Sun et al. (2022)

Tension	An indication that a faculty member and assessment leader experience conflicts of interest	"I don't understand how an assessment leader can say they're here for student improvement when they barely take the time to understand what we faculty are going through" "To me, I want to take my instruction and students in this direction, but what the assessment leader says is effective for WASC is stuffing me into a whole different box" "I like my assessment leader as a person, but I can find myself at odds with the reality of what they're trying to do with their work"	Bess and Goldman (2001), Fuller and Skidmore (2014), Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), Horne et al. (2016), Sun et al. (2022)
OneTime	An indication that a faculty member and assessment leader have a professional working relationship with a sole focus on assessment-based tasks	"I think things are good with me and the assessment leader; we don't really do much together beyond the formal assessment tasks though" "While the assessment leader and I don't talk often, I'd say that we have a solid working relationship that gets things done" "I tend to stay in my lane and the assessment leader tends to stay in theirs. We do well together when a crossover needs to happen but I don't think we need more to do together besides that"	Bess and Goldman (2001), Fuller and Skidmore (2014), Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), Horne et al. (2016), Sun et al. (2022)