A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF PRINCIPAL PERCEPTIONS
OF PERFORMANCE EVALUATION IN OHIO

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By
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This qualitative study of a purposeful sample of women principals in Ohio was designed to examine principal perceptions regarding performance evaluation to understand the impact of the standardized framework on the capacity, renewal, growth and behaviors of principals.

This study asked:

1. How does a purposeful sample of women principals leading in Ohio schools perceive the Ohio Principal Evaluation System?

2. What critical insights about the power dynamics involved in Ohio leadership performance evaluation can be gleaned from this sample?

3. How and in what ways does a sample of women principals believe that the Ohio Principal Evaluation System impacts their holistic leadership growth?

4. What power dynamics are involved in the performance evaluation of the sample group, and how do these dynamics impact their individual leadership?

The perceptions of women principals were explored in order to understand the influence a male guided standardized performance evaluation framework has on their growth and development as leaders as well as to understand the power dynamics that surround performance evaluation practices. Assumptions held by the OPES system, part of a larger accountability driven framework, were critically examined. Critical
commentaries emerged indicating that growth and development outcomes have not materialized for principals continuing to experience pressure to increase standardized assessment scores as the strongest indicator of student growth under the framework. Key themes were summarized as (a) emphasizing evidence; (b) translating to leadership; (c) constraining holistic leadership growth, wisdom leadership and renewal; (d) making of local decisions; and (e) experiencing power dynamics.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The effectiveness of the school principal is highly correlated with student achievement. Strong research indicates that the impact of the principal on student achievement is second only to the impact of the student’s classroom teacher (Cistone & Stevenson, 2000; James-Ward & Potter, 2011; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). This is due in large part to the principal’s role in leading the articulation of vision and direction for teaching and learning and their influence in hiring, developing, and retaining excellent teachers. The vision and goals that a principal establishes translates, often directly but at least indirectly, into teaching and learning in the classroom (Sun, Youngs, Yang, Chu, & Zhao, 2012). A principal’s effectiveness is not solely his or her contribution to standardized achievement advancement but his or her ability to lead wisely and carefully consider the complexity of decisions affecting the human soul and spirit in societies with democratic ideals (Ylimaki & Henderson, in press).

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) categorized 21 principal responsibilities identified with positive achievement results. The responsibilities are diverse and span a range of competencies including cultural capacity, understanding of curriculum, facility with assessment and instruction, relationship building, and the ability to make changes. Additionally, these researchers found that principal leadership in establishing procedures and promoting school climate are crucial to a school’s success. Because of the principal’s pivotal impact on the school, his or her capacity for growth and development
is crucial. Performance evaluation practices should contribute to this growth in a meaningful and dynamic way. Qualitative research with principals experiencing standardized mechanisms of performance evaluation will indicate to educational professionals and policy makers the impact that these types of systems have on not only accountability but also on the ability of principals to effectively lead in today’s schools. This includes the capacity of the evaluation process to contribute directly to principal professional growth and renewal in a holistic manner involving ethical and moral dimensions of leadership, without being unduly focused on single or isolated skill areas.

Noddings (2013) highlighted this idea with her discussion of the difference between accountability and responsibility when she noted that responsibility is an elevated concept in which educators consider and tend to moral, aesthetic, and social growth of students in addition to intellectual growth, clearly stating that test scores (i.e., accountability) cannot be the full measure of an educator’s work.

Consider the words of a principal interviewed regarding performance evaluation. “I am asked to self-evaluate myself, and then sit in front of the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and all the district directors where I am asked questions, praised, scolded, and then given a written document” (Bingham, 2013, p. 73). On the surface one could argue that all the elements of a “proper” performance evaluation exist: self-reflection, affirmation, dialogue, and accountability. However, a critical read reveals power dynamics that speak to a cold, disengaged, top down process in which the principal is seen as a passive as opposed to active participant with little evidence that the process contributed to professional growth or renewal.
Statement of the Problem

Legislative initiatives such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Race to the Top (RTTT), and statewide accountability reform have put the spotlight on performance evaluation and accountability measures. With the passage of these legislative pieces, a most notable change occurred with regard to the principal’s responsibilities to include increased responsibility for student achievement. Considering this, it is more important than ever that the performance evaluations of principals assist them in becoming better leaders of teachers and stronger in instructional leadership. It is crucial to hear from principals how they perceive post RTTT standardized evaluations impact them and assist them in holistic growth and professional renewal. Since the inception of NCLB in 2002 and then RTTT in 2010 as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), there has been a relatively small amount of research on principal performance evaluation practices within an accountability framework including those in which standardized practices have been employed including direct ties of a leader’s performance to measures of student achievement (Babo & Villaverde, 2013; Fuller & Hollingworth, 2014; Parylo, Zepeda, & Bengtson, 2012; Portin, Feldman, & Knapp, 2006; Viramontez, 2011). Prior to the RTTT initiative, few states had developed comprehensive standardized performance evaluations (Fuller & Hollingworth, 2014). Researchers note that principal performance evaluation research has not kept pace with the research available in teacher evaluation as the educational context has shifted to increased accountability (Christensen, 2011; Gaziel, 2008; Sanders & Kearney, 2011). Cassavant, Collins, Faginski-Stark, McCandless, and Tencza (2012) clearly link
initiatives like RTTT and the need for performance evaluation research, making clear that increased focus on improving school leadership is directly related to state and federal mandates about student achievement. This focus has caused researchers to start turning their attention to principal performance evaluation models that might benefit both leaders and students, and this body of work is in need of additional study. Fuller and Hollingworth (2014) pointed out that after RTTT, many states worked under the assumption that teacher evaluation research would translate directly to principal evaluation research and therefore adopted evaluation frameworks for principals that were less than robustly researched. In addition, in their work with women and performance evaluation in general, Wilson and Nutley (2003) reported that the subjective experiences relating to evaluation have been under-explored in terms of women’s experiences.

Additionally, little is known about the consequences of principal performance evaluation—how practices change as a result and what impact the process has on the principal and learning centered leadership (Radinger, 2014; Sinnema & Robinson, 2012; Sun & Youngs, 2009). In a literature review of eight prominent educational leadership journals conducted by Parylo (2012) from 2001-2010, she found that,

The limited number of studies on evaluating educational administration and leadership is surprising. Researchers have concluded that school leaders have indirect or mediated impact on student achievement and directly impact teacher satisfaction and school improvement. Therefore, research and evaluation is needed to assess and examine leader preparation, socialization, professional
development, evaluation and succession programs. Both research and evaluation studies are needed to study and assess the effectiveness of these programs. (p. 81).

It is important that reflection and development functions serving to develop holistic leaders not take second place to accountability in the conversation surrounding current leadership evaluation practices. Accountability does not equal development. Accountability measures, even if scored “successful,” do not guarantee that principals have grown in capacity as wise leaders able to move their staff and students to increased learning and the ability to function deftly in a democratic society. For example, a principal could lead a school that demonstrates gain each year on a standardized test while drastically reducing student experiences in the arts, clearing the schedule for instruction in the “basics.” In this situation one would question the leader’s capacity for wisdom leadership to think beyond tests to consider expression, empathy, and tolerance for which untested subjects may provide experiences. That is why it is crucial that research continues to inform performance evaluation processes and practices within a standardized framework, an area in which there is not a robust body of research (Babo & Villaverde, 2013; Fuller & Hollingworth, 2014; Parylo et al., 2012; Portin, 2000; Viramontez, 2011).

This naturalistic study sought to understand the perceptions and experiences of women principals engaged in the Ohio Principal Evaluation System (OPES) and how involvement in the OPES process impacts professional growth and renewal contributing to wise, well rounded leaders (defined further below). Regarding research associated
with OPES, Shoaf, Zigler and Beebe (2013) pointed out that there is a lack of research documentation associated with the process—a gap my research contributes to filling.

**Purpose of the Study**

My line of inquiry seeks to understand the perceptions of women principals involved in a standardized performance evaluation framework known as the Ohio Principal Evaluation System (OPES). It is important to understand, in a qualitative manner, the impact of the standardized framework on the capacity, renewal, growth, and behaviors of principals engaged in the process. The current OPES framework results from recent federal and state mandates for increased accountability and defines leadership quality in terms of metrics including a strong component of standardized student achievement measures with decreased emphasis on the moral and ethical components of wisdom leadership (Ohio Department of Education, n.d.b). My research contributes to understanding how an emphasis on reflection, renewal, and growth can be prioritized by evaluators while working within the context of accountability mandated performance evaluations.

The purpose of my research was to capture women principal perceptions—their feelings, reactions, and reflections during and as a result of their involvement with the OPES evaluative process. My referent for the concept of perceptions is informed by feminist standpoint theory. Feminist standpoint emerged as a critical theory highlighting relationships between knowledge production and the practice of power as the prevailing voice of research was presumed to represent a detached generic humanity, not women or other oppressed groups based on race, culture, or class (thus feminist standpoint—not
simply women’s standpoint). Research has historically been, “speaking authoritatively about everything in the world from no particular location or human perspective” (Harding, 2004, p. 4). Standpoint urges that research be conducted and considered from “particular, historically specific, social locations” (Harding, 2004, p. 4). Prominent feminist standpoint theorist Sandra Harding stated that the impact of understanding from the contextual standpoint of oppressed groups allows one to see “behind” or “beneath” dominant and/or androcentric ideologies that shape all lives (p. 6). She also noted that research conducted from localized standpoint allows the actualities of women’s everyday lives to demonstrate the impact of conceptual frameworks and practices of influential social institutions (Harding, 2004). In the case of my research, the influential social institution is the standardized management of powerful schooling ideologies in terms of performance evaluation. Because all women have not had the same experiences, feminist standpoint theory works to highlight diverging understandings rather than to seek central, unified tenets highlighting decentered subjects and contextualized experiences that are socially located (Harding, 2004). To understand from a feminist standpoint considers that a standpoint other than the ruling ideological class has an epistemological advantage in that this source of knowledge is not consumed with concealing domination or exploitation of the remaining population (Jaggar, 2004). Additionally, centering research from the standpoint of women (women principals in my research) provides access to realities of knowledge not easily accessible to men (Jaggar, 2004). I have selected this interpretation of “perceptions” because it is particularly relevant for the way I have framed my dissertation research problem. I think feminist standpoint theory is relevant to
my work on women principals’ perceptions of performance evaluation because I seek to understand how these principals function within OPES, a standardized process resulting from the accountability movement. I am interested in understanding how the process affects women and their everyday leadership operating in differing contexts serving varying populations of students and parents. I want to understand “behind” or “beneath” their compliance with the normative feedback framework (OPES) that influences their practice.

My research serves to inform those implementing OPES regarding the impact the process has on principals and its ability to contribute to holistic leadership growth, assisting principals to develop subject matter, self, and social understanding as well as its ability to assist leaders towards wise leadership.

I explored the perceptions of women principals to understand the impact that a male guided standardized performance evaluation framework has on their growth and development as leaders as well as to understand the power dynamics that surround current performance evaluation practices. My understanding of the performance evaluation framework as male guided or male normative is premised on the idea that “gender is something we do, something we think about, a set of social constructs and a set of practices and cultural meanings that organize people into categories that are ideological rather than biological” (Dentith & Peterlin, 2011, p. 40). In educational leadership, gender has acted as an oppressive social construct to limit access to power for women and those of minority status (Dentith & Peterlin, 2011; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006). For example, resources in terms of mentoring for advancement and power
in terms of decision-making and policy formation, such as are necessary to implement standardized performance evaluation are not as readily available to women leaders (Peters, 2010). Apple (2011) used primary source documents (teaching contracts for women) to demonstrate the ideological foundations in which the field is grounded, making for deep roots of male normed understandings. Women were hired to teach with the dawning of compensatory schooling and increased factory availability to men. The result was a devalued profession, ideologically located as an extension of the home with male school board control over women’s dress, living arrangements, physicality, and morality. Feminist theories attempt to shine light on the ways in which gender, as a social construct, contributes to limitations of power and resources (Dentith & Peterlin, 2011; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006). Therefore, when I refer to male hegemony in terms of performance evaluation, I am referring to the “persistence of male advantage in organizations” (Acker, 1992, p. 248). This limited access to power and resources is keenly demonstrated in educational administration by the scant numbers of women in power positions such as the superintendency, central office, and even the high school principalship (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006). Furthermore, keeping in mind that contextually centered gendered constructs are not static and should not be reduced to essentialism, traditionally male valued capacities of rationality, efficiency, accountability, and competition constitute the vision of the idealized leader (Reay & Ball, 2000). Reay and Ball pointed out that in the current period when capitalism is reinventing itself, alternative collaborative and caring ways of leading are made more difficult for both men and women and that current circulating discourses undermine leadership committed to
feminist practice. Regarding the complexity necessary to avoid reduction to essentialism, Hendry (2011) called for educators of both sexes, all races and classes to construct identities that allow education to be a humanistic endeavor and not a corporate one, an inquiry process as opposed to a method, embracing both practical and poetic aspects involved in education. Feminist authors Dentith and Peterlin (2011) advocated a feminist leadership that highlights intersectionality of oppression by active confrontation of sexism, racism, classism, and all types of oppression while encouraging the appreciation of a variety of viewpoints.

Current standardized educational practices demonstrate the intersectionality of marginalization. Intersectionality refers to experiences of oppression as varied in degrees and forms. Socioeconomic status, religion, ethnicity, culture, race, and sexual orientation each impact the degree, intensity, and lived experience of oppression. In terms of the accountability culture, of which OPES is firmly representative, school ratings and designations work to put minority individuals at risk of further oppression (Dentith & Peterlin, 2011). Principals and hence schools more likely to be designated as failing are often found in urban areas in which there are increased populations of persons of lowered socioeconomic status, minorities, and cultural differences. Lowered ratings contribute to “remedies” such as restructuring in which principals are let go or reassigned to other buildings or positions (McDonnell, 1989).

In terms of power, I am grounding my conception in the work of French and Raven (1959) who defined power as the ability or potential to have influence on another toward psychological change including influence over one’s behavior, opinion, attitude,
goals, or values. This power as influence assumes that “the leader’s use of influence or power mobilizes people within the organization to go beyond their individual interests in working toward the common good” (Katz, 2006, p. 104). They (French & Raven, 1959) specified five sources of power consisting of reward, coercion, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power. Reward refers to a leader’s ability to control resources as well as rewards. The higher a person is within an organization the more likely he or she has access or control of resources others within the organization desire. Coercion refers to a leader’s ability to reward or punish including the ability to thwart one from reaching goals or desired reward or status. Legitimate power arises from the leader’s assertion of his or her position and role expectations. There is the perception with this power source that the leader has the right to lead and that followers should acquiesce. Referent power is that which is based in concern and goodwill that has been built over time. Trust, respect, and fair treatment contribute to the referent power source. Finally, expert power is established when the power source maintains expertise or knowledge that is specialized and others are reliant upon that knowledge (French & Raven, 1959; Katz, 2006). Katz (2006) argued in her work on educational leadership and power that, historically, school administration literature is dominated by definitions of power that assume control and domination as a norm. As I analyzed participant responses, I wanted to understand the way power influenced them throughout the performance evaluation process.

I critically examined assumptions held by the OPES system, part of a larger accountability driven framework for performance evaluation. I also wanted to explore how women principals might effectively utilize formative feedback practices, so common
in developmental supervision, in the performance evaluation process, which is tasked with both formative and summative components. In addition, I reviewed documents the districts used regarding their OPES application to further understand power dynamics and localized implementation.

**Significance of the Study**

Lack of support for administrators ranks among the 10 most important factors influencing principals’ desires to remain in or leave the profession (Cooley & Shen, 2000). The modern educational leader faces multiple publics, priorities, and tasks during the day-to-day work of the job. As stressors associated with educational leadership positions rise, a number of potential candidates are declining application to the profession and those currently employed are turning over at a less than desirable rate (Cooley & Shen, 2000; Parylo et al., 2012). Marzano et al. (2005) outlined a complex and diverse range of educational leadership competencies necessary for a successful principalship. Conflict with teacher unions, school boards, parents, and increased administrative duties are all factors associated with decreased interest in the principal position (Cooley & Shen, 2000). Urban principals in particular are faced with additional challenges such as student mobility, teacher retention, and school violence. Increased responsibilities for all principals afford less time for cultivating relationships with stakeholders and for engaging in their own professional development and growth. Time pressures often negatively impact a principal’s interactions with her family and school leaders often find they are toiling beyond normal working hours (Portin, 2000). Additionally, principals are now key players in providing professional development to teachers, despite having less
time to engage in their own development, and in interpreting growth and accountability measures. Under these conditions, fatigue and self-doubt contribute to decisions of leaders to drop out of the profession or experience reduced self-efficacy (Kneese, Pankake, Schroth, & Blackburn, 2003; Portin, 2000).

It is vital that those responsible for supporting principals understand and address these challenges. Examining the processes and context in which principal evaluations are structured and delivered provide a way to inform leaders about how to use evaluation as a dynamic means of supporting principals to sustain growth, development, and renewal. Professional development and renewal techniques are critical in a profession that taps such diverse competencies and demands a multiplicity of results. However, those in the field report that support and renewal structures as well as meaningful professional development allowing them to grow and become more effective are inadequate (Marcos, Witmer, Foland, & Vouga, 2011).

Research studies consistently demonstrate that meaningful professional development and support systems are lacking to assist leaders in directly impacting student achievement—especially in terms of assisting minority students, students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged students that must show rigorous yearly growth within accountability frameworks in order for principals to achieve successful evaluations (Daresh, 2007; Honig, 2012; Keith, 2011). Although there is much information available on the mentoring and induction of new principals to the profession in the literature, there is considerably less information on best practices to support established principals underlining the lack of a well-articulated support structure for those
responsible for leading our nation’s schools. Honig (2012) highlighted lack of support for experienced principals by stating, “Previous work in educational leadership has barely explored job-embedded professional supports for school principals’ learning, let alone how executive level central office staff might participate as main agents in that work” (p. 764). Both new and established principals need development and renewal. If not provided, principals can lose focus and fail to self-reflect, limiting their ability to continually improve practices, move their schools forward, and maintain perceptions of efficacy (Kneese et al., 2003; Portin, 2000).

Qualitative research regarding principal evaluation perceptions is important because of the powerful impact that principals have on teachers, students, and schools (Cistone & Stevenson, 2000; Marzano et al., 2005). The more that school leaders are able to develop and grow, the more positively they can impact their school communities. Understanding how principals experience and respond to a standardized evaluation system that is relatively new will assist district leaders in Ohio in making decisions regarding vision, purpose, and implementation of the system so that it most effectively leads to principal growth and renewal. Leaders that experience growth in a balanced way, in areas of increased subject, self, and social understandings, will be better able to influence teacher growth in this same manner. A qualitative understanding of how the structure and requirements of a performance based system guide the actions of principals through the process of evaluation will assist leaders in considering how to leverage the value in such systems. In addition, this understanding will assist in combatting elements contributing to hegemonic social and cultural reproduction. For example, women find
that they are still, at times, put at a disadvantage in traditional evaluation which often tacitly values and prioritizes those without break in career and whose first priority is the job, often putting in long hours beyond requirements (Wilson & Nutley, 2003).

Performance evaluation structures that prioritize a male normative view of leadership may also put women at a disadvantage in the process (Wilson & Nutley, 2003).

Therefore, hearing specifically from women leaders experiencing standardized performance evaluation will assist in understanding if these dynamics prevail.

There are few alternatives to traditional methods of principal performance evaluation in which a standardized approach is employed, typically including isolated processes in which principals are more passive than active and have the perception of being removed from the daily work and professional growth of principals (Bingham, 2013). Peer performance evaluation has been explored but not widely used, extensively developed, or consistently researched (Gil, 2001). Peer dialogue and portfolios are methods that may be used during performance evaluation that allow a participant to be more actively engaged but do not necessarily constitute an alternative conceptualization to male normative prescriptive performance evaluation constructs (Barnes, Camburn, Sanders & Sebastian, 2010; Drago-Severson, 2012; Tillema, 2001). An alternative conceptualization considers principal performance evaluation as an organic and dynamic part of a leader’s professional growth, adding to his or her holistic capacity to lead. It decreases hierarchical role rigidity and increases egalitarian practices with the one evaluated being integral to the process and outcome.
My qualitative research with principals being evaluated in a standardized system that prioritizes standardized student testing served as an invitation for participants to consider critical questioning in terms of standardized performance evaluation, an opportunity for participants to establish a critical distance from a process that is routinely accepted as the only way to approach evaluation. The interview exchanges allowed some to begin to question how the process contributes to and inhibits dynamic growth that aids them in instructional leadership leading to subject, self, and social understanding as well as to wise leadership. It introduced the consideration of potential power imbalances that seek to further hegemonic influences.

Ylimaki and Henderson (in press) articulated the importance of this type of critical questioning.

Educational leaders must learn to practice a curriculum-based critical hermeneutics. Without this developmental work, they are not in a position to articulate, facilitate, and advance a nuanced theory of democratic general education. They are not able to engage in such moral work. They may be able to work as compliant, efficient middle managers, and they may be able to function as good bureaucrats; but they lack the necessary repertoire of knowledge, skills and dispositions for democratic educational leadership. They are not able to respond creatively to Noddings’ (2013) critical comment that, “Education is not simply one agency with a specific purpose within an enormous bureaucracy. Education is a multi-aim enterprise, and it’s time that we recognize that fact and build on it” (p. vii). In fact, they would most likely ignore Noddings’ critical
comment and, perhaps, even dismiss her criticism as intellectually arrogant. (pp. 7-8).

Bingham (2013) used a mixed methods approach and Cassavant et al. (2012) used a qualitative approach to look at the differences in perceptions between superintendents and principals with regards to performance evaluation. They found that there were considerable differences between principal and superintendent perceptions, with superintendents perceiving the process in a generally more positive light. Superintendents reported that principals were involved in the design and implementation, that the process was linked to professional development, and that the process improved principal performance. This disconnect signals a need for continued investigation of principal perceptions, especially in light of the fact that superintendent positions continue to be overwhelmingly filled by males. The national percentage of superintendent positions filled by males is 76% (Kelsey, Allen, Coke, & Ballard, 2014). I believed it important to investigate further the dynamics surrounding the situation in which a position overwhelmingly represented by males (superintendent) reports decidedly different perceptions than school leaders. My investigation questioned whether a male-guided discourse is in effect in the area of principal evaluation.

**Conceptual Framework—Theoretical Perspectives**

A post-modern view of supervision moves away from directive supervision to a more collegial, collaborative constructivist approach. A critical-emancipatory stance calls for educators to collaboratively look at political, moral, and ethical aspects of everyday practice (Glanz, 2000). The goals of emancipatory supervision involve the
raising of critical consciousness with a keen cognizance of the political and cultural context in which supervision takes place. This viewpoint aligns most closely with my understanding of supervision and leadership in that it provides a space for social justice issues to emerge within collaborative dialogue surrounding the evaluative process as opposed to evaluation that is primarily driven by accountability. A post-modern, critical-emancipatory supervisory position differs from pre-modern and modern orientations, which favor an applied science approach in which supervision is conceptualized as technical, hierarchical, and prescriptive. Leaders operating in a collaborative, critical-emancipatory framework encourage risk taking and challenge individuals to construct knowledge themselves instead of accepting it only in handed down form (Glanz, 2000).

In his review of principal performance evaluation literature, Reeves (2009) alluded to this type of evaluation practice when he talked about evaluative structures in which errors are the source of fear rather than learning. In a collaborative, critical-emancipatory framework, errors would be conceptualized as learning opportunities. Zepeda (2000) described constructivist supervision as a way of supervising that promotes continuous reflection and provides a context rich with dialogue and respectful of multiple perspectives. A constructivist supervisory approach is mindful to embed learning within a social context and is mindful of adult learning principles. These principles include self-direction, opportunity to dialogue, and a climate of safety (Zepeda, 2000). A leader that is committed to a constructivist approach views himself or herself as both a leader and a follower.
This idea is in harmony with the concepts advanced by Brookfield and Preskill (2009) as they articulated leadership as learning. Their conceptualization was based on the ideas of Antonio Gramsci, who advanced the idea of cultural hegemony—the process by which individuals and organizations maintain power in society. They articulated a leadership that is capable of being held by anyone in the organization and is not defined by the traditionally shaped concept of hierarchy, individualism, control, and a dispassionate affect. Learning centered leadership is relational and collective, rotational, and has less to do with formal position than the sustaining of relationships to accomplish a common purpose. The authors described learning leadership: “What is distinctive about learning leadership is that it highlights in bold relief commitment to, and practice of, learning” (p. 14). They also asserted that,

Such leaders know in their bones that they have much to learn and that the people likely to be their best teachers are the co-workers they see and collaborate with every day. They also see encouraging the learning of others as the central responsibility of leadership. (p. 3)

I believe reflective evaluative processes should foster this type of leadership.

**Evaluation and Power**

Throughout the history of performance evaluation processes in general, the focus has shifted periodically about what should be measured including skills, competencies, behavior, or performance outcomes (Wilson & Nutley, 2003). The current educational accountability system aligns with an emphasis on performance outcomes (Blackmore, 2013). Wilson and Nutley (2003) asserted that the result is an image of rationality,
technicism, and neutrality in which women may be at a greater disadvantage than men in that the norms of performance evaluation have been established and fine-tuned under a male lens and understanding of the world. Qualities typically associated with male leadership such as control and competition are idealized as the best management qualities (Reay & Ball, 2000). In fact, Marshall (1984) stated, “leadership characteristics and the masculine sex role correspond so closely that they are simply different labels for the same concept” (p. 19). Reay and Ball (2000) pointed out that top women managers necessarily adapt many feminine qualities in order to reach success in leadership. Thus many female leaders inadvertently find that they conform to male standards of leadership that include individualism and competition as opposed to challenging and subverting these established dynamics. Feminist approaches to leadership more often involve the concept of power for as opposed to power over and embrace a collaborative empowering ethos (Reay & Ball, 2000). The early work of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) established that authority in connected knowing, the highest state of cognitive development, rests not on power but on commonality of experience. Petra Munro (1995) described feminist understandings of power. She maintained that feminism does not reject power but instead seeks to transform the concept to that of empowering more individuals as opposed to limiting power to smaller numbers of those in supervisory positions. Shrewsbury (1987) talked about a feminist concept of power; “feminist pedagogy embodies a concept of power as energy, capacity, and potential rather than domination” (p. 8). Additional themes include that of decentered power, plural powers, reflective practitioners, and supervisors as facilitators (Munro, 1995).
Blackmore (2013) outlined the many types of educational leadership models that have been advanced throughout recent decades consisting of servant leadership, instructional leadership, visionary leadership and transformative leadership to name a few. She pointed out that the missing component in the advancement or veneration of these models is discussion about the theoretical or political position from which these leadership approaches were developed. She noted that, “leadership is discursively overworked and theoretically underdone in policy and in much of the literature” (Blackmore, 2013 p. 140). Performance evaluations that do not contribute to growing well-rounded leaders or consider the complexity of the principal role are evidence of education policy theoretically underdone.

Coates (2004) went further to say that performance evaluation is certainly not gender neutral (as rubrics and continuums may suggest) but many “measurable” behaviors are actually historically male specific behaviors including efficiency, competitiveness, and rationality. Feminist theorists applying a Foucauldian perspective maintain that performance evaluation is a means of control and is not automatically morally and politically neutral. Its processes are seen as a form of indirect control in that rubrics and Likert type scales advance the objectification of the individual with the individual viewing him/herself as others see them (Coates, 2004; Wilson & Nutley, 2003). This type of control is masked by systems that employ seemingly objective or technical type techniques. Important questions raised by critical feminists in the area of appraisal include how the prevailing discourse and context of power relations affect the experiences of those appraised (Wilson & Nutley, 2003).
Feminist author and educator Gretchen Freed-Rowland (1995) troubled the idea of traditional (modern and post-modern perspectives) supervision. She talks about traditional thinking regarding supervision, which pushes for practical formulaic approaches as “reusable packages” are sought to create model educators. This approach is in contrast with a relational model of supervision. A relational model of supervision recognizes and affirms the impact of our culture on us as humans, values the fact that we are all learners, and views supervision as about the process not only the product. In this model relationships are valued with trust and transparency held as highly important (Freed-Rowland, 1995).

Seminal feminist theorist bell hooks (1994) is honest about power dynamics in the classroom when she pointed out that student professor relationships may not be equal but are marked by an equal responsibility to establishing a learning culture in the classroom. This idea can be transferred to the area of principal performance evaluation in today’s accountability culture. Power dynamics exist whereby the evaluator and the one evaluated may not be inherently equal but can certainly be marked by relationships that share an equal responsibility to maintaining a culture of reflective learning through the evaluative process as opposed to a culture of proving one’s worth through the evaluative process or a simple deliverance and acceptance of feedback without reflection and dialogue. Liberatory, progressive practice that truly engages an individual in reflecting and then acting is one that allows participation without good/bad labels and is a means toward critically engaged thinking about one’s work. I believe applications such as my research, probing power dynamics in performance evaluation, will create space for
equalized and empowered evaluative and supervisory relationships to take shape in the everyday lives of educators. It also opens further space for critical theorizing in relationship to a standardized management paradigm. This is important considering that Blackmore (2013) stated, “the SEI [school effectiveness and improvement] paradigm has been primarily informed by management literature on human relations, cognitive psychology and not that of critical pedagogy” (p. 143).

Current education performance evaluation practices are focused heavily on accountability, representing a broader accountability movement whose practices are highly associated with control and competition. In today’s accountability climate for education, policy makers, not just educators, are playing a larger role in establishing evaluation criteria (Babo & Villaverde, 2013; Piro, Wiemers, & Shutt, 2011). In this climate, schools are pressured to demonstrate success through narrowed definitions and markers of progress reliant to a significant degree upon once a year normed tests (Keith, 2011; Piro et al., 2011). Accountability is the buzzword in an environment where districts, schools, and individual professionals are measured and assigned ratings corresponding to performance or failure to perform in accordance with prescribed criterion of accountability. Student achievement measures, that is, student standardized test scores, are appearing more often in district and statewide performance evaluation systems for educators. Such performance evaluations cannot constitute the only means of feedback that leaders receive regarding the efficacy of their practice (Parylo et al., 2012; Siens & Ebmeier, 1996). This annual high stakes feedback contributes to the competitive ratings driven milieu as opposed to one focused on the growth of every leader and
educator within his or her lived context serving concrete and individualized students with specific needs which vary from school district to school district, situation to situation.

Greene’s (1984) concept of educator success is articulated by the following.

If we are ‘successful’ or ‘effective,’ then, there will be no visible product for which we can take the credit. There will be diverse individuals in diverse contexts, engaging in continually new beginnings as they work to make sense of their worlds. (p. 62)

Those who align with this concept may be perceived as anti-intellectual, fuzzy headed, or operating under a naiveté that is not data-driven, another buzzword in the accountability culture vernacular. I am challenged by Greene (2000) who called us to imagine educational ideals and practices differently than they currently exist when she stated, “There are many instances of images of the possible calling attention to what is lacking that break through the boundaries laid down by the taken-for-granted” (p. 273). In the case of principal performance evaluation this means breaking the boundaries of the taken for granted by re-imagining the process as iterative, renewing, and egalitarian as opposed to singular, summative, and one-directional.

It is commonly noted that there is a constant tension in the performance evaluation process that exists between development and accountability, between formative and summative assessment (Shoaf et al., 2013). In the state of Ohio, along with a large number of the states in the nation, there is a strong focus on school administrator accountability, which involves including student growth measures in evaluation. Goal setting, based on narrowly defined data points and evidence gathering
to prove mastery, is commonplace (Piro et al., 2011). Qualitative research will assist in ascertaining whether these types of evaluative frameworks promote deep self-reflection and the capacity to assist administrators in learning journeys allowing them to explore and take risks within a safe and collaborative environment.

My research has critically examined assumptions held by accountability-based models of performance evaluation. The current system (OPES) is part of a larger accountability driven system referenced by Henderson and Gornik (2007) as a standardized management paradigm in which administrators (and teachers) are managed through a system that heavily depends on student achievement as evidence by standardized assessments. This is a system that appears to put decreased emphasis on developing moral responsibilities such as wisdom and social justice. Critical questions that need to be addressed in terms of a leader’s experience of OPES include the appropriateness of a one size fits all approach, assumptions about the ability of the educational leader to set goals and engage in reflection, as well as assumptions about ways of knowing, understanding, and growing. An understanding of the types of knowledge that principals believe to be valued by the OPES process was an area of particular interest during my research. I sought to understand if assumptions and areas of focus in the system are rooted in patriarchal norms and how feminist thought might find space in the current evaluation landscape.

**Educational Paradigm**

Ylimaki and McClain (2009) presented ideas about the importance of wisdom centered leadership. They believe that without wisdom and compassion the heart of
education cannot be sustained (McClain, Ylimaki, & Ford, 2010). Ylimaki and McClain (2009) described wisdom centered curriculum leadership as “navigat[ing] the current politics of testing and improved student outcome in wise and humane ways” (p. 14). These humane practices include generosity, discipline, patience, right effort, meditation, and wisdom. Guiding the model is the idea that one’s truth is not imposed from the outside but is cultivated from the inside through study, reflection, and experience (McClain et al., 2010). Ylimaki and Jacobson (2012) pointed out the importance of learning capacity within organizations including building principles and practices that lead to self-renewal over time. They went on to say that current practice in the United States is oriented around building capacity to meet short-term goals that are imposed by the outside. Under such a system, there are leaders and schools who work within the system to improve but critical questions arise as to whether the press to meet repeated series of short-term achievement objectives allows leaders to develop the inner values and seek a wisdom orientation, whether they even have time to consider what these values are and how they function regarding them. Summarizing succinctly the relationship between a wisdom-oriented leader and standardized evaluative practices Ylimaki and McClain (2009) said,

The wise leader manifests the six virtues of the Bodhisattva through more integrated responses to expectations for educational leadership and accountability. Such responses do not stop with evidence as required by external agencies, such as test scores and standards-based curricula; wise leadership practice includes
responses to accountability that include evidence of equanimity or balance and a joy of learning in the school climate. (p. 30)

One of Ylimaki’s main ideas is that mainstream educational leadership studies spend a great deal of effort discussing behaviors associated with curriculum leadership but do not spend time exploring the inner qualities that inform and foster leadership based on ethical and moral dimensions (McClain et al., 2010). For example, Ylimaki and McClain (2009) discussed prevailing concepts of “effective” leaders as those who set direction for a school by assisting personnel to develop goals in which the focus is on overt leadership practices. Ylimaki and McClain (2009) pointed out that inner foundational values prompt outward behaviors and values such as patience, trusting, and allowing are not mined and discussed in prevailing leadership literature. Wisdom is referred to as the recognition of interdependence and an aptitude for sustaining openness as well as ability to empathize and also to see beyond the current reality (McClain et al., 2010). Mindfulness is an important component of McClain et al.’s (2010) notion of curriculum leadership wisdom with it being described as “being present in each and every moment, fully experiencing what is happening right now” (p. 310).

Ylimaki’s works have influenced me to understand that leaders who tend to inner values view the organization as organic with growth potential based on the multiplicity of perspectives within the organization. Such a leader would not be prone to see growth and development as a series of levers that need to be precisely applied or adjusted from the outside in order for growth to occur. This concept is illustrated in Ylimaki’s (2012) ethnographic work with principals in which one states, “I believe my role is to help
people maintain some semblance of balance, to create schools that are focused on the joy of learning, not just passing the tests” (p. 13). Such a search for wisdom will assist leaders in finding balance in sorting out curriculum and instruction concerns in the current accountability landscape in which Ylimaki (2012) classified curriculum as an inherently political endeavor.

Enunciating a unification of a common moral-academic binary within an accountability culture, Ylimaki and McClain (2009) stated,

In response to challenging accountability mandates and conditions principals can draw from their own inner reservoirs of wisdom, manifested as beneficial action. This is the wise action of the Bodhisattva ideal, the path of living the six virtues of generosity, discipline, patience, right effort, mindfulness and wisdom, all the while maintaining equanimity. Through wise leadership practice and responses to accountability these leaders can and do demonstrate selfless service, demonstrate the idea of bringing affective as well as academic benefit to their human beings and demonstrate the noblest characteristics of leaders through humanity, clarity and courage. (p. 31)

Ylimaki (2012) discussed democracy in terms of educational outcomes stating that democratic education is a way of life and not a means to an end. She cited Dewey (1916/2008) and his belief that subject matter knowledge should lend meaning to social realities and experiences, “The educator exposed to the temptation to conceive his task in terms of the pupil’s ability to appropriate and reproduce subject matter in set statements, irrespective of its organization into his activities as a developing social member” (p. 127).
Accountability era instructional leadership conceptions focus on curriculum mapping, numbers, data, reliance on externally developed curriculum packages, alignments to one size fits all standards and achievement via testing with much less emphasis on kindness, arts, developing community, and ensuring social justice and equity for marginalized populations. There is much talk about problem solving but less talk about critical questioning of social realities (Ylimaki, 2012). Ylimaki pointed out that capitalist end goal thinking perpetuates domination of a hidden curriculum in which economic prosperity is valued more than the democratic development of each individual. When school leaders experience decreased sense of agency and see curriculum as developed by bureaucracies with standards of best teaching and leading practice as handed down from contextually neutral experts this translates to teachers who become more likely to educate in a technical manner and less likely to create and respond in an organic and democratic manner.

Henderson and Gornik (2007) described balanced curriculum leadership with self, social, and subject dimensions. Henderson and Gornik (2007) outlined the curriculum wisdom paradigm and articulated how it differs from the conventional standardized management paradigm. The traditional standardized management paradigm revolves heavily around accountability. Teachers and leaders work to improve student achievement outcomes as measured by nationally normed tests. There is a definite one size fits all thinking behind this model in terms of curriculum standards, courses of study, and articulation of good versus bad teaching and leading. Assumptions underlying this model are that scores on standardized assessments indicate a deep understanding of
content. Contextualized, localized, and anecdotal knowledge are valued less than “hard” data and standardized knowledge. The curriculum wisdom paradigm is balanced and has a triangulated focus of self, subject matter, and social understandings and is referred to as the 3S paradigm or 3S understanding. The curriculum wisdom paradigm is concerned with developing human capacity that is both moral and intelligent while honoring democratic ideals and values of a progressive society. Subject matter is located within a deep understanding of a person’s self and his or her knowledge of societal relationships and common good (Henderson & Gornik, 2007). Democratic wisdom as understood by Henderson and Gornik complements Ylimaki and McClain’s (2009) conception of wisdom centered leadership as they advocated leading wisely with a focus on integrated dimensions of wisdom, not disjointed technical capabilities. Within the 3S paradigm, the goal of schooling is concerned with ensuring that students are ready to function in a democratic society with democracy being a moral way of living and not simply political engagement (Kesson & Henderson, 2010). These goals contain deeper personal and ethical dimensions than the standardized paradigmatic focus of preparing students to be economically productive and has influenced me in that it prompts me to question assumptions and understand tacit philosophy driving initiatives (with OPES being an example of an initiative) and programs in order to ascertain if a balance of self, social, and subject understanding exists within the initiative and how these can be cultivated by creating spaces and “wiggle room” (Henderson & Gornik, 2007, p. 213).

Prescriptive models for performance evaluation provide a technical avenue of reflection via a self-assessment but may struggle to tap into truly allowing educators to
engage in a learning orientation that fosters new ways of being and doing in terms of democracy. For example, philosopher Badiou’s sense of, “I don’t know” as discussed in Kesson and Henderson’s (2010) article might have difficulty taking root in a culture that spells out standardized prescriptions of efficacy without engaging the learner in the messy process of reflecting deeply on aims of education (instead these aims are given), contextual needs, his or her underlying assumptions, and musings about success and failure over time (as opposed to yearly achievement oriented measures). The current performance evaluation framework has decreased space devoted to cultivating core values and a wisdom orientation, although professional conduct/behaviors are noted. Performance evaluation conceptualized as a key component of professional development, and viewed that way by those involved would begin a shift from the standardized management to curriculum wisdom paradigm in this arena. My research has contributed to an understanding of the impact of standardized performance evaluations on principal’s development, notably a development of a curriculum wisdom orientation and the cultivation of subject, self, and social understanding. By interviewing and exploring principals’ leading and learning under a standardized performance evaluative system of feedback, I have contributed to district leadership understanding of the current system’s capacity to develop wise, balanced leaders and make recommendations regarding local adjustments that might increase this capacity.

I wanted to explore and understand if women principals involved in the Ohio Principal Evaluation System feel that aspects of wisdom and balance as part of holistic leadership in their practice are advanced through their engagement in the process. My
definition of a holistic leader is based on the work of Ylimaki and McClain’s (2009) wisdom centered leadership and Henderson and Gornik’s (2007) 3S understanding. I believe critical engagement allows education as wisdom, freedom, and balance to take shape in the everyday lives of leaders. Even though we work in an intense accountability driven system, local education agencies have some leeway in their purposes and practices of performance evaluation methods to increase engagement and democratic principles emphasizing the ability of all leaders to reflect on the complexities of their professional practice. This is much different than performance evaluation practices that encourage a power figure to authenticate good leadership and label poor leadership while minimally engaging the practitioner.
Principal performance evaluation has gone through multiple iterations and periods of differing points of emphasis. Endeavors to heighten accountability and strengthen educational leadership have put an increased emphasis on principal evaluation. Initiatives such as the widely impactful Race to the Top grants in the last several years look to principal evaluation as a tool to accomplish both increased instructional leadership and hold principals to a high standard (Fuller & Hollingworth, 2014). Defining good leadership practices has been an elusive concept although some consensus has been reached regarding widely accepted standards of the profession (Militello, Fusarelli, Alsbury, & Warren, 2013). Reeves (2009) elucidated the complexity of finding balance in the area of evaluative measures when he stated, “There is not a simple dichotomy between leadership evaluation practices that are enlightened and those that are wretched” (p. 15). Davis, Kearney, Sanders, Thomas, and Leon (2011) found, through their research with principals, that there is not necessarily a singular or absolute ideal evaluation model. Instead they advocate evaluations that serve the purpose of increasing capacity in teaching and learning and the ability to accomplish organizational outcomes.

The national backdrop to performance evaluation is one in which principals are established as not only exceptionally important to the functioning of the school but also under duress given the multiple roles and responsibilities embedded in the job. Cooley and Shen (2000) found that there is a significant emotional impact on principals related to stress, second guessing from multiple publics, bureaucratic requirements, and frustrations.
that may result in burnout. Stressors associated with the principal position are on the rise and an increasing number of candidates are declining application. Conflict with teacher unions, school boards, parents, and increased administrative duties are all factors associated with decreased interest in the principal position. Urban principals in particular are faced with multiple challenges and obstacles including teacher retention (Cooley & Shen, 2000). Under these conditions, fatigue and self-doubt contribute to decisions of principals to drop out of the profession (Kneese et al., 2003; Portin, 2000).

**Ohio Principal Evaluation System**

The Ohio Principal Evaluation System (OPES) was adopted by the state board of education in December 2008. All districts are required to use OPES, or a similar structure, with common non-negotiable elements. The system was developed when Ohio received $400 million in Race to the Top grant money (Ohio Department of Education, n.d.a; United States Department of Education, 2011). OPES is widely used throughout the state. OPES is used by 613 traditional Ohio school districts, 90 community schools, 53 educational service centers, and 49 joint vocational school districts (J. Grubb, personal communication, May 26, 2015). Evaluators must be trained through a two day state training and credentialed through a third party testing agency. Credentials of evaluators must be updated periodically. A principal’s final summative evaluation is combined from two components, each of which is weighted at 50% of the evaluation. The first component is the principal performance rating determined by the principal’s professional growth plan, two 30 minute observations, and walkthroughs. The principal performance component of the evaluation system is rubric based that consists of indicators from the
Ohio Standards for Principals. The Ohio Standards for Principals are aligned to the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards. Principals are tasked with gathering multiple sources of evidence to document growth and performance with the rubric whose domain areas are continuous improvement, instruction, resources and operations, collaboration, and community engagement (Ohio Department of Education, n.d.b). All standards of the rubric are evenly weighted as all areas are considered important to an effective principalship. The second component is the student academic growth rating. This rating is determined by student value added measures obtained through standardized testing or through locally designed measures if standardized testing information is not available. Under OPES, districts are required to utilize a minimum percentage of standardized assessments in the calculation of principal effectiveness if it is available. OPES provides four ratings to principals which are accomplished, skilled, developing, and ineffective. The stated purposes of OPES are professional growth focused on enhancing knowledge and skill, continuous improvement, and quality assurance in the form of compensation and employment decisions (Ohio Department of Education, n.d.a).

**Standards for Principals**

In 1996, the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) set hallmark standards for educational leaders. These standards were established to inform principal development programs, certification processes, and professional growth of principals. The ISLLC standards were exceptionally influential and many states used them as a springboard or reference point for establishing or retooling state educational
leadership standards (Derrington & Sharratt, 2008; Lindle, Stalion, & Young, 2004; Militello et al., 2013). Although these standards were not developed with evaluation in mind, they have assisted in forming the basis of evaluation models for many states and districts. The ISLLC standards are as follows (Cassavant et al., 2012):

Standard 1: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

Standard 2: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Standard 3: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

Standard 4: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Standard 5: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

Standard 6: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.
Militello et al. completed an interesting study in 2013 regarding how principals perceived and operationalized the ISLLC standards, important considering the large part they play in guiding the work of best practice for principals and their inclusion in multiple states’ standards and/or evaluation systems. They found that principals focused their work primarily around one of three major themes, which were a collaborative focus, a policy focus, or a vision focus with collaboration and policy occurring most frequently. Collaborative practice includes attention to climate and the empowerment of teachers. Principals noted that this type of leadership practice is often more difficult within an environment of top down mandates. A policy focus regarding the implementation of standards included a focus on increasing student achievement and the development of 21st century skills in addition to establishing order and routine in the school. Those who focused on vision also prioritized teaching and learning. No matter what the focus administrators reported operating under, they consistently noted that challenging the status quo was not something they spent time or energy on. This is concerning when one contemplates the courage that may be needed to negotiate issues of social justice or the persistence required to continually question power dynamics involved in taken for granted or top down mandated educational practices.

The Militello et al. (2013) study provides evidence that the standards are lived differently by each administrator with standards alone unable to standardize the work. The importance placed on both collaboration and policy indicates that administrators are trying to find a balance and negotiate the space between expectations and daily practice while dealing with human understanding, emotion, and reactions. The authors talked
about the challenge of finding a middle ground when they stated, “The answer to changes [in] practice lies in the murky middle-between the over-reliance of strict standards and the incongruence of idiosyncratic practices” (p. 86).

Lindle et al. (2004) used a time analysis approach to determine if ISLLC standards were congruent with the daily work of principals. They found that a large share of leaders’ time was spent in some capacity engaging in the standards but that the ISLLC standards are noticeably silent in terms of principal engagement directly with students. Additionally, in accordance with earlier studies, the principal’s role remains fragmented and intense in a way that standards cannot change. Principals are in control of approximately two-thirds of their day on any given day. These considerations are important for evaluators to be aware of when working through the process where evaluations are based on ISLLC standards.

**The History and State of Principal Performance Evaluation**

It is commonly noted that there is a constant tension in the performance evaluation process existing between development and accountability, between formative and summative assessment (McGill, 1991; Shoaf et al., 2013). Ideally, principal performance evaluation should serve the primary purpose of informing and supporting development and continuous learning while pointing out gaps between current practice and ideal outcomes (Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliot & Cravens, 2009). Performance evaluation praxis consists of both the “what” and “how” of assessing leadership behavior. Goldring et al. (2009) shared that certain evaluation models were most prevalent in education prior to the current standardized accountability age including the assessment of
responsibilities, processes, and organizational outcomes. Stine (2001) indicated that the most commonly used formats in the decades preceding RTTT efforts were checklists, narratives and evaluation by objectives. Throughout the 20th century, before the accountability movement gained steam, the checklist model for responsibility completion was widely used. During the 1990s, an emphasis was placed on the management role of principals. Viramontez (2011) reported that until somewhat recently evaluations honored loyalty, conformity, and even physical appearance. An approach at one time popular was to assess key competencies that principals should understand such as knowledge involved in instruction, management, and leadership style. Yet a different approach involved an assessment of practices that principals engage in that impact school improvement (Goldring et al., 2009; Shoaf et al., 2013). Since the 1990s, the importance of the principal as instructional leader has steadily grown. In a nationwide review of principal evaluation systems, Reeves (2009) reported there were many issues that needed to be addressed in principal performance evaluation but that some potential positive changes were in process. Specifically, that ambiguous standards, unclear performance levels, and an authority-responsibility disconnect were concerning areas. Authority-responsibility disconnect refers to principals being evaluated on things they did not control or influence in a major way. Reeves (2009) called for multi-dimensional leadership performance evaluations that would operate within a standard-based environment including multiple opportunities for feedback and continual improvement and clear performance levels. Reeves validated the inclusion of qualitative information (calling it the story behind the numbers) and questioned the use of heavily weighted standardized test scores. He also
drew attention to the importance of context to a principal performance evaluation. He indicated that potential positive changes might include rubrics with clear standards and performance levels. His work does not systematically address principal goal setting and engagement or cycles of deep reflection and I believe this is a weakness in his paradigm. He astutely recognized the complexity of the issue when he stated, “There is not a simple dichotomy between leadership evaluation practices that are enlightened and those that are wretched” (Reeves, 2009, p. 15). Useful and empowering evaluations within an accountability culture are found somewhere in between enlightening and wretched. A systematic study of principal perceptions will contribute to finding this space.

A large number of states and districts are currently implementing an accountability driven approach of performance evaluation based on organizational outcomes which include measures such as student achievement, attendance, and graduation rate (Cassavant et al., 2012; Goldring et al., 2009). At least 50% of states are currently using some form of student growth measures that are directly related to evaluation of principal effectiveness (Fuller & Hollingworth, 2014). Despite the misgivings that exist about statistical legitimacy of using student achievement or value added data to inform principal performance evaluations, nearly half of state legislatures in the United States have enacted legislation that includes student achievement data in evaluation (Piro et al., 2011; Shoaf et al., 2013). In a review of administrator performance evaluation systems, Goldring et al. (2009) found almost no documentation that spoke to the reliability or validity of newly implemented accountability minded
evaluations. Shoaf et al. (2013) specifically pointed out the same weakness for the Ohio Principal Evaluation System.

The impact of business practices in terms of educational evaluation are probably most keenly noted in the rise of systems that provide for fiscal remuneration and ratings for educators that demonstrate outstanding achievement as measured by standardized student achievement measures (Buckingham & Goodall, 2015; Knight, 2011). Additional aspects of performance evaluation historically or traditionally utilized in the business community include an effort at objective and formalized assessment and a primary reliance on quantifiable data (Rubin, 1995). Further hallmarks of business model evaluations include efficiency, speed, and standard one size fits all approaches resulting in single year end ratings (Buckingham & Goodall, 2015).

**Evaluative Context**

Goldring et al. (2009) noted what I believe is a critical point, “Although the domains of effective learning centered leadership are universal . . . contextual factors should be considered in interpreting leadership accomplishments” (p. 24). They go on to say that variables such as experience level, local policies, geography and the student body should all be considered as important factors in an evaluation. Militello et al. (2013) pointed out that standardization of evaluation takes for granted the assumption that all school contexts are essentially the same with the idea that if a set of leadership behaviors are catalogued and executed with precise fidelity success in schools will undoubtedly follow.
There is no way to divorce contextual factors from principal performance evaluations. For example, a principal working hard to secure levy support in his or her community may find that for a time period other accountability competencies were slowed or put on hold with perhaps the end result being less evidence accumulated to demonstrate specific proficiencies. But, unarguably, levy support directly impacts instruction in terms of class size and academic supports able to be offered to students. This is a cyclical, contextual factor that would necessitate consideration in an evaluation. Radinger (2014) also highlighted the importance of contextual factors in the ability of principals to positively impact student achievement. An example he cited is the obstacles a leader might face in instituting change in practice in face of community or staff resistance. This type of resistance varies widely among settings even with a standardized state evaluation system. In their study of the perceptions of principals regarding their evaluations, Cassavant et al. (2012) found that leaders react and perform differently in relation to the context they work within and with respect to the situations in which they are involved. Their research led them to question that there is a common, single best practice leadership model or style. They contended that geographic locale, type and level of school, and size of district and school are all types of contextual factors that impact decision making and performance and should be individually considered within evaluation.

**Principal Role in Performance Evaluation**

The most common ways for principals to be involved in their own performance evaluations is through self-evaluation and compiling evidence to demonstrate mastery of
specified competencies (Goldring et al., 2009). Principal growth will be hindered without identifying and accessing professional development required to fill the gaps identified via self-evaluation and without the ability to reflect on progress. A preoccupation with gathering evidence to prove completion is not the same as using the evaluative process to promote active involvement in learning, doing, and reflecting on practice in order to promote professional growth and renewal. I contend that reflection, renewal, and growth are key pieces that we must promote and protect, working within the context of accountability mandated performance evaluations. Local education agency leaders can make choices to promote a culture of growth and renewal or simply a culture of approval and accountability. Consideration of performance evaluation as professional development is necessary to promote this type of growth culture. Shoaf et al. (2013) supported this idea when they commented on the Ohio Principal Evaluation System particularly, “How the Ohio Principal Evaluation System is used will be the key to its success and acceptance by principals and school administrators” (p. 263). Babo and Villaverde (2013) who promoted the use of reflective evaluative portfolios painted the landscape well when they stated, “Many of the current methods of principal evaluation taking place in American schools have far too limiting a perspective on the job requirements of today’s principal” (p. 94). They suggested, “a holistic view of leadership practice and competency based on job-embedded standards . . . one that needs to be explored by those responsible for the evaluation and development of the nation’s local leaders” (p. 94).
Sun and Youngs (2009) focus of research is the impact that a new genre of principal performance evaluations has on leadership behaviors. They reported that little is known about impacts of these evaluations in terms of timing, purposes, and consequences on principal leadership behaviors. When investigating leadership behaviors as a result of the performance evaluation process, they found that when the evaluation put an emphasis on curriculum, instruction, and student learning, the principals more often worked to influence these areas. They found that positive as well as negative consequences did not have a significant impact on how principals implemented learning-centered leadership activities. Also interesting to note is that this study found that Chinese principals, whose students are known for their achievement, spend more time involved with improving their teaching knowledge and skills, often obtaining additional or higher level teaching certification. A normal part of a Chinese principal’s duties is to create and conduct model lessons which teachers are encouraged to critique and discuss (Sun & Youngs, 2009). Incorporating lesson study into principal performance evaluation is a method of involving principals in the process that has not been a part of the evaluation landscape in the United States. This method of lesson study may be an untapped way for American principals to be actively involved and engaged in reflective, collaborative practice during an evaluation cycle.

**Student Achievement Measures**

As indicated earlier, states seriously began the process of linking student achievement measures to principal performance evaluations within the last decade, most notably promoted by the enactment of Race to the Top. Fuller and Hollingworth (2014)
presented a strong argument that outlines the shortfalls of using student achievement measures to establish the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of principals. Student achievement measures, almost exclusively, in the form of standardized assessments, were not intended to evaluate the effectiveness of either teachers or principals. In 2007, The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality pointed out that student achievement assessments are not able to analyze the contributions of school leaders (Goe, 2007). In addition, the Economic Policy Institute released a brief outlining concerns about the technical adequacy of test scores to evaluate teachers—which leads one to question use with principal evaluation as well (Baker et al., 2010). A simple example of technical concerns is that the lowest performing schools could be the most at risk for inaccurate information about principal (and teacher) impact due to tests being written at grade level.

The danger of de-contextualization is raised by the use of linking standardized achievement to individual actions. Fuller and Hollingworth (2014) stated definitively that, “Thus, at best, there is only mixed support in the psychometric community for the use of student test scores that were originally designed to measure student achievement as a method to evaluate teachers, and by extension, principals” (p. 472).

In addition to the assumption that achievement tests are valid for performance evaluation purposes, other assumptions underlying this type of approach are that student and school characteristics have no influence on scores and that the principal has control over all school factors including facilities, community support and the candidate pool for teaching, all of which affect student achievement (Fuller & Hollingworth, 2014). If a tool not designed for evaluation of a principal’s effectiveness is used to provide either
formative or summative feedback to a principal, then there is the danger that the principal is receiving incorrect messaging. Positive feedback or a positive performance evaluation may signal to a principal to continue with current practices and negative feedback or a negative evaluation may signal change. This short circuits deep self-reflection and goal setting for growth and improvement and may not even be valid due to the source of information.

In a study examining the tensions associated with principal performance evaluation, Zepeda, Lanoue, Price, and Jimenez (2014) noted that superintendents experience tension when they feel pressure to rate leaders based to a large degree on student achievement measures when they believe that the principal is instituting or sustaining other types of improvements in the school or in cases of extenuating circumstances. Fuller and Hollingworth (2014) recommended a more balanced approach that includes using achievement scores as a blunt instrument capable of pointing to a direction in which additional information could be examined.

**Principal Perceptions of Evaluation**

District leaders who take time to understand the perceptions of principals about their performance evaluations will be better able to tailor the experience as a supportive growth process. In 2009, Reeves found by surveying principals that few felt that their performance evaluation truly shaped their performance with 58% stating that the evaluation had little impact on their motivation or did not provide meaningful feedback. However, principals did report that they found the process to be positive and that the performance evaluations were generally accurate. Eighteen percent of principals
surveyed reported that they had never been evaluated. In terms of translating evaluation operationally, an overwhelming 97% indicated that they did not specifically understand how to improve their practice based upon their evaluation. Less than half reported that they had an opportunity to make suggestions regarding their performance evaluation and development.

In interviews to examine principal and superintendent perceptions about principal performance evaluations, Thomas, Holdaway and Ward (2000) found that principals felt they were less involved than did the superintendents in the planning for their evaluation and what it involved, with a decided mismatch in perception. Additionally, principals did not see the process as important as the superintendent did. The work of Davis and Hensley (1999) found similar mismatches in perception. Also, principals perceived performance evaluations to be too subjective with unclear expectations, lacking in formative feedback and unduly influenced by political circumstances and influences.

A limited number of studies have begun to focus on principal perceptions and are building a body of work regarding the principal experience in post RTTT performance evaluation endeavors. Work that has been done on the perceptions of principals regarding standardized performance evaluations instituted post-Race to the Top initiatives indicate similar or continued reactions and thoughts regarding the process and benefits of the process. Parylo et al. (2012) conducted a phenomenological study that investigated principal perception of performance evaluation. In general, principals in this study reported that their performance evaluation experience was multifaceted, continuous, and transparent. The principal group studied was evaluated within a structure
that included both formative and summative components. Principals indicated that the performance evaluation increased awareness of the importance of their evaluation, defined the experience as a process, not a single event, which was founded on transparency, dialogue, feedback, and support. Principals equated their performance evaluation with the school’s evaluation thus leveling their work with the school’s success or failure. Most important to principals in the process was that they be active participants and that they receive formative feedback in order to effect a change in practice. Participants noted that self-assessment was a method whereby they could become more heavily involved but in which they were unable to engage due to the nature of the evaluative framework. Gaziel (2008) reported that the majority of respondents in his qualitative study perceived performance evaluation as summative rather than formative in nature and felt that the process was shallow and less than helpful in growing them as leaders.

Bingham’s (2013) work with Idaho leaders found that statistically significant differences in perception occurred in several perception areas. More superintendents felt that the performance evaluation reflected what principals do on a daily basis than did principals. A statistically significant number of superintendents felt that the principal performance evaluation improved job performance. In Bingham’s study, 93% of superintendents felt that the principals’ performance evaluation focused on professional growth whereas only 66% of principals felt this way. Superintendents reported much more often that principals engaged in self-reflection during the process than did the principals themselves. A significant number of superintendents as opposed to principals...
reported that school leaders were active participants in performance evaluation policies, selecting evidence data, and selecting professional development.

Other studies have specifically focused on principal perceptions. In a study of elementary principals in California, Viramontez (2011) found that they felt the standards based performance evaluations in which they were in provided inconsistent contribution to professional growth. Principals noted that value in the process resulted from conversations involving feedback as to whether decisions they were making and actions they were taking were contributing to a successful school. They particularly noted that being included in setting goals for progress was helpful. Principals shared that being able to address specific needs of their particular schools was important to accomplish during the performance evaluation cycle in conjunction with the non-negotiable standardized items required for all schools. Principals reported that they believed the performance evaluation tool to be aligned to professional standards, and perceived student achievement data as being very important to their evaluations. Being engaged in the process of goal setting and reflecting on their progress was viewed positively by participants. The majority of principals did not find that the performance evaluation process contributed to their professional development.

Christensen (2011) studied perceptions in Massachusetts, a state that provides guidelines about timelines and gives guidance for developing local performance evaluation systems. She found that principals perceive systems that incorporate their input into the creation and ongoing development of the performance evaluation system as more fair than if not afforded this opportunity. These Massachusetts principals agreed
with the California principals and did not feel the performance evaluation system contributed to an improved knowledge of teaching and learning. These principals felt it was important for them to be involved in the creation and cyclical revision of the performance evaluation process.

In 2009, principals reported that they appreciated the way a tool like a rubric assists in focusing feedback to their practice in addition to narrative feedback. Principals reported they valued the assistance of narrative feedback. School leaders also reported the rubric assisted them in moving through the process of self-assessment. Administrators did note that the rubric alone could not provide meaningful feedback but required a pairing of supervisor-principal dynamics and dialogue that worked to influence items such as instructional issues. The supervisor’s approach was found to introduce variability in the evaluative process. This evidences itself in the care the supervisors took with content, thoroughness of evaluation feedback, the amount of interaction between supervisor and principal, and whether the experience was treated as a formality that had little impact on professional growth or not. In fact, these authors found that implementation was far more important than the instrument used, with the evaluating supervisor pivotal to how a standards based performance evaluation is employed (Kimball, Milanowski, & McKinney, 2009). Supporting this, principals participating in a study by Christensen in 2011 shared that the relationship with the supervisor is exceptionally important in the evaluative process.
Multiple studies found that principals truly feel that the principal evaluation process is a formality they engage in, an event and not an integral part of the professional growth and renewal process (Cassavant et al., 2012; Kimball et al., 2009).

As part of monies received by the Teacher Incentive Fund (post RTTT), Pittsburgh City Schools instituted a robust system of principal performance evaluation, development, and incentives for student achievement and for leading difficult schools. Support for principals included a leadership academy, frequent feedback for principals by supervisors, the completion of learning walks by building leadership teams to gather information about the work being done in schools, and individual Directed Personal Growth (DPG) plans that each principal created for himself or herself. Research conducted by the RAND Corporation (Hamilton, Engberg, Steiner, Awsumb-Nelson, & Yuan, 2012) indicated that principals rated most highly the learning walks and the DPGs as most impactful on increasing their effectiveness. Principals in the process were active in making changes to evaluation rubrics as a result of concerns about fairness of the ones originally introduced. Principals specifically expressed a concern that the rubrics lacked sensitivity with regards to differentiating between effective and ineffective leaders and did not allow for consideration of the type of school a principal was leading. Monetary bonuses were not perceived by principals as motivators. The authors of the RAND study noted that due to the multiple efforts involved in the Pittsburgh study causal information regarding increase in effectiveness or changes in behavior could not be determined.
Developmental Supervision

In the field of education, developmental supervision has been most widely researched and applied with teachers. Developmental supervision is an evaluative practice that is less concerned with immediately changing behaviors as it is with prompting reflection and critical inquiry. Reflection and inquiry then often does lead to behavioral change (Glickman, Gordon & Ross-Gordon, 2004; Siens & Ebmeier, 1996). Characteristics important to developmental supervision include a focus on improvement and reflection, provision of feedback, its formative rather than summative nature, sensitivity, informality, individuality, and a trusting relationship between supervisor and supervisee (Berube & Dexter, 2006; Hopkins & Moore, 1995).

Developmental supervision or formative evaluation attempts to blend the practices of evaluation and professional development by focusing on improvement and growth via the evaluative relationship (Glickman et al., 2004; McGill, 1991). This practice has many proponents and is thought to contribute to supervisee effectiveness. Developmental supervision aims to assist with professional growth more than traditional summative evaluation (Berube & Dexter, 2006; McGill, 1991). Bedrock to this kind of observation and feedback structure is open dialogue between participants as they work through a cycle of pre-observation conference, observation, and post-observation conference (Hopkins & Moore, 1995). Balancing formative and summative functions of performance evaluation is not easy and takes a commitment by those evaluating and those being evaluated to negotiate the space so that it is meaningful and manageable.

When describing an ideal performance evaluation, principals in a study by Gaziel (2008)
indicated that an evaluation would include frequent feedback to principals and would be woven directly into the professional development of the principal with clear understandings about how the principals could improve his or her effectiveness.

A foundational premise of developmental supervision is based in the supervisor’s capacity to understand the level of adult development and to apply the appropriate amount of direction and supervisory approach along a continuum including directive control in which the supervisor exerts the most control, directive informational in which the supervisor’s key role is information sharing, collaborative in which processes are shared by both individuals and a non-directive approach in which the one being supervised directs the learning.

Performance evaluation seeks to serve both formative and summative purposes in the current Ohio Principal Evaluation System (Ohio Department of Education, n.d.a). Developmental supervision or formative evaluation attempts to blend the practices of evaluation (summative feedback) and professional development (formative feedback) and growth (McGill, 1991). This practice has many proponents and is thought to contribute to effectiveness. In her research on developmental supervision, Siens and Ebmeier (1996) pointed out that the goal of formative feedback is not to change behavior but rather to assist educators in reflection and setting their own goals for improvement. Characteristics important to developmental supervision include a focus on improvement and reflection, provision of feedback, formative rather than summative nature, sensitivity, informality, individuality and a trusting relationship between evaluator and the one being evaluated (Berube & Dexter, 2006; Hopkins & Moore, 1995). These characteristics are
harmonious with feminist ideals that include relational dynamics and a balance of power between evaluator and the one being evaluated (Freed-Rowland, 1995). Developmental supervision appears to offer a more promising approach over traditional summative evaluation but by its very nature contains conflicting roles for the supervisor responsible for both development and appraisal of performance. McGill (1991) put it this way,

As understandings of supervision have evolved, a mutual view of the endeavor has conflicted with more traditional ones. As if this situation were not confusing enough for both parties involved, an instructor or an inspector often seemed to lurk behind and even struggle with the persona of the supporter. (p. 259)

A clear understanding of how principals interpret what constitutes formative versus summative support will enable standardized systems to adequately engage in potentially powerful developmental supervision practices.

Understanding how principals perceive and experience a performance evaluation system that is at once formative and summative will assist leaders in ensuring that the process allows educators to reflect and grow throughout the experience, creating a safe space for growth and renewal in an intense accountability culture. The idea of a safe space for growth aligns with the notions of formative feedback in which there is the opportunity for a learner to engage in penalty free learning and growth. There has been a considerable amount of work done with regards to formative feedback and student learners in which students receive repeated opportunities to learn and apply new knowledge (Maki, 2010; O’Connor, 2010). Turning attention to these same ideas in terms of principal evaluation would allow creativity, risk-taking, rigorous goal setting,
and both self-reflection and reflection with knowledgeable others to become commonplace in performance evaluation.

**Adult Learning Theory**

Evaluators engaging in developmental supervision or those desiring to engage principals in reflective performance evaluations as part of professional development within a curriculum wisdom paradigm should understand the theories of adult learning because the primary objective of evaluation would be that of learning and growing in order to increase effectiveness. Adult learning incorporates action and experience learning. Self-directed approaches are an important part of the construct. Projects completed by participants rely on ownership, collaboration, internalization, reflection, and motivation of the learner (Langer & Applebee, 1986; Parylo, 2012). Self-reflection is a key technique to principal learning (Bisschoff & Watts, 2014; Drago-Severson, 2012). Learners are meaning makers who apply already established mental and linguistic symbols to new circumstances or situations. As participants engage in open dialogue and shared deliberation, they are able to re-construct new meaning. Common methods in the field of educational administration to improve the practice of principals include the use of in-service professional development programs and the implementation of improved assessment processes (McGough, 2003). Melding these two practices into a dynamic performance evaluation system in which leaders identify professional development as part of the evaluation process enables the participants to construct new and altered meanings in a self-motivated and reflective manner. In light of Guskey’s (1999) research which demonstrates that adult learning is linked to increases in student achievement, a
performance evaluation model which actively incorporates professional development as part of—not separate from—assessment and goal setting is paramount. Porter (as cited in Reardon, 2011) conceptualized impacts to raise educational leadership. These impacts are standards, licensure, program accreditation, professional development, and leader evaluation. Reardon’s principal survey research found that principal perception of their learning-centered leadership and student performance on high stakes testing speaks to the need for principals’ self-assessment to drive his or her professional development.

Principals are required to do more than ever before in the milieu of heightened accountability and public stage of performance. However, they may not have the skills and tools wherewith to accomplish the new requirements. For example, principals are called upon to ensure the learning of all student subgroups including students with disabilities and students living in poverty but may not understand how to positively impact these populations (Keith, 2011). The Institute for Educational Leadership (2000) reported,

Even as communities shine a public spotlight on principals when their schools’ test scores are released and prescribe stiff penalties for many when their schools perform below expectations, current principals find very little in their professional preparation or ongoing professional development that equip them for this new role. Nor are they supported in this leadership role by their school districts, which for decades, have expected principals to do little more than follow orders, oversee school staff and contain conflict. (pp. 2-3)
Keith (2011) found that when principals have a stake in requesting their own professional development it most often revolves around mandated improvement areas such as assisting teachers in implementing research based instructional strategies and raising the scores of students with disabilities and student living in poverty. This includes the desires of not only new principals, but veterans as well who are in just as much need of tools to work the new landscape as brand new principals. Principals’ engagement in mapping district wide leadership development as well as personal professional development is a way to engage principals in their own performance evaluative process when professional development and learning goals are part of the assessment cycle.

Zepeda, Parylo, and Bengtson (2014) called for school districts to actively consider the principles of adult learning theory when thinking about professional development of principals. Principals see their emerging and evolving role as primarily that of instructional leader and need tools to assist them in being effective in this capacity. Participants in their recent study indicate that desirable qualities for development programs, aligned with adult learning principles, include relevance, continuous and job embedded nature of the development, active, collaborative, goal oriented, and self-directed (Zepeda, Parylo, et al., 2014).

Self-Efficacy and Goal Setting Theory

A potential powerful result of meaningful performance evaluation is an increase in principal self-efficacy. A principal’s self-efficacy is one’s belief about his or her ability to impact change due to the decisions and actions taken by the principal.
Principals with strong self-efficacy persist in accomplishing goals, adapting to the context to realize end results. These leaders tap internal power bases as opposed to consistently seeking external inputs for answers. Principals who see themselves as effective are ones that see themselves as capable. District level support has been found to be a statistically significant contributor to principal self-efficacy. Efficacy comes through mastery building experiences, verbal persuasion, self-monitoring, reflection and goal setting. Specifically, mastery experiences are built by experiencing modeling of a competency, occasions for skill perfection and then the opportunity to transfer the learning back to a job embedded context (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004, 2007). Each of these experiences can be built into a principal performance evaluation. Shared leadership and meaningful decision making on the part of principals is central to maintaining principal efficacy and ownership (Cistone & Stevenson, 2000). Establishing an interdependent, rather than independent or dependent relationship with central office is important in supporting principals to accomplish their work. It stands to reason that principals who are dynamically involved in the evaluation process by means of self-reflection as well as learning and goal setting as part of a collaborative process may experience higher levels of self-efficacy than those who have not had similar experiences.

Goal setting theory provides insight into productive dialogue and interactions within the evaluative process. Difficult goals lead to higher performance than vague or easily attained goals. Learning goals lead to better performance as individuals actively work to increase their capacity to meet complex goals, adding to their base of knowledge and skills (Locke & Latham, 2006). Feedback provided along the way also assists
individuals in attaining goals. If feedback is combined with the learner self-monitoring and evaluating his or her own progress toward goal completion, the chances of achieving goal attainment increase. If a leader experiences role overload (if one is stretched too thin in one’s role) goal pursuit and attainment is negatively impacted. The same appears true for complex goals that are not accompanied by the appropriate learning goals (Locke & Latham, 2006).

**Peer to Peer Practice**

A way for principals to be dynamically and reflectively engaged in the performance evaluation process would be including them directly into the feedback loop by way of dialogue with peers. There are sound peer-to-peer practices that can be incorporated into the evaluative process or become part of the evaluative context.

Because of the intense complexities of the principal position and the adaptive challenges (challenges without readily apparent solutions) faced by administrators, renewal and development endeavors are significant to assisting principals to stay on the job and become more effective. Studies reveal that principals vocalize a desire to dialogue and reflect with their peers (Drago-Severson, 2012). Barnes et al. (2010) studied a principal development framework that involved principals in reflecting collaboratively with others in communities of practice. The studied framework allowed principals to strategically apply learning through job embedded contexts. The authors established that changes in principal behaviors occurred through a “gradual refinement” (p. 271) of their current practice as opposed to major shifts in practice. Principals in the Barnes et al. study related that a condition of the development framework that facilitated
the most change in their practice was the sustained structure of a professional learning community of practice whereby they could discuss and reflect with knowledgeable others. Also powerful was the job-embedded nature of the framework in which principals’ integrated declarative knowledge into their current school culture. In other words, they were provided an opportunity to practice what they were learning and then to reflect with others as to how well it worked. Transformative learning, a term coined by adult learning theorist Mezirow (1991), involves the changing of mindset after critically reflecting on assumptions. Drago-Severson (2012) stated that, “Critical reflection occurs when we invest time reflecting on the content of the problem, the process of problem solving, or the problem’s basis” (p. 12). Her research prompted her to call for a more collaborative orientation to feedback to administrators guarding against the tendency to allow isolation to become common place. Fahey (2011) put it succinctly when he said, “Principals are expected to build school-wide professional communities without participating in such a community themselves. The culture in which principals work generally conspires against this work” (p. 6). Reardon (2011) concurred and reported that the findings of his research regarding principal leadership and student achievement call for the engagement of principals in reflective practice engaging in dialogue with others as a means of problem solving contextual challenges related to learning-centered leadership.

A Critical Friends Group framework is an example of a professional learning community model researched with principals. Using this framework participants use a structured conversation protocol designed to build collaborative professional learning
communities. The topics of collaboration are comprised of problems encountered by difficulties encountered in the principalship. The goals include a commitment to rigorous conversation and a focus on transfer of learning to practice. Fahey (2011) found through qualitative study that principals involved in this type of protocol revealed that it directly impacted their leadership practice. They described the experience as having a “spiritual quality” (p. 24) and of being a safe place, “where you can test your hypotheses. It is the safest place. I do not know any other place where I can do that” (p. 25). The studies mentioned above discuss the promotion of self-efficacy and professional development of principals, both of which have the potential to contribute to the professional renewal of principals. However, I found that there is very little research dedicated solely to the renewal of principals in their profession. I was able to locate research regarding the outcomes of mid-career mentoring for principals who indicated that renewal was an outcome of that mentoring. Confidence, sense of purpose, a decrease in feelings of isolation and burn out as well as an increase in self-direction were all noted as effects of project mentoring by both mentors and those mentored. Project-based mentoring pairs up individuals for voluntary projects, creating a space for trusted relationships and creative, self-directed work. Principals in the study noted that they often had difficulty confiding in teachers who they supervise, assistant principals who they feel responsible for teaching and superintendents who evaluate them and with other principals in the district due to professional reputations. Participants shared that working with trusted outside of district mentors helped move them forward in an individualized personal professional way (Ashby, 1991).
The Chula Vista School District in California pioneered a peer performance evaluation system with district principals that built on the idea of learning, leadership, and formative feedback through the evaluation process. The premise of the peer performance evaluation system embraced by the district was that the most important goal of principal evaluation should be personal and professional growth and development. The peer process was part of a larger re-structuring incorporating increased collaboration and decision making on the part of building leaders. The system was designed to encourage open, frequent dialogue so growth could be promoted within an accountability framework. In addition to standards of leadership created by principal groups, self-actualization goals were included. Self-actualization goals directly relate to the power of adult learning orientations. Hallmarks of the peer learning framework were multi-year evaluation cycles, the divorce of disciplinary actions from the process, frequent formative feedback, a focus on the increase of the principal’s capacity to become a more effective instructional leader, and an understanding that the process would be marked by continual change and modification. Principals reported strengths of the system that included an increased appreciation for diverse perspectives, the value of varied expertise and brainstorming solutions to problems, increased trust, supportive relationships, and the experience of engaging in a meaningful evaluation with learning at the center. Weaknesses of the approach included lack of time to engage in the process and continuing struggles to offer honest feedback to colleagues (Gil, 2001).
Summary

There is no doubt that principals are keenly important to the work of schools, to the achievement and quality of schooling that students receive. It is, therefore, equally important that their growth, renewal, and holistic development be sustained in light of the complex challenges with which they are now faced. In a world of high stakes accountability measures, it is of primary importance that district leaders keep principals engaged in the process in ways that allow them to become more balanced, wisdom centered leaders with robust subject matter, self, and social understanding. My research uses qualitative data to provide information regarding the perceptions of women principals involved in a standardized performance evaluation framework (OPES). It is important to understand, in a qualitative manner, the impact of the standardized framework as well as localized performance evaluation practices on the learning, growth, renewal, and behaviors of principals engaged in and living the process.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Question

My research worked to understand the perceptions of women principals engaged in the Ohio Principal Evaluation System (OPES) and how involvement in the OPES process impacts professional growth and renewal. I wanted to understand how the performance evaluation process impacts self, social, and subject matter understanding; how wisdom centered holistic leadership is developed through the process. Additionally, I wished to understand how principals perceive that performance evaluation affects their practice. A balance of subject matter, self, and social understanding mediated through wisdom centered leadership constitutes a principal who is holistically developed as opposed to leadership that is fragmented or hyper focused on one area of practice, such as test scores and improvement in standardized domains. Beyer and Apple (1998) described holistic leaders as those who consider political, economic, aesthetic, ethical, and historical dimensions of their practice as they seek to improve their practice. This description supports the elements found in 3S understanding and wisdom leadership.

In the budding research base on principal perceptions of standardized performance evaluation methods, Cassavant et al. (2012) noted that principals in their study stated they were uncertain as to whether their involvement in designing an articulation of desired capacities and standards for performance would be necessary or beneficial. They alluded to this process as the “boss’s” job (p. 103). This response raises the question as to whether this type of response is a reflection of a growing lack of
empowered critical thought among today’s educational leader, indicative of the pervasiveness of the hegemony of a handed down, pre-packaged, pre-determined outline of what makes up sound leadership. Beyer and Apple (1998) referred to this as “deskilling” (p. 4). They pointed out that the skills and discernment of educators, crucial for building and justifying curriculum choices, are being lost in the deskilling process. Deskilling occurs at the hand of powerful forces converging on schools in an attempt to create “miniature factories dominate[d] by concerns for input and output, efficiency, and cost savings” (p. 4). A counter to deskilling is leadership grounded not in technical capacity for “how” but the addition of “what” and “why.” Beyer and Apple articulated it this way:

The difficult ethical and political questions of content, of what knowledge and which forms of experience are of most worth, have been pushed to the background in our attempts to define technically oriented methods that will ‘solve’ our problems once and for all. Professional curriculum debate now tends to be over procedures, not over what counts as legitimate knowledge . . .

Pinar (2012) supported the thoughts of Beyer and Apple (1998) when he talked about “school deform” thinking that venerates school accountability and efficiency at the expense of all else (p. 21).

The questions that I investigated in this research were as follows:

1. How does a purposeful sample of women principals leading in Ohio schools perceive the Ohio Principal Evaluation System?
2. What critical insights about the power dynamics involved in Ohio leadership performance evaluation can be gleaned from this sample?

3. How and in what ways does a sample of women principals believe that the Ohio Principal Evaluation System impacts their holistic leadership growth?

4. What power dynamics are involved in the performance evaluation of the sample group, and how do these dynamics impact their individual leadership?

**Naturalistic Inquiry**

Naturalistic inquiry is well suited to a study of the perceptions women principals have regarding performance evaluation. It is also well suited to the feminist understandings that inform my research perspective. In the methodology of naturalistic inquiry, each participant perspective is connected to context and is not isolated or considered out of context. In fact, naturalistic research contends that meaning is damaged if contextual understandings are not acknowledged and explored (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). In naturalistic inquiry there is a definitive movement from simple to complex realities, from manipulated variables to a systems view of interrelated participant understandings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These foundations of naturalistic inquiry are in line with feminist ideas of connected and contextually linked understandings (Belenky et al., 1986).

An author on feminist research methodology, Maithree Wickramasinghe (2010) presented data analysis as a “middle order approach” (p. 70). She described this as a balance between deductive and inductive approach, moving fluidly between a participant’s everyday experiences and the researcher’s theorizing. I used deductive
analysis as I utilized feminist theorizing to inform and guide the units of data that I classified into themes. I used inductive analysis as I allowed the participants’ voices to convey ideas as patterns emerged in responses as well as to express multiple and even potentially conflicting realities. Feminist guided research is careful not to construct a meta-narrative but rather allows a “decentering” that honors multiple voices (Wickramasinghe, 2010, p. 57). Wickramasinghe pointed out that feminist researchers cannot consider themselves to understand data completely inductively because their analysis is centered within feminist theoretical perspectives, politics, assumptions, and ethics. Multiple realities are pursued within naturalistic inquiry. The aim is not to find an ultimate truth to reference, but to represent multiple realities understanding that each increases the meaning of the other, referenced by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as “mutual simultaneous shaping.” An important assumption of a feminist understanding of naturalistic inquiry is that differences within multiple realities do not have to be resolved through rational logic or data reduction.

Additional assumptions in naturalistic research are that the end goal of research is not to be generalized across large populations, but that the reader is to make connections to his or her situation while reading participant experiences. Lincoln and Guba (1985) called this tentative application of results due to the unique interaction of research and respondent as well as situational and contextual factors. Cause and effect is not sought after, but a complex interdependence of contextually related experiences is examined for common themes that emerge during data analysis and points of convergence evolve. Researchers operating from a feminist lens involved in naturalistic studies understand
that objectivity is a mirage and acknowledge the understandings and influence of the researcher as human instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Wickramasinghe, 2010).

Erlandson et al. (1993) pointed out that the naturalistic researcher possesses a demeanor of humbleness and a readiness to learn. hooks (1984), a hallmark feminist, maintained that academics and researchers must operate with a demeanor of vulnerability which I equate closely to the humble spirit of research enunciated by Erlandson et al. (1993) regarding naturalistic inquiry. A naturalistic inquirer takes care to reconstruct the experiences of the respondents. A researcher working through a critical feminist lens would do the same, thus empowering the voice of the respondent. It is through the questions and examining of cultural and contextual assumptions that feminist inquiry converges with naturalistic inquiry (Harding, 1987). MacKinnon (as cited in Harding, 1987, p. 20) illustrated this when stating, “consciousness-raising is feminist method.”

Furthermore, naturalistic inquiry experts Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated the following regarding researcher influence and objectivity; “the naturalist who admits the influence of personal values finds the disclosure refreshing and no more a commentary on ultimate invalidity than would a conventionalist’s admission that a paper-pencil instrument had achieved something less than perfect validity” (pp. 175-176). A researcher approaching work through a critical feminist lens acknowledges her own values and assumptions throughout the body of the work, noting potential influence (Sprague, 2005). I find the words of feminist author Petra Munro (1995) inspiring on transparently sharing one’s perspective; “I hope that by sharing our struggles . . . instead of seeking analytic distance, we will enhance our understanding of the complexity of
human relationships from which we emerge and are attempting to make meaning” (p. 112).

Finally, naturalistic inquiry accepts a researcher’s utilization of tacit and felt knowledge in additional knowledge presented through language known as propositional knowledge (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This stance brings to mind the idea of the feminist acknowledgment of knowing that is not only logical and objective but subjective and interwoven with feelings and impressions (Noddings, 1984).

A study’s trustworthiness is important to a naturalistic researcher and is established by credibility, transferability, and dependability. Techniques such as repeated engagement, thick description, limited triangulation of data, member checking, and audit trail assisted in establishing my study and are discussed further below (Erlandson et al., 1993).

**Narrative Inquiry**

I also believe that it is important to involve elements of narrative inquiry to understand principals’ performance evaluation experiences and incorporate feminist thought. Narrative inquiry uses stories as the primary data source. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described narrative inquiry as a showing rather than telling, as stories that are lived and told taking priority with narrative inquiry being a form of the narrative experience. Content, context, and structure of the narrative are examined as the researcher uses narrative analysis to understand the participant experiences. Narratives are generally not considered to be descriptions, arguments, reports, or evaluations, although these distinctions are not always easily determined and the lines between them
can be blurred at times (Wells, 2011). Leading narrative researchers Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described this type of inquiry.

With this sense of Dewey’s foundational place in our thinking about narrative inquiry, our terms are personal and social (interaction); past, present, and future (continuity); combined with the notion of place (situation). This set of terms creates a metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and the social along a second dimension, and place along a third. (p. 50)

Narrative inquiry is a rejection of viewing individuals as abstract entities or data points. It is also often in conflict with the grand narrative established by western thought, male hegemony and capitalist-influenced, economy-focused education, looking instead through the lens of concrete, lived narratives (Wells, 2011). Wells described a rationale behind using narrative inquiry that includes

Efforts to account for individual agency; to include life experiences of those at the margins of society; to incorporate knowledge of subjectivity into the social sciences . . . to the ‘rediscovery’ of culture in social policy and to debates as to the differences between historical and narrative truth in psychoanalysis, among other things—in short, to link micro- and macro-levels of analysis. (p. 10)

These characteristics make it well suited to a feminist frame of understanding highly concerned with agency, voice, and examining social norms (hooks, 1984). Blackmore (2013) pointed out that through the shared experiences of women leaders, feminist
researchers can “focus on the social relations of gender and how these are reproduced/produce and constituted within globalized school systems” (p. 149).

Framing interview questions is important to the narrative process. Questions posed must be open ended and allow the respondent to tell their story. Questions do not narrowly define or guide an answer with the goal being to hear the “how” of the experience yielding robust conveyances of concrete occurrences. These questions may have a distinctly different style than the research questions (Wells, 2011). The narrative researcher looks at inward and outward dimensions of participant experience, with inward being the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of the participant and outward being the context, both immediate and greater social context surround the participant and event. The researcher also considers both backward and forward experiences with backward being events and experiences that happened prior to the story being told and forward being the future of the story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In this type of inquiry, knowledge is viewed to be constructed together with researcher and participant collaborating and interacting to create understandings. The interview site is thought to be a site of knowledge construction (Fontana & Prokos, 2007; Wells, 2011). Because of the neutralizing of power dynamics between researcher and participant, narrative inquiry elements are appropriate for use with a critical feminist approach (hooks, 1994).

Wells (2011) described a post-modern understanding of narrative inquiry which positions human experience in tension with societal discourses and sees it as fragmented and fluid with some experiences that may even remain outside of language. A definite emphasis on the multiplicity of ways in which a story can be told exists within a post-
modern grasp of narrative inquiry. Natural questions for a narrative researcher to ask include ones such as whose story is being told, what it is being used for, and at whose expense a story is being told. These types of questions dovetail with the types of questions a critical feminist oriented researcher might ask of an existing paradigm presented through an accountability culture educational ruling class (Harding, 1987).

Discourse analysis in narrative inquiry examines the stories told by participants and looks carefully at items such as intonation, pitch, and pauses to assist in interpreting meaning (Grbich, 2013). Discourse analysis looks at how individuals use discourse but also takes a look at how they are subject to prevailing societal and contextual discourse and grand narratives (Merriam, 2002; Wells, 2011). I incorporated elements of discourse analysis, a hallmark of narrative inquiry, during the data analysis of my research. I looked for paralinguistic features, which include things such as smiling, laughing, sighing, and pausing. These paralinguistic features often convey information not directly stated by the participant. Referring to feminist methods for data collection, Sprague (2005) pointed out that listening carefully to a participant’s inability to articulate smoothly their perspective may be telling.

Ease in articulating an experience is created by a language that captures the salient aspects of that experience. Verbal struggles can be indications of a lack of fit between one’s knowledge of daily practices and struggles and the hegemonic worldview. (p. 152)

As I interviewed I also listened for moral language including ought or should as well as meta-statements in which the participant viewed herself with the eyes of the
dominant discourse. This listening provided information regarding conflict between
hegemonic expectations and the daily lived reality of leadership (Sprague, 2005).

I chose to proceed with a naturalistic inquiry study including narrative elements as
I told the principals’ stories while remaining true to relating the experience of the
research participants. I chose this methodology because naturalistic inquiry,
incorporating narrative elements of story-telling, aligns with a critical feminist
perspective, demonstrating how connectedness, multiple understandings and concrete
lived experiences evidence themselves within principals’ understanding of their
evaluation process (Belenky et al., 1986; Sprague, 2005). Feminist researchers do not
espouse a singular feminist methodology, but rather feminist conviction is made evident
as the data are collected, constructed, analyzed, and written up (Wickramasinghe, 2005).

Participants

Participants were comprised of six women public school principals being
evaluated and having been evaluated by the Ohio Principal Evaluation System in
Northeast Ohio in districts with varied characteristics. I wanted to understand how
women understand and interpret the current evaluation structure, which conforms to a
standardized management paradigm model established in a male hegemonic culture. I
chose to include only women in my study because I wanted the perspectives of women
being evaluated under what I conceptualize as a male-guided standardized performance
evaluation system. I wanted to understand how women perceive being involved in this
process. In addition, I chose to include women because the literature surrounding the
dearth of female representation in the school superintendent position postulates that this
could be attributed to lack of mentoring and encouragement from within the field by supervisors (Kawaguchi, 2013). A key time to address professional growth, promotion potential, and opportunity with principals is during the evaluation process. We need to hear from women principals how they perceive performance evaluation contributes to their growth as leaders. This, in turn, could inform future study regarding how evaluations assist in transference to a promoted leadership position. I chose only women participants because the feminist idea of reciprocal interviewing between women, in which trusting relationships are established during research as women have a greater likelihood of shared personal and social interests, is important to me because it is very likely that other women principals have experienced the same power dynamics that I experienced as an educational leader, functioning in a value system (both the performance evaluation system and the larger accountability milieu) established and guided by male normative assumptions (Sprague, 2005).

With regards to sample size, Erlandson et al. (1993) states that, “there are no rules for sample size” (p. 83). The purpose in terms of sample size is quality as opposed to quantity of data. Because I incorporated narrative inquiry elements in my study, I wanted to be able to allow the stories of the participants to develop, therefore keeping the sample size deliberately small.

Purposeful sampling was used in the study. Purposeful sampling involved determining ahead of time which criteria were required of participants and then choosing individuals who possessed the criteria or could provide the type of information necessary to the research purposes (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Individuals represented
variations in terms of context (rural, urban, suburban), experience level, and school socioeconomic status (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The participants consisted of five elementary principals (two of these had been either a middle school assistant principal or head principal) and a middle school principal (who had also served as a high school assistant principal). Two of the principals were from suburban districts, one was from a rural district, and three were from urban districts. Three participants possessed less than five years total administration experience, one possessed 24 years of experience, and two possessed between 10 and 15 years of experience in school administration. Four school districts were represented from the six participants. Three of the districts represent school populations of low socioeconomic status (four principals) and one district (two principals) represented school populations of medium to high socioeconomic status. All participants possessed an Ohio principal license and had completed at least one year of administrative leadership in Ohio in a public school setting.

**Site**

All interviews were completed in public schools in Northeast Ohio. Participants represented districts with varying characteristics including rural, suburban, and urban characteristics including various levels of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and school achievement levels. In addition, participants involved in the study were evaluated by persons representing a variety of backgrounds and experience levels.

Interviews were conducted at the school site in the building that the principal leads. My observation of the sites contributed to an understanding of the context in which the principal works and within which she was evaluated.
**Data Collection**

The primary data collection method consisted of a semi-structured interview. I developed tentative questions for the interviews that lasted approximately 60 minutes each. Interviews took place at the principal’s school site so that I could understand the context of the principals’ daily experience. Participants were contacted by email to request participation. I conducted two interviews with each participant. The interviews took place during one school year at different times in the evaluation process. These techniques were utilized to increase trustworthiness of the study by incorporating repeated/prolonged engagement and to hear participants’ stories and understandings at various times in the process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I designed open ended interview questions to elicit story-telling or narrative responses from participants as I sought to incorporate elements of narrative inquiry within my naturalistic inquiry approach (Wells, 2011).

The interviews remained flexible in that I took advantage of opportunities throughout them to pursue thoughts and ideas brought up by the participants. Maxwell (2005) highlighted the importance of asking questions participants understand and ones whose purpose is to gain insight and not merely to follow a set of scripted operationalized research questions. Hatch (2002) pointed out that flexible and interactive interviews set the stage for researcher and participant to share the ownership for knowledge gained. This type of shared ownership aligns with power balances valued by feminist ideals. Additional questions emerged as the interview dialogue proceeded. Naturalistic inquiry values this type of interaction in which the participants are valuable drivers in the
interview process (Wells, 2011). Feminist research methods during interviewing include the pursuit of concepts and ideas that participants raise during the interview. Researcher “professionalism,” control, one way communication, and passive listening are all aspects of traditional interviewing and lend to researcher detachment. As I engaged in interviews, I encouraged two-way communication, by actively listening and following up with dialogue as well as displaying an openness to yielding control of the dialogue to participants throughout the interviews (Sprague, 2005).

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) presented the interview as negotiated, noting that “many female researchers advocate a partnership between the researcher and respondents, who should work together to create a narrative—the interview—that could be beneficial to the group studied” (p. 117). During interviews, part of my data collection involved notations regarding nonverbal cues, such as facial expression, body language, and pauses in communication. Also, I was mindful of maintaining respect, a nonjudgmental and nonthreatening demeanor, all important considerations during interview sessions (Merriam, 2009).

In addition to interviewing principals, I analyzed district documents relating to the evaluation process as implemented by the district. Considering items such as what was included and excluded as well as choice of language and areas of emphasis were part of an examination of power dynamics within a critical feminist paradigm (hooks, 1994). Examining these documents closely assisted in understanding how the districts frame the Ohio Principal Evaluation System and what areas are focused upon by the district as well
as how the day to day performance evaluation practices are operationalized. The analysis helped me to understand how districts contextualize the standardized framework.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis in a naturalistic inquiry study is inductive in nature as opposed to reductive. However, because I am informed by feminist understandings it was important to me to keep socially just understandings in the foreground as I listened to and analyzed data. Author on feminist research methodology, Wickramasinghe (2010) presented data analysis as a “middle order approach” (p. 70). She described this as a balance between deductive and inductive approach, moving fluidly between a participant’s everyday experiences and the researcher’s theorizing. I used deductive analysis while employing feminist theorizing to inform and guide the units of data that I classified into themes. I used inductive analysis as I allowed the participant voices to convey original voice and express multiple and even potentially conflicting realities. The process of analyzing data was an ongoing one that did not take place only after all data were collected. It started when I entered the site and continued until the project was complete (Pope, Ziebland, & Mays, 2000). In support of this view, Erlandson et al. (1993) said, “An assumption of the naturalistic researcher is that the human instrument is capable of ongoing fine tuning in order to generate the most fertile array of data” (p. 114). As I analyzed data throughout the process I was able to generate themes and bring to light multiple, perhaps conflicting, experiences at the same time in order to fully understand the research problem (Pope et al., 2000).
Feminist thought legitimates the use of researcher emotion in the analytic process. I used emotions as an analytic guide. Sprague (2005) explained, 

Thus emotions are the personal links to the social, and researcher introspection is a strategy for social research. When one is studying a community in which one has played a role, interactions with other members are not just occasions of collecting information. Rather, these interactions are instances of that community’s practices, shaped by its values. Thus the researcher’s feelings about those interactions are primary data about the community. (p. 135)

My own experience with principal performance evaluation prompted my research of principal perceptions in an era of accountability that includes standardized performance evaluations often tied directly to student achievement measures. I realized the bulk of energy in the process was directed to proving that I had completed certain activities. In addition, all of my principal colleagues were consumed with writing student growth goals (goals measured by student achievement on standardized tests) that would be easily mastered or would appear the least damaging on evaluations—a type of gaming the system that could hardly be said to truly impact long term achievement increases. I found the process to be disappointing and unsatisfying in terms of professional growth and renewal. In particular, I felt disengaged from the process unable to drive my own learning and reflect on successes and mistakes due to the structure and emphasis of the process. I had the distinct impression that the performance evaluation was top down and did not increase my empowerment as a leader. The process was focused on increasing student scores on annual assessments. Henderson and Ylimaki (in press) touched on the
inadequacies of the current standardized systems to develop the individual when they pointed out that “a conception of curriculum as strictly content or even content and learning experiences does not fully consider the individual (leader, teacher, student) as subject in the process of formation through education.” So poignant was my evaluative experience that I left traditional public education for two years to explore charter education. It is important that the reader understand the background from which I approached qualitative research as it impacted my decisions throughout the process. Since the time of that pivotal experience, I have learned more about the ideas surrounding feminist relational leadership and the exploration of power dynamics that exist in a male hegemonic culture. These ideas put voice to many of the feelings and perceptions I had while engaging in a standardized evaluative framework and prompted me to study them further.

Data in my study were recorded and indexed or coded in an ongoing fashion to generate categories and convey experiences. Phrases, incidents, and behaviors were all part of the raw data used to generate categories. Lincoln and Guba (1985) referred to this as unitizing, with units of information providing a starting point for constructing categories. Categories were worked and reworked as descriptors of the categories were written and revised as supported by data. New categories emerged and others remained constant (Erlandson et al., 1993).

A tool often used in analyzing qualitative data is negative case analyses in which alternative data pieces are examined that appear to refute emerging hypotheses. Hypotheses can then be revised until there are no longer discrepancies. Another, or
alternative, approach, which I used, given the assumption of multiple realities under a constructivist and feminist paradigm would promote the sharing of alternative or conflicting views and experiences as evidence of tensions and complexities that exist in the experience of the research problem (Erlandson et al., 1993).

**Trustworthiness**

A naturalistic study is able to claim methodological soundness by demonstrating trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described trustworthiness when they stated, “The basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is simple: How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?” (p. 290). Trustworthiness is conveyed by credibility and transferability. Credibility has to do with the extent that the study “rings true” with the reader (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 30). Transferability allows the reader to determine how the findings can be applied to contexts in which he or she operates within. Repeated engagement was one of the techniques that I used in the study to increase credibility of the research. I was engaged with the participants over a period of time that allowed me to understand the context in which they function and allowed me to build rapport with participants as well as hear their stories and experiences at more than one point in the performance evaluation process. This mitigated deviations or distortions caused by newness of my presence or by unique occurrences at the site or with the participant that do not normally occur (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Thick description is another technique I took advantage of in my research study. Thick description works to increase transferability. Thick description does not involve
the sharing of findings but does relay to the reader information necessary to understand the context in which the study took place as all of the senses are engaged in creating a picture of the research context. Thick, rich description lends to credibility in that it provides a detailed description of the setting, participants, and themes of the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Erlandson et al. (1993) stated, “When reading a description, one should be able to get a feel for what it is like to actually be in the context” (p. 146). Lincoln and Guba (1985) contended that using purposeful sampling contributes to thick description in that a greater variety of contexts is able to be used. Thick description contributes to transferability, which is the ability of the reader to determine whether the qualitative findings of the study transfer to his or her context (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Triangulation of data works to increase trustworthiness as well. Triangulation is the idea of looking at information from more than one vantage point and comes from differing sources, methods, investigators, or theories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I utilized qualitative data from interviews as the primary information source but also incorporated document analysis, providing a limited measure of triangulation.

Member checking was part of my research. Member checking consists of asking participants to engage in the process of providing feedback and reactions to not only interview data but also the interpretive work of the researcher (Erlandson et al., 1993). This trustworthiness technique connects to concerns of feminism in terms of power dynamics between the researcher and participant (hooks, 1984; Sprague, 2005). The ability of the participants to weigh in on interpretations helps to create a more egalitarian balance in the research process. Also, member checking directly contributes to
credibility, which is the ability of the reader to accept that what is being reported represents the experiences of those who participated (Erlandson et al., 1993). Specifically, I provided each participant with a summary of the interviews as well as coded synthesis of her interview in which I employed interpretive coding in an attempt to convey her experience. I asked each participant to provide her thoughts on her interviews.

I kept a reflexive journal during the study. A reflexive journal allowed me to record “information about the researcher’s schedule, and logistics, insights, and reasons for methodological decisions” (Erlandson et al, 1993, p. 143). A research journal allowed me to maintain a sense of self-awareness and provided a vehicle for self-reflection or reflectivity both of which Koch (1993) pointed out as important to qualitative rigor. Feminist author Sandra Harding (1987) maintained that in critical feminist oriented research, “the class, race, culture and gender assumptions, beliefs and behaviors of the researcher her/himself must be placed within the frame of the picture that he/she paints” (p. 31). A research journal contributed to the process of bringing to the study my assumptions and beliefs in a transparent manner, thus contributing to credibility and trustworthiness. Using a reflexive journal guards against abstraction whereby categories and labels generated through data analysis as neutral and as authority as opposed to a reflexive presentation, which acknowledges the somewhat arbitrary and potentially influenced nature of categorizing (Sprague, 2005). The journal highlighted shifts in meaning during data analysis as well as reasoning behind emerging themes. Participant quotes were used to exemplify themes throughout the journal. Using
participant voice is part of making the research process public and providing the reader with “enough clarity and detail so that someone else is able to judge the quality of the study and accept or refute the findings” (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002, p. 33).

Another important function of the research journal was to maintain an audit trail in which the study could be opened to examination. Creswell and Miller (2000) outlined that the purpose of an audit “is to examine both the process and product of the inquiry, and determine the trustworthiness of the findings” (p. 128). The completed journal becomes part of the audit trail, important to furthering trustworthiness of the study. The audit trail includes additional items such as raw data as well as the types of decisions and thought processes that were involved in analyzing and coding data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Writing up the Data**

Throughout the presentation of data findings and conclusions I used the concrete present tense of “I, me, my, myself” instead of reverting to abstract language such as that of “the researcher.” This is important when working within a feminist framework because it keeps the audience mindful that it is the researcher that made choices for inclusion and exclusion in the study as well as interpreted meaning from the participants’ responses. It helps to remind the reader that findings presented are partial and situated as opposed to absolute “truth” or certainty (Wickramasinghe, 2005).

In addition, in writing up data, active voice was used throughout. This purposeful use of active voice accomplishes several goals. It assists with making me as the researcher visible in the text, which is important to a power balance in the research
context. Using active voice also emphasizes the action orientation of feminist informed research. This is significant in feminist thinking because the purpose of feminism is not simply to understand how things work but rather, to take action contributing to social change, including the dismantlement of patriarchal hegemonic influence in educational policy strongholds (Sprague, 2005). Avoiding dense jargon and overly technical language also assists in avoiding the trap of “hiding the researcher” (Sprague, 2005, p. 22).

It was important in the writing up of data that the participant voices were used throughout. Using actual respondents’ words enabled their voices to be portrayed as they presented the information, with the transparent understanding that I, as researcher, still chose the portions and incorporated them into the analysis, interpretation, and writing. My research and writing assumed that data and conclusions are partial representations of the participants at a situated time and in a concrete context.

**Definition of Terms**

*Formative feedback:* An ongoing process of feedback that allows one to make adjustments in performance (Popham, 2008).

*Power:* The ability or potential to have influence on another toward psychological change including influence over one’s behavior, opinion, attitude, goals or values (French & Raven, 1959).

*Professional development:* Learning or activities that contribute to increased knowledge and/or skill in one’s profession (Keith, 2011). Professional development is
the practice of identifying need areas and investigating knowledge and techniques that have been found to be effective (Bingham, 2013).

Renewal: Being made new, fresh, or strong again; to begin again with more force or enthusiasm (Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, n.d.).

Self-efficacy: One’s belief about his or her ability to impact change due to the decisions and actions taken (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004, 2007).

Standards Based Environment: An environment in which decisions are made based upon articulated standards (Guskey & Jung, 2009).

Student Achievement Measures: Quantitative, standardized measures of student achievement using standardized tests (Fuller & Hollingworth, 2014).

Student Growth Measure (SGM): A method for determining academic progress. Progress is measured by examining growth between two points in time (Ohio Department of Education, n.d.a)

Summative Feedback: Feedback provided that allows decisions to be made that are of a final nature such as continuation or termination of a program or person’s employment (Popham, 2008).

Value Added (VA): A measure of student achievement that shows student growth from one year to the next (David, 2010).
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of my research was to explore and capture a purposeful sample of women principals’ perceptions about their experience with their performance evaluation under the standardized OPES framework. Examining the process of educational leadership performance evaluation provides a way to inform evaluators in supporting principals towards professional growth, one of the stated objectives of OPES. Specifically, I engaged with participants about the ability of leadership performance evaluation to contribute to holistic leadership growth and renewal, assisting principals to develop subject matter, self, and social understanding, as well as its ability to guide principals towards wise leadership. I wanted to understand assumptions, power dynamics, and localized implementation. This work served as an invitation for participants to critically question standardized performance evaluation, providing an opportunity to look at a process that is routinely accepted as the only way to approach evaluation from a new lens. The questions that I investigated in this research are as follows:

1. How does a purposeful sample of women principals leading in Ohio schools perceive the Ohio Principal Evaluation System?
2. What critical insights about the power dynamics involved in Ohio leadership performance evaluation can be gleaned from this sample?
3. How and in what ways does a sample of women principals believe that the Ohio Principal Evaluation System impacts their holistic leadership growth?
4. What power dynamics are involved in the performance evaluation of the sample group, and how do these dynamics impact their individual leadership?

The key findings of my research emerged from interviews with participants, discourse analysis, and document analysis of performance evaluation related documents.

**Participant Description—Overview**

The contributing participants constituted a purposeful sample so as to represent maximum variation among female participants with a range of experience spanning 3–24 years. The principals worked in four different Northeast Ohio school districts and came from distinct school settings ranging in size from 450–670 students. Two principals were African American and four were Caucasian. Three principals worked in urban schools, one in a rural school, and two in suburban schools. Four schools had a student body with low socioeconomic status (60% free and reduced lunch or higher) and two schools had a student body with a moderate to high socioeconomic status (10% or lower free and reduced lunch). Half of the schools housed a diverse student population (75% or higher) whereas half had somewhat more limited diversity (40% or less). Two principals led schools with robust second language populations (20% or higher). Three principals had both elementary and middle school experience, one had both middle and high school experience, and two spent their careers solely in elementary schools. Four principals were evaluated by the district assistant superintendent and two by the district superintendent with four being evaluated by a male and two by a female.
Participant Summaries

Below, each participant is described so that some of her lived experiences might be able to paint a picture of how she approaches leadership, what she values, and the type of context in which she works. Each principal’s viewpoint is shaped by individual and unique backgrounds, experiences, and contexts.

Dorie

Dorie is in her third year as a principal and is bubbly and excited about the work she does. She is proud of her teachers and takes time to point out their work. When I visited the school, Dorie individually introduced me to each teacher and often made comments about their strengths or classroom projects that were underway. Dorie has worked hard to establish relationships and change culture to a more trust-based climate in the building during the three years she has been there. She told me that when she came into the position there was a lot of mistrust between the teachers and the administration. It is important to her that the leadership team “be on the same page” in order to establish trust by responding the same way on major issues to be fair to all teachers in the district. She meets with her fellow administrators twice a week, which, by conventional standards, is an exceptional time commitment to this kind of work. She leads two physical buildings in a rural community. One of the buildings is a K–2 school and the other is a 3–5 school, making up a K–5 campus. The schools were built mid-20th century but are well maintained and have a pleasant appearance. She says that her relaxed and friendly demeanor counteracts her assistant principal’s more business-like demeanor nicely. Prior to working as a head principal, Dorie worked as a school improvement
coach for two years in an urban K–5 school that was struggling to meet state report card indicators. In this role, Dorie found herself a cheerleader among teachers for digging into data and using assessments to inform instruction. Dorie taught English Language Arts for eight years at the middle school level as well. Prior to working as a teacher, Dorie worked as a paralegal. Education is a second career for Dorie and she reports that she loves the work and knows she has found her passion. Dorie’s school is in a rural community that includes a sizeable population of Amish students who also are designated as second language learners. The campus is comprised of 450 students and has a high percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch, indicating a lowered socio-economic status. The school has an inconsistent record in terms of standardized assessments, meaning that they meet some indicators of achievement on the state report card and fail to meet others. The district is small and the district superintendent evaluates Dorie. Dorie describes her interactions with her evaluator as low key and relaxed. It is evident that she respects and admires her evaluator. She shared stories about his coming in to the school in costumes to read and to deliver the morning announcements, indicating his hands on approach to leadership. Dorie has only been evaluated as a leader under the OPES framework. Dorie thinks of wisdom leadership in terms of transparency, making a point to note honesty and forthrightness as an important element of leadership.

Fern

Fern is a confident and highly motivated leader in her eighth year as an administrator, with this being her second year as a head principal in a K–5 building. The building is full and there is a lot of activity in the halls and in common areas with every
space being used to accommodate students. The school is experiencing a changing demographic in that recent years have brought increased diversity to the school. Fern presents a professional and business-like demeanor but makes a point to emphasize the importance of developing relationships with teachers, parents, and students. Prior to being in the K–5 building, Fern was an assistant principal at the middle school level. Fern leads a building of 500 students in a moderate-high socioeconomic community in a suburban area. The area is comprised of students from a multiplicity of nationalities with a variety of cultures represented in the school. Fern likes to make sure each family feels welcome and pointed out to me several changes in which the school engaged so that families felt more welcome upon arrival including welcoming student-oriented decorations, books for families to read while they wait, inspirational quotes on the walls, and literature for parents. The school historically does well on standardized assessments and is currently working to implement a new mathematics program in order to increase standardized scores in math. The district assistant superintendent evaluates Fern. She told me she feels that it is an advantage for her to be evaluated by a woman, explaining that the assistant superintendent “gets” the emotionality involved in the principal job and how women are often perceived as emotional in leadership and decision making, noting that this can be perceived as negative. The district is a moderately sized district and Fern is one of four elementary principals. Fern works closely with an assistant principal who is relatively new to administration. Fern has been evaluated under multiple frameworks, including OPES.
Karmen

Karmen is a plain-speaking no-nonsense leader in her third year of administration, having served as a head principal of her current K–5 building for all three years without the aid of an assistant principal. The school building Karmen leads is only about six years old and was part of a construction project to build brand new facilities across the district. Signs and notices are posted in both Spanish and English and there is a bright airy feeling to the school. Karmen’s experience was that of an elementary teacher prior to becoming an administrator. Karmen told me she wanted to be a teacher since she was a child and that she finds educational leadership a natural extension of the leadership qualities she demonstrated in the classroom. Relationships are first and foremost in Karmen’s priorities. She takes seriously the impact she has on both students and teachers, making it a point to get to the building each morning early to greet others and have conversations with teachers to help set the building tone. She views relationships as key in the evaluations she conducts with teachers and feels that relationship should be key in principal evaluation as well. Karmen says that understanding relationship dynamics is something that is endemic to a wise leader as is the ability to remain self-aware. She knows she is leading well by a feeling she experiences in the building, noting that quantitative data paints only part of the picture of her leadership. Karmen leads a 500 student building in an urban district of low socio-economic status. The district and school have difficulty meeting state report card indicators in terms of standardized assessment, and she sometimes feels frustrated that the progress they see in classrooms does not translate to standardized state metrics. The student population is approaching
one third second language speaking representing primarily Spanish speakers of Mexican heritage. The district is a moderately sized Ohio district with Karmen being one of three elementary school principals. Karmen has only been evaluated under the OPES process.

**Mindy**

Mindy is in her 13th year of school leadership, working with an assistant principal to lead in an urban district with a low socioeconomic status and high second language population totaling approximately 20% of the student body with most of the second language students of Mexican heritage. The school building is large and newly constructed with impressive technology in classrooms and labs and is a source of pride for the community. She shared with me that she is now the “veteran” principal in the district, with all of the other individuals hired after she was. This puts her in a surprising yet pleasing place: Surprised that she is now seen as the “expert” in several areas but pleased that she can relay institutional knowledge with younger members on the administrative team. Mindy particularly enjoys mentoring teachers pursuing administrative certification, ensuring that they receive meaningful and authentic leadership experiences during mentorship periods. Mindy spent nine years as an assistant principal at a high school and has been in her current role as a middle school principal of 630 students for four years. The school Mindy leads has difficulty attaining passing rates on statewide testing and accompanying report cards but Mindy is excited about progress they have made over the last couple years with writing. Students that didn’t write or wrote very little in the past are now routinely writing multiple paragraphs and pages about topics that are important to them. Mindy is evaluated by the district assistant
superintendent and has been evaluated under frameworks other than OPES previously. Mindy has a strong desire that her teachers enjoy coming to work each day, noting that she wants teachers to speak their mind and feel free to question decisions. Mindy shared a story with me about one of the greatest sources of pride for her was walking in a community parade in which students and families approached her telling stories about how she had impacted them both recently and years before. These types of interactions confirm for her that her 58 mile one way drive to work each day for over a decade truly matters to the community.

Salina

Salina is the sole principal of a second and third grade building of 560 students in an urban moderately sized district, having been an administrator for 11 years. The school has been recently built and is clean and modern looking. Statements about joyful climate are posted and planning charts for organizational change to a digital environment are evident in the office complex. Salina had experience leading grades K–8 prior to taking over the 2–3 school. The school has had difficulty meeting proficiency rates on state standardized assessments and report cards. Salina’s school is in the process of implementing a major shift to digital learning with one to one devices. This is a source of great pride for Salina, having written the grant that allowed her school to be immersed in technology. It is important to Salina that her school evidences a joyful learning climate. She wants students to be truly engaged in the work they do each day and wants students to look forward to coming to school. Additionally, it is important to her that students be challenged but also that they be nurtured by their teachers. Salina works hard to model a
nurturing and gentle spirit for her teachers. Salina laughingly relayed to me that she is working to move her compass needle from south to north, with north representing a no-nonsense, straight talking approach and south representing a comforting, nurturing approach in an effort to be a more balanced leader. Salina refers to holistic and wise leadership as a spiritual endeavor for her in which she uses core beliefs and ideas about what is right to make decisions and move her team forward. Salina feels that risk taking is an important characteristic to encourage in both teachers and administrators, noting that her school’s move to digital learning is a risk but one that she feels is worth tackling even with its unknown territory and potential obstacles. Salina is evaluated by the district superintendent and has had experience being evaluated under frameworks other than OPES during her leadership tenure.

**Tatianna**

Tatianna is an experienced principal with 24 years as a school administrator at the K–5 level. She is well connected within the school leadership community, having served in multiple districts. Tatianna approaches challenge with equanimity and talks about an impactful and wise leader as one who leads with an equal measure of heart and head. Tatianna has led through some difficult circumstances including a particular year in which three students passed away and a year in which an historically blue ribbon school was designated by the state as in need of improvement generating blame and division among the staff. This is her second year in a suburban district where she currently serves as head of a 670 student school with the aid of an assistant principal and an early childhood coordinator. The school is in an affluent area and is a very high achieving
school performing well on state standardized assessments. Mascot pride is evident as the theme is posted outside and inside the building and each class earns door tokens in the image of the mascot. This school is also full and every office and classroom contains large and small groups of students. Tatianna knows she is successful when the climate of the building feels right, when students are meeting benchmark measures, and teachers and students want to show off what is going on in their classrooms. The school is unique in that it houses several programs for students with unique disabilities including an early childhood program for students with disabilities and a school for students that are hearing impaired. These programs do present some challenges as the staff and students in each program has unique needs and climates that have to be taken into consideration. Tatianna is evaluated by the district assistant superintendent and has experience with systems other than OPES throughout her career. Tatianna takes seriously her role of accountability within the district structure, noting that her role is to take responsibility for the things that go on in her school and to “take arrows before they hit the superintendent.”

Data Collection

Six women principals participated in two semi-structured interviews approximately 45 days apart. The interviews lasted approximately an hour each and took place at the principals’ schools. I asked questions but also allowed participant response to guide discussion points. I asked questions that elicited story telling from the principals as they discussed their understandings with me regarding principal performance evaluation. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. I completed a discourse analysis of each of the interviews as well as an analysis of documents associated with the
OPES process. Almost all of these documents were state documents and were comprised of the 27 page model which explains the goals and structure of the system, implementation details, and the principal rating rubric. I also looked at a state created nine page resource document outlining suggestions for evidence of principal performance. One district created three additional documents for their leaders including a blank version of the state rubric that principals could use on which to write and record their evidence, a comparison of the differences between the rubric levels of skilled and accomplished (via cut and paste from the state OPES model), and a document in which a column was added to the rubric stating how the specific objective aligned to the district improvement plan with a column titled “Ohio Improvement Plan Activities/Evidence.” The final district-created document was a timeline of when meetings as well as formative and summative assessments would take place.

**Data Analysis**

I listened to each interview twice, summarizing the participants’ thoughts, and began initial coding of emerging themes. As a means of member checking, I shared this initial coding for each interview with participants letting them know that part of my research methodology was to share themes with participants to ensure that their voice was accurately represented. Three participants replied to me stating that the initial coding accurately represented their dialogue with me. Three others did not reply after receiving the interview coding. Meeting with participants twice, conducting a discourse analysis and document analysis were ways I operationalized repeated engagement and limited data triangulation serving as measures to increase the trustworthiness of my research.
After listening to each recording two times and initially summarizing and coding from that process, I read transcriptions of the interviews and refined the coding, matching participant quotes with emergent themes, grouping clusters of similar themes together under larger categories. Throughout the process of listening to interviews, reading interview transcripts, and coding, I kept a research journal. In the journal I made notes about my thinking throughout the process. I used the journal as a place to indicate how my background and beliefs were influencing choices I made as a researcher and the reasoning behind my coding emerging themes the way that I did. I used participant quotes in the journal as a tool to make sure that I was true to authentically representing each participant.

I coded for emerging themes, originally noting nine main themes. I then grouped the nine emerging themes as subcategories under broader headings that ultimately resulted in the five main themes of evidence, holistic growth, translation to leadership practice, local decision making, and power dynamics which comprised my key findings. Smaller categories such as collaboration, isolation, appreciation, limits, and renewal were re-categorized under one of the final five key findings. I also began a secondary coding mechanism to complete a discourse analysis and make sense of responses, looking at the type of language used as well as examining paralinguistic features and verbal struggles. Discourse analysis helped to determine how participants might be subject to societal and contextual discourse or grand narratives that are readily accepted (Merriam, 2002; Wells, 2011). The codes I used were those indicating both critical and accepting voices as well as responses that pointed to a relationship orientation versus a standardized, top-down
orientation. Discourse analysis assisted me in coding the participant responses. I noted facial expressions and verbal struggle or hesitation, which helped me to interpret meaning, and I used this information while placing responses within emerging theme categories.

Finally, I engaged in an analysis of the documents mentioned above and related to the OPES process. I used the document analysis to identify areas of focus and importance in the OPES system, noting both items included and those not included in the state guidance documents and district-created support documents. Findings from the discourse and document analysis were woven in throughout and informed the five key findings.

As I analyzed data, I listened for participant responses that were similar as well as those that were dissimilar, grouping responses into themes that assisted in answering the research questions. Because my research is informed by a critical feminist lens, I asked questions as I listened to and read interview transcripts such as what assumptions might undergird the responses or how the standardized management paradigm might be influencing principals’ ways of understanding. I noted what I believed to be emerging critical voices of participants as well as that of acceptance of standardized, male normative ways of viewing performance evaluation, professional growth, and renewal. I analyzed participant responses for word choice and to identify where there might be tension between knowing and doing statements as well as their demeanor and mannerisms during our time discussing performance evaluation. As I examined OPES
documents, I also asked questions about assumptions such as what is important and to whom, looking for areas of priority and emphasis.

**Key Findings**

Participant responses emerged around five key findings regarding their perceptions of OPES which revealed the following understandings of the process: (a) emphasizing evidence, (b) constraining holistic leadership growth, (c) translating to leadership practice, (d) making of local decisions and (e) experiencing power dynamics surrounding the performance evaluation process. I chose to use gerund verb forms regarding the impacts and effects of the OPEs process to designate the key findings because I feel that these active and concrete words best represent the lived understandings that principals’ voices and stories expressed as they navigate their way in the process.

**Emphasizing Evidence**

The principals’ perceptions of the performance evaluation process revealed an emphasis on evidence. The performance section of the principal evaluation consists of a rubric that accounts for 50% of the evaluation and the remaining 50% comes from the student growth measure of the performance evaluation. There is also a required professional development plan and growth associated with the plan is to contribute directly to the performance section of the evaluation. The rubric is comprised of five sections or standards that spread across a continuum of four designations raking from ineffective to accomplished. There are 22 specific indicators within the five sections or standards. Four of the participants shared specifically that they expend considerable
energy collecting evidence and organizing it in a way that can be presented to the evaluator during performance review meetings. They indicated this evidence really is the bedrock of performance evaluation conversations and that evidence collected and presented was often the difference in a performance rating either moving up or down the continuum. Mindy shared the significance her evaluator associates with evidence. “So it’s all like about ‘Show me the data, show me the, show me the evidence.’ He’s all about the evidence.” Salina stated, “I always have to have tangible evidence to show what I’m doing.” Dorie stated,

He is a data guy. You’ve got to show him that with data. You are talking to him about what you need to do with kids ’cause that is where you come from but that is the big part of my job is to make him understand.

Karmen stated, “What it comes down to it is how well do I document all that I do.”

Karmen went further to say that without the evidence pieces the system may not have meaning for her,

I don’t feel that there has been a lot of depth to any of this OPES process thus far. Any depth that has come from it has come from the time that I spend pulling things together, looking at the rubric, really reading the descriptors and making sure that I can support where I truly feel that I belong.

I completed an analysis of documents associated with OPES. All of the districts chose to use the state documents without changes. The only addition was that one district (two principals in the study were from this district) created further supporting documents. The documents included one in which a column was added to the rubric stating how the
specific objective aligned to the district improvement plan with a column titled Ohio Improvement Plan Activities/Evidence. This district also created a rubric with blank spaces by each indicator so that principals could write in the evidence they were collecting. They also distributed a district specific timeline of when the evaluator would meet with participants and what would be done at each meeting as well as a document highlighting the differences between skilled and accomplished. This was created by cutting and pasting portions of the OPES rubric and highlighting the additional criteria associated with accomplished as opposed to skilled.

The document analysis supports the principal perceptions regarding the strong emphasis on evidence. One of the three stated purposes of OPES is, “Quality assurance focused on the collection of evidence to document performance” (Ohio Department of Education, n.d.a). The state-created OPES documents include a nine page packet titled “Suggestions of Evidence of Principal Performance” in which hundreds of suggestions are listed broken down by standard. For example, agendas, photos, outlines, leadership team meeting minutes, and newsletters are all cited as potential pieces of evidence that demonstrate principals have successfully articulated a shared vision. The particular district that created additional forms also chose to create at least one document with an evidence emphasis in the form of the blank rubric intended for users to fill in as evidence was accumulated. Responses indicate that principals perceive there is a strong emphasis on evidence that may outweigh the other two stated purposes of OPES which are professional growth and continuous improvement. This perception is supported by the document analysis.
The gathering of evidence was cited as ongoing by three participants and stress creating by two participants. Regarding the constant nature of evidence collection, Karmen shared, I have a tab on my phone under my reminders tab labeled OPES and any time that there is anything connected to OPES on there I want to make sure I don’t forget to pull before my meeting with him or forget to talk about. It’s on that tab. It’s a note to me constantly about it.

Salina noted, “But now I keep this notebook and this composition book and I write everything down. I always have to have something to show.” Regarding stress associated with evidence gathering, Salina further noted, So it’s stressful I think for me. For me it’s a little stressful because I want to make sure I’m doing it correctly. I want to make sure my superintendent can see what I’m all about. I don’t always think about saving that evidence or documenting that evidence of what I’m doing. Because I’m just doing.

Karmen shared emotion about the gathering process also noting that she experiences “…frustration with all the work that I have to do to make the evaluation happen properly. That is frustrating.”

Participants noticed that feedback on performance goals often was focused on assisting principals to hone their evidence and data collection. Dorie stated, “Then [evaluator] gives us feedback on what he wants us to do for it which is a lot of times the data piece.” Salina related a feedback conversation,
We sat down and we talked about—he was like well how are you going to show—he kept saying, well what are you going to use for your evidence? What are you going to use for your evidence? And you know I would say, the teacher’s flexible group charts or sheets. And I remember he was like well anybody can write down those numbers, you know or whatever, but what else? You know, so he helped me through that process—helped me try to filter them out a little bit better.

Fern supported this when describing feedback from her evaluator who gave “suggestions of action steps and ways to help measure the goal.”

Additionally, participants noted that feedback from evaluators was found mostly in terms of day-to-day operational items when they called asking for help with how to handle specific situations. Feedback on growth and development goals was more rare and more often tended to be summative in nature. When referring to her development goal, Mindy acknowledged, “We never really revisit it.” Fern described formative feedback: “It’s definitely more the problem solving, the handling issues, the procedures and that sort of thing than necessarily the types, being a leader kind of thing.” Fern talked about the limited nature of feedback.

I think the advantages are is that there is actually an opportunity to sit down and talk about goals and get feedback. I think the disadvantages are that it is not very frequent. It is a two-fixed point. A beginning and an end so there is not a lot of feedback in between.
Five participants stated that they felt the discussions regarding the rubric were collaborative. They said they felt this way because there was a discussion about how they were rated on the rubric and some of them acknowledged their appreciation for this opportunity. Mindy related that the process is a “very collaborative discussion.” Karmen stated, “So I think it is a lot of conversation about each of those areas.” Dorie shared she appreciated “the two conversations with her boss.” Several felt that this discussion was a way for them to have input into their performance evaluation and the determination of their rating. As I conducted discourse analysis, however, I noticed the choice of language principals used when discussing the actual conversations they had with evaluators might not necessarily be considered collaborative. For example, words participants used such as “come back, have everything in line, proven beyond a shadow of a doubt” tend to evoke images not necessarily consistent with egalitarian teamwork. Both Mindy and Salina used the words “come back” with evidence when describing interactions with her evaluator. I think Karmen’s comments particularly exhibited the dualism or complexity involved in the sharing of evidence.

I think there is negotiation to it. It’s collaborative. That has happened at times. You best bet that I’ll have everything I need in line, “Here you go” or “You missed the mark on this a little bit.” That stuff has been taken into consideration and movement has happened on the rubric because of that. Her use of the word collaborative doesn’t quite match with the idea of having an arsenal of evidence lined up and the emphatic use of the words “you best bet” which were unlike other less passionate language used throughout most of her interview.
These words may signify a discontent with negotiation and may highlight
dissatisfaction (although not explicitly stated) with the position of the principals in the
process in terms of an uneven power position, a position perhaps not equally
collaborative but a constant negotiation of the push and pull of proving and accepting in
the performance evaluation meetings with the evaluator—the push to prove location on
the rubric and the pull of accepting a descriptor on the continuum. Salina discussed with
me her perception of her role in the process “just to supply evidence.” She described her
evaluator role as: “He’s the person that is basically in charge of what happens to me in
this career. He has the power or the authority to look at what I’m doing and [determine]
if the evidence doesn’t fit that particular area.” This particular perception points to an
understanding of power as reward or coercion as theorized by French and Raven (1959)
with reward referencing a leader’s ability to control rewards and coercion referencing a
leader’s ability to reward or punish including assisting or blocking the attainment of goals
or status.

It is interesting to note that the two principals who had the least to say about an
evidence emphasis were from the same district, prompting me to consider that a local
decision about the focus points and areas of emphasis may be important to the principal
experience and may have resulted in a decreased emphasis on evidence and potential
stressors associated with a strong evidence gathering orientation. This particular finding,
that local decisions appear to be pivotal in the process, was consistent through the
interviews and is highlighted throughout my work.
Constraining Holistic Leadership Growth

Two (of three) stated purposes of OPES are, “Professional growth focused on enhancing the knowledge and skills of principals and continuous improvement focused on the principal’s commitment to improve his/her practice over time so as to continually impact higher levels of student performance” (Ohio Department of Education, n.d.a). The guidance document stated that, “The primary goal of evaluation is to foster the growth and development of the professional educator over time” (Ohio Department of Education, n.d.a). Each principal is required to have either a professional growth plan (if they have no significant deficiencies) or an improvement plan (if significant deficiencies exist), which contribute directly to their evaluation rating.

Principals’ perceptions of the ability of the OPES process to promote professional growth pointed to some gaps in this capacity. Four principals did say that they appreciated the structure of the framework. Fern shared that she appreciated “having clear goals set, being accountable—been better that what I’ve experienced in the past.” Karmen concurred, “I’m happy that it is relatively explicit as far as the rubric goes.” Dorie stated,

It forces you to actually sit and put things on paper and think and reflect. For me it’s been helpful and it forces me to reflect formally. I think it forces like it to happen not just when you have time. It forces it to happen throughout the school year.

However, five participants expressed that the Ohio performance evaluation’s impact on professional growth was not exceptionally impactful or that the impact was felt
in terms of assisting them in school growth, not necessarily professional leadership growth. One participant, Dorie, solidly equated her personal growth with school growth and generally was more enthusiastic about the process and perceived it as impacting growth more positively.

In terms of growing towards wisdom leadership that encompasses ethical dimensions beyond quantitative measures as outlined in Chapter 1 or a holistic leadership that understands not only subject matter but understanding one’s self and societal or cultural influences that impact leadership, principals found the process especially disconnected. Tatianna stated,

I don’t know that it’s necessarily that it’s a tool that I would use, that I’d use or fall back on for professional growth. I don’t know that I use that or fall back on that tool for as much professional growth.

Salina’s comment was particularly telling with regards to the impact the process has had on her practice over time indicating a lack of meaningfulness. “As I was writing my goals this year I was trying to remember what we talked about last year.” Tatianna said, in reference to the rubric and growth plan, “I just don’t look at that thing that often,” and “I don’t know that anybody has ever used the word ‘growth’ with me with that rubric.” Karmen shared, “I feel that I’m jumping through hoops.” Dorie articulated the equating of professional growth with an increase in building improvement.

I think it’s directly related. It just whatever we’re doing has to translate you have to be able to see it in the student data. So I feel like my personal growth is connected to student data is connected to OPES evaluation.
All of the principals perceived the process to assist them in understanding things about themselves, citing self-reflection as an integral piece of the process. Although Karmen qualified her discussion of reflection as something she would have engaged in regardless of OPES,

I feel it is a tool to help me reflect on everything that I’m doing. Not that I wouldn’t do that reflecting anyway because that is who I am. I’m always analyzing myself and how I do things and what I could do better. How other people do things and how that would work here and things like that. I feel that there isn’t an explicit . . . the tool itself doesn’t necessarily . . . or the process itself doesn’t even necessarily elicit any more of that than normal.

All reported they use the established self-assessment rubric but also make self-reflection a priority throughout the process, asking themselves how they are evidencing the standards as they collect artifacts throughout the year. Most of the principals stated that they were able to grow with regards to subject matter influencing leadership but that this process was often a lonely endeavor they undertook through isolated reading and research. Fern stated, “I did the self-assessment and then so I filled that part out and then I filled out the growth plan.” Karmen explained, “So I’m glad that’s there [rubric] because I am self-reflective and I do a lot of that but again that is just me and my self talking and my comparing it to what I read and things like that.” Tatianna also discussed self-reflection, “I do things on a quarterly basis, and I reflect on either things that have happened and the kind of impact it had on everybody, and what skills I didn’t shine in.” Only one principal (Dorie) talked about learning activities that were established as a
Fern pointed out what she considered to be the area least focused on in her evaluation: “I would say the professional development in terms of like curriculum and some of the professional development sort of knowledge pieces.”

Karmen portrayed a critical voice regarding the lack of impact on professional growth. “I mean when I am relying on an annual elementary school principal conference for the basis of my growth every year or the reading that I’m doing and have time to squeeze in. That’s not OK.” She had already had conversations with colleagues about changes she hoped to see in the performance evaluation process and planned to have a conversation with her evaluator.

So I’ve talked a little bit to my colleagues about that but I will be for sure talking a little bit about how important it is for the district to model, in some regard, what they want the process to look like at the building level between administrators and teachers. I think that needs to be cleaned up a little bit.

As I continued the dialogue with principals it became clear that circumstances involved in the process contributed to the lack of meaningful development associated with the current performance evaluation practices. Time devoted to the process was one and another involved a lack of deep utilization of the ways these principals reported that they have learned in a meaningful manner. A third contributor, experienced by three of the leaders, was goals prescribed for them, ones that they did not create or have input into creating.
Principals shared with me stories about times when they learned in impactful ways, when they received feedback that changed their practice or times when they were prompted to change their practice. These included self-reflection, collaborating and dialoguing with peers and other educators, and engaging in mentoring relationships with trusted professionals. Tatianna talked about her mentor of many years as a guiding light. She also shared a story about attending a summer learning institute at a university where she networked, studied with, and collaborated with peers as an exceptionally powerful tool. About that time Tatianna noted, “very definitely that changed my practice—learning from other leaders.” Karmen shared about dialogue with a trusted colleague as an experience that changed her practice. She also said that her fellow principals were pivotal to her growth and renewal in the profession. “I wouldn’t have remained in this district for the last few years had I not had the other two elementary school principals.” Karmen further detailed, “I love growing and learning in those ways too and thinking differently. Those things happen when you connect with other people. My learning and growing comes from me or the work that I do with my counterparts.” Fern and Salina both talked about the power of walkthroughs and observations of both teachers and leaders, learning from multiple others.

When we talked about holistic growth in terms of developing understanding of others or society or developing wisdom leadership, that the OPES process was particularly ill equipped to contribute to this type of growth was the recurring theme. When I discussed the potential of the performance evaluation process to assist growth in societal understanding, Karmen stated,
I would say no. And if it does I haven’t experienced it to that depth yet. I’m not saying that the process itself can’t or won’t but I have not experienced that here in any way, shape or form and I don’t think . . . I don’t foresee that changing just based on how it is done.

Dorie, Fern, and Salina all concurred that discussions about leading wisely, engaging the ethical and moral dimensions of leading, were rather rare and not commonly a part of feedback discussions which tended to center around day to day doing or raising student achievement.

However, all three talked about some of the most powerful professional feedback they had received during their careers did indeed encompass wisdom leadership. Dorie shared valuable feedback she had received from a mentor.

He just said that honesty and integrity are everything in every area of your life so even if it is not what people want to hear. He said, “I don’t mean hurt people’s feelings, but being honest and doing the right thing will take you everywhere.”

When I asked Fern to share the most powerful professional feedback she had received, she shared,

He talked about moral compass a lot. And so we would talk about, you know often times we have to make decision but you always want to make the decision in a way that sort of it pointed towards your moral compass. You know regardless of what it is. If it kind of just doesn’t feel right, then you have got to investigate it. Or you have got to; you know you have got to make a decision that feels right inside.
Tatianna and I talked about her perception that the indicators on the rubric don’t necessarily mean that one has truly understood others—participated yes—but she questions the depth of understanding.

If you really look at those especially when you start to talk about the community piece it’s really being involved in committees and other associations. Is that always the way to be the best at something? Because you sit on a board or a committee. I don’t know that is true.

She went on to say, “I mean I think there is a portion of evaluation that makes you understand how the community fits into the school.” Fitting the community into the school does not indicate that the model promotes a desire for leaders to develop a deep understanding of others in order to contribute to 3S holistic leadership. Fern also contributed to this perception of doing as opposed to deep understanding; “I wouldn’t say necessarily ‘understanding’ them but part of what area that I need to get better at is continuing to get all stake holders involved.” As I engaged in discourse I heard in Dorie’s response an understanding of students as seen through the eyes of state subcategories. Each designated subcategory has to show a specific percentage of growth each year on state report cards. As Dorie shared the following I was left questioning whether standardized systems such as state report cards and OPES confine leaders to thinking about understanding in terms of specific subcategories and specific percentage increases and not a prompting toward a deep understanding of values, norms, and motivators.
I have to think about all the different groups . . . you have kids that overlap, they’re special education, they’re Amish and they live in poverty, so you get the triple whammy. Everything you do you have to think of that. If I’m trying to get all my kids to pass to fourth grade those are really big considerations and I have to really really understand. I have to know too in order to lead.

In addition to lack of time committed to the OPES process and the inattention to engaging in mechanisms of learning that principals find powerful, two of the principals had goals prescribed for them and two additional principals found themselves in the position of advocating against using a prescribed goal as part of the performance evaluation and growth plan. This appears to speak to prevailing attitudes of the standardized management paradigm regarding top down prescriptions for improvement. The performance evaluation model states, “Inherent in Ohio’s definition of principal effectiveness is the expectation that all students will demonstrate a minimum of one year of growth based on standard and reliable measures” (Ohio Department of Education, n.d.a). The model instructs evaluators that their role is to “mutually establish goals and objectives, action plans and evidence indicators” (Ohio Department of Education, n.d.a). It seems there is a gap between knowing and doing at times when evaluators prescribe goals for principals. I believe the propensity for evaluators in some districts to prescribe goals stems from an unwritten or cultural emphasis on student growth measures and the general acceptance within a standardized management paradigm that pre-packaged, prepared, and uniform responses to problems are desirable. This belief is supported by participant responses. When I asked Fern what the emphasis was in her evaluation, she
replied, “I think data, goal setting those kinds of things.” Although not intense, Karmen noted the increased priority on the student achievement piece.

The only thing that maybe has a little more weight is our student learning objective, our principal student learning objective because it is looked at again at the end of the year and that growth measure piece, that number 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 comes from how my student learning objective went.

Salina echoed this understanding when asked about what area of the performance evaluation was emphasized. “The student achievement piece. The student growth measure.”

Some of the same relationship oriented methods and experiences that principals stated caused them to learn deeply were also mentioned by principals as means of renewal. Fern talked about a time when she recently felt renewed by interacting with other leaders around new information at a summit. “[Seeing] new ideas I had not seen before. That kind of stuff excited me. Anytime there’s something that I haven’t seen before, I haven’t heard before that could really be impactful that people are already doing.” Karmen described the way she feels when engaged together with her teachers on professional topics.

That is a time that I feel so empowered because I’m right alongside them. I have my book open. I’ve got my response journal. When they are writing, I’m writing. When they are discussing, I’m discussing, learning alongside each other.

Mindy talked about feeling renewed in learning with other principals in her current graduate work at a local university. Salina said that she remembers feeling renewed
when administrative groups would work hard and learn together around a common goal in a retreat setting. “I remember that renewed us as a staff, as administrators.” When I asked Salina if her performance evaluation promoted renewal she looked at me almost incredulously as she shook her head no and said that it did not make this contribution. Only Dorie pointed to her evaluation as aiding in her feelings of renewal. She feels this “when I can see the learning happening and teachers being engaged and buying into what is happening.”

Also related to renewal was principals’ ability to own a project. I believe this speaks to the participants’ desire to be free from top down prescriptions and have the ability to create and author as opposed to implement and monitor. Tatianna told me she feels renewed and empowered.

When I know that something has to, you know like, when I have like a sense of urgency or a sense of need. I’m given the go ahead to do it. It’s that I’m given the ability to, create and do and all that on my own.

Salina concurred when she talked about being able to lead independently in the area of teaching and learning “when I am working on curriculum and instruction. [When] he lets me go and do what I do.” This idea was supported by Karmen who talked about feeling least empowered when being micromanaged. Through the process of discourse analysis, I noted that Dorie became animated during a discussion of a program that she launched in her building, taking complete ownership in a theme oriented learning experience for children to increase their reading skills. She moved around the room when she spoke to me, gestured with her hands to emphasize statements and held up a t-shirt with the school
mascot and name of the learning program she was referencing—all of these paralinguistic features speaking to a sense of ownership and pride in creating and leading as opposed to implementing the ideas of someone else.

As I completed the document analysis, I did not find reference to renewal in the OPES model or supporting documentation. This indicated to me that renewal may not be a priority or desired outcome of this framework. However, discourse analysis of the interviews with the principals indicated that renewal is needed in a profession that taps their capacity heavily. All of the principals noted that they experienced duress in the leadership positions they hold. Tatianna, a veteran of 24 years, stated that she still beats herself up over decisions she makes, describing a recent decision she made that was disputed on social media and took its toll on her. Dorie talked about grievances and staff discipline issues she was facing that presented considerable difficulty for her. Salina described a period that she had come through at the end of the previous school year in which she felt exceptionally discouraged at the needs of her school building and the limited number of resources available to assist her in addressing these needs. Fern talked about being spread thin and Mindy about getting beat up in the job and the pressure of criticisms experienced on social media venues and in the community during council meetings. Karmen talked about the significant disappointment she and her team experienced when building academic progress did not translate to state test results. The potential for professional depletion is always present and is a lived reality for these principals. Fern, Tatianna, and Karmen conveyed that hearing positive feedback about
their growth was one way that evaluators could contribute to their renewal through the performance evaluation process.

**Translating to Leadership**

Principals responded that their experience in OPES translated to their practice with others in multiple ways. Two talked about how the performance evaluation process in which they engaged served as a model for how they evaluated assistant principals who also are evaluated using the OPES process. Tatianna in particular shared with me that after our first dialogue she actively changed the process with her assistant principal, probing her about the deep learnings she would take away from the process that would contribute to her growth as a whole leader and not just that relating to school growth on established achievement measures. She relayed to me that my questions during the first interview had prompted her to think more deeply about the purpose and depth of the evaluation process where she advised her assistant principal, “This is your decision. This is your professional growth (emphasis on the word ‘your’).” Considering that I had stated in Chapter 1 that I had hoped my work would serve as an invitation to critical distancing and questioning by principals, I was encouraged to see this shift in Tatianna’s consideration of the performance evaluation process. Tatianna was the only participant to share that the type of dialogue in which we engaged during the interviews elicited a change in practice for her as evidenced by conversations with her assistant principal.

Three principals talked about how their experience with OPES cultivated empathy for their teachers who were going through the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES). Mindy said, “It actually made me empathize with them more. I’m more empathetic to
their struggling.” Additionally, Tatianna noted, “It also impacts the way that I evaluate somebody. It is how you are treated during yours. If you think you had a fair evaluation you want to make sure that you are fair.”

Not only did three principal responses indicate that the OPES process increased their empathy and understanding, they acknowledged the direct link between teacher action and student achievement to their own OPES rating. Salina put it this way, “The student achievement piece. I tell my teachers all the time, ‘I’m right here with you.’ Those kids that you have, their student growth measure affects me too.” It was interesting to note that one principal shared that evidence collection and meeting the student achievement goal created enough stress that she had to make a mental note to avoid letting it show. “So, yeah, it’s a lot, and I, I think, and I try not to be too anxious about it because I don’t want it to rub off on my staff.” So in this regard, the particular principal took pains to not allow certain aspects of the OPES process affect her work with staff in a negative manner. Mindy noted that she assists teachers in looking for evidence and coaching them in this regard, helping them to refine their evidence collection. This perhaps is indicative of a kind of cultural reproduction that stems from Mindy’s own experience with evidence collection being a valued and emphasized element of the performance evaluation process.

Karmen shared how she wanted to make sure the teacher evaluation system was meaningful for her teaching staff because she was frustrated with the meaningfulness of her own experience with OPES. Particularly she wanted to make sure she really
understood their work and that continuous feedback and robust discussions were part of the process. Karmen stated,

I look at it how I impact OTES [Ohio Teacher Evaluation System] with staff. If we had very surface level conversations or we skipped the pre-conferences. Not actually reflecting and thinking about what they have done and how they’ve done it and what it should look like moving forward and things like that.

Salina was the only principal to talk directly about the inhibiting effect the process has the potential to have on her practice:

I think no . . . I feel like where I might have taken a risk, I probably feel a little contained. Just so I could stay in line with the evaluation tool. To make sure I have that evidence to support it.

In addition, Salina talked about her, and hence the school’s increased focus on low achieving students as opposed to high achieving students as a direct result of the student growth measure portion of performance evaluation. “And, so you do find yourself always worried about the low kids, the kids that are not on track, compared to my gifted students, who still need to grow.” Salina was from one of the urban schools. This finding directly relates to the intersectionality of feminist concerns. Her response indicates that urban schools, often educating many students of poverty and color, are at potential risk of providing decreased service and attention to students at achieving and high achieving levels because of fear of sanction should students who struggle not perform on standardized assessments.
Finally, Tatianna, Salina, and Dorie all specifically relayed that their evaluations did impact them with teachers in that priorities and goals arising (or assigned) during the process were items and initiatives they would take back to the teachers and promote with them.

**Making of Local Decisions**

Principals’ perceptions about the part local context and decisions make and should make in principal performance evaluations were evidenced throughout the interviews. All of the districts chose to use the state documents with little to no changes. The only exception was one district that created a document that showed how their school improvement efforts goals aligned with OPES standards and how evidence could be gathered to support work in this area. The additional documents this particular district created were primarily cut and paste segments from the state model and rubric. In addition to using the state documents unaltered, the district leadership in all locations did not take time to dialogue with principals about the purpose, aims, and implementation of OPES in their district, nor did they engage principals in a discussion about their leadership or development needs. This speaks to power dynamics that I discuss further in Chapter 5.

The lived experiences of principals I interviewed indicate that district leadership and individual evaluators potentially have a powerful impact on the process by decisions they make about the nature of their interactions with principals, emphasis areas of performance evaluation, and how the process unfolds as it is lived by both parties. Tatianna talked about the impact that local decisions individual evaluators can have when
she talked about interactions with evaluators: “The conversations that have gone along with it [evaluation], with a handful of evaluators, not every evaluator, probably led to more professional growth than the tool itself.” She went on to say, “If they would have used another one [performance evaluation tool], would it have still allowed for it? I would—I think so. I think it was the person and how it was delivered, rather than the tool itself.” Karmen had similar thoughts about the importance of local decision making and roles with regards to OPES; “I firmly believe that the process can be whatever the evaluator makes it.”

Particular areas that became apparent during participant responses that result from local decision making are goal setting, support provided for growth and development, the emphasis on the student growth measure, as well as observation and feedback. I wrote earlier about local decisions some principals had experienced in which they were disconnected from goal setting by receiving a prescribed goal. Tatianna explained that at the time she was given prescribed goals, district leadership assumed that a leader’s professional growth goal should be equivalent to a building’s growth. “And they were not too much about personal growth, but they were more about building growth. Those building goals were your personal goals.” In Dorie’s case the goal setting in her development plan was established as school growth. Tatianna critically questioned the defining of personal professional growth with school growth, but I understood from Dorie that she accepted and embraced this viewpoint regarding a principal’s growth.

Fern and Salina both described a somewhat isolated goal setting process in which they used the self-assessment tool and then set goals without robust discussion. As I
completed the discourse analysis I noted that Fern said she engaged in a “sort of growth plan process” reinforcing the idea for me that the goal setting process was less than dynamic. Tatianna additionally described goal setting as somewhat solitary: “I develop my own professional growth plan.” Dorie described a collaborative process with her assistant principal in which they set school improvement goals together. Dorie was the one principal who noted planned learning associated with her goals. None of the principals included an actual learning goal that outlined how they would grow their capacity as part of their professional development plan such as was mentioned in the literature review when I discussed adult learning being an active part of the goal setting involved in the performance evaluation process (Guskey, 1999).

With regards to local decisions about the importance of student growth measures, several leaders indicated that local decisions placed a heightened emphasis on this metric as noted in the principal responses mentioned earlier during the discussion about connection to growth and the provision of prescribed goals. Tatianna shared the impact of this heightened emphasis:

You could receive an accomplished score on the rubric and if your data piece was just meeting the average, you weren’t an accomplished principal at all. And even though you worked very diligently to put those instructional pieces in, it came down to a day, instead of the 365 days that you give.

In terms of local decisions affecting observation and feedback, Fern and Tatianna described their evaluators as encouraging and supportive but yet not involved consistently in growth oriented feedback and dialogue surrounding the performance
evaluation goals and indicators. Time evaluators dedicated to the process was found wanting by five out of the six principals. Principals described the actual observation experience differently. Dorie and Mindy described frequent visits to their building by their evaluator and Karmen and Salina described these as rare occurrences. Tatianna and Fern described observations as happening occasionally. Karmen expressed that she wanted her evaluator to see his role differently. “I think part of his role is to help me learn, grow, and be better and that doesn’t happen.” Karmen reported that feedback related to her performance evaluation process was a “regurgitation” of the performance rubric as opposed to deep and substantive dialogue. Mindy expressed that she likes the day to day feedback she receives on problem solving issues or when she calls and needs assistance but that feedback regarding leadership growth or feedback related to her professional development goals is rare. Salina classified the feedback she receives as more of how to accomplish things as opposed to why things are done or bigger picture impacts surrounding leadership and decision making. Salina also felt that her evaluator was there to “just to check it off basically” during their evaluative conferences. Although Fern cited feedback as happening only twice a year, she did make mention that she considers the feedback discussion to be the most important part of the performance evaluation process and she appreciates the opportunity to engage in this portion of the performance evaluation process.

**Experiencing Power Dynamics**

Power relationships evidenced themselves through participant responses and discourse analysis. Principals spoke with both accepting and critical voices throughout
the discussions about performance evaluation. Five of the principals at one time evidenced an emerging critical voice as we talked about their journey through OPES. Only Tatianna noted directly that our conversation and the line of inquiry we explored together prompted her to extend her thinking about the scope and complexity of standardized systems and their influence on something like a principal’s growth and development.

Top-down standardized management understandings were revealed throughout the interviews and I did not find it surprising that this lens dominated accepted understandings. All of the principals referred to understanding student achievement through standardized assessment. Dorie, Mindy, and Fern hesitated in their response to my question about their school’s academic achievement level due to not having the most current testing results and stated they were waiting for results to be made available. When I asked principals questions about school achievement they all responded with references to state testing or asked me if I meant state testing.

Four of the principals’ student achievement goals for principal evaluation related to standardized state testing measures such as performance index (percentage achieved on spring standardized statewide test) or value added (percentage of growth from one year to next on spring standardized statewide test). Principals who referenced alternative measures (such as student reading levels) as the official student achievement performance evaluation goal were concerned that these measures would not translate to standardized measures. Karmen stated, “It’s like all these great things are happening that everybody is seeing in these areas but why the heck can’t that translate into a higher percentage of
students proficient on the OAA [Ohio Achievement Assessment].” Four principals reported that these standardized measures are the only ones commonly recognized by the public and therefore they feel pressure to increase them. The principals noted that simple grades assigned in statewide report cards are easily understood and make sense to community stakeholders. Although the default, immediate response for principals in relationship to achievement was standardized assessment, with further dialogue principals revealed additional thoughts concerning achievement and student success. Specifically, I noticed that two of the urban principals made it a priority to identify alternative measures of progress and achievement in their schools. Mindy talked about writing growth and Karmen about reading level growth. Karmen evidenced an emergent critical voice when she talked about priorities other than standardized achievement.

The measure of a success of a kid in life, which is my goal, is not to make sure that they pass that test. That is not something that is going to determine whether a kid is successful in life or not—whether or not they have the perfect AIM score at the perfect time or whether they come across proficient in the AIR tests, whether they were on-track in third grade or not on track in third grade. Those types of things aren’t going to be the sole determination of whether a kid’s growth can be successful. And that is what I want. I want these kids to walk out of here polite. I want them to have good morals and values. I want them to understand making mistakes and how we learn from those things.

Salina emphasized that she wanted her school to be a joyful place where students and teachers wanted to come each day and learn in ways that promoted deep thinking.
I’m working very hard to create a climate here of collaboration of um joy—joyful learning. And the reason I say joyful learning, because I want the kids to come to school and be happy about coming to school and enjoy being here.

I believe Tatianna summed up the prevailing assumption in terms of OPES. She stated that the OPES rubric is often treated like a fail proof formula that, if mastered, will lead to the desired result of improved standardized achievement, as if this was the most desirable type of growth for students to experience. Salina and Tatianna both talked about the confining nature of the framework. Salina articulated it this way, “OPES has narrowed—like they created the standards and the indicators and I meant that’s where we’re focused. Everyone’s focused on that. Excuse me, and um, I think sometimes you stay in that box.” To this point, I noticed during discourse analysis that achievement dominated all of the principals’ conversations with me. Things like passion, interest, and student choice were not mentioned during the interviews and were noticeably absent as I listened to the interviews and read the transcripts. Joyful climate and moral development were mentioned once each by Salina and Karmen as was pride by Tatianna but did not take precedence in the conversations.

I found the use of the word “force” by both Dorie and Karmen interesting when they spoke of the process, with perhaps the use of this word pointing to a lack of choice involved in elements of performance evaluation or to the confining nature of the evaluation. Dorie said,
I think it forces you to actually sit and put things on paper and think and reflect. I think it forces you to actually sit and put things on paper and think and reflect.

For me it’s been helpful and it forces me to reflect formally I think. Karmen said, “I’m forced once, twice a year to sit down and say those things out loud to my evaluator.”

Relationships were cited by five of the principals as being imperative to the performance evaluation process. Dorie and Mindy felt that they had established a relationship with their evaluator that was marked by openness and equanimity. Tatianna stated that her relationship was growing toward that dynamic. Tatianna used the words relationship and conversations repeatedly throughout her description of how she feels learning and growth can occur within the evaluative framework. Fern shared that she had good dialogue with her evaluator but was reluctant to suggest changes to the process that she had thought about, potentially indicating a less than equitable distribution of power in the evaluative context. Karmen clearly stated a desire for a relationship with more give and take. “It’s that, that relationship that I want to go back to.” Karmen talked about the importance of relationship: “I’m a firm believer that relationships build the foundation and if they are not there in a very strong way—um I don’t care about the rest of it.” Salina expressed a disadvantage in terms of power dynamics in her relationship with her evaluator. When discussing his role, “He’s the person that is basically in charge of what happens to me in this career.”

Tensions between emotionality and rationality were evident at times during the interviews, with principals moving between qualitative and quantitative ways of
knowing, doing, and leading. Several exchanges evidenced that these leaders conceptualized growth in a broader sense than the prevailing understandings of standardized student achievement. Mindy talked about her school’s growth in the area of writing.

We’ve seen some huge growth in that process—where kids would only write one sentence responses to a prompt, they’re writing three—five paragraphs. We’re seeing the benefits as they’re becoming better and better writers younger. We’re pushing up forward you know an eighth grade paper may be a five to seven paragraph paper. Oh, yeah, it’s amazing.

Karmen talked about how her school was seeing a lot of growth in reading and relationships between students and between students and staff. She said she was proud and confident of that growth but did experience some anxiety when scores didn’t translate to standardized test indicators that are included in the published state report card. Fern talked about the shortcomings of the performance evaluation process to capture the full or whole nature of leadership and that its focus might be too narrow. “I think sometimes that the system doesn’t measure the other kind of good things that happen.”

Principals spoke about how they understand their version of lived leadership and how they are navigating leadership identity within the prevailing value system, experiencing disconnects between their values and that which is commonly accepted as desirable. I noticed that half of the principals were self-effacing as they described emotional experiences, those not directly tied to data—those without quantitative value.
It appeared these caveats could potentially be a defense mechanism to qualify statements falling outside of the current norms of that which is valued. When I asked Mindy what she was most proud of as a leader she repeated a self-effacing phrase,

This is going to sound corny. I finally was able to do the Link County Fair Parade. So I finally was able to clear my schedule for the parade. And I cannot believe the feedback I was getting from former students and former parents in the community. And it was just validation that I have made a difference in this district. I mean it’s corny.

When Karmen answered the same question she stated,

This sounds really cheesy but until go through it, it is hard to understand but overcoming um the doubt that I had in myself to do the job and everything that I was going through personally to actually come out of that funk, that fog, that darkness that was here for a couple of years and to see the affect that had on the people in the building.

Fern referenced tension she feels as a woman leader regarding unwritten expectations.

I definitely see a difference in a building principal as a male and building principal as a female. When I make a decision versus maybe a male would make a decision, it’s seen as more emotional or maybe it has more feelings attached to it than if a, especially difficult decisions, than if maybe a male made that decision. It almost feels more threatening when a woman does it than when a man does it.
Fern noted that she is glad she is evaluated by a woman who had been a principal because it makes her feel more comfortable that these dynamics are understood. She is unsure if they would be understood by a male evaluator who may not have experienced this dynamic. Salina shared that she is actively trying to change her leadership style, which was prompted by conversations with her evaluator and self-reflection,

I do believe in this group decision making process. I do find value in it. And I try to use it as much as possible. At the beginning of this year during one of our administrative in services, we did this compass leadership. North, south, east west—I believe south is like the fluffy nurturing person. Which of course, everyone knew I was south. But all summer I was working on trying to be a north person. Just really, boom, boom, boom, boom, you know not being as nurturing but um just being straight.

All of the principals said qualitative means contributed to their understanding of when they were leading well. Karmen stated,

It is somewhat of a feeling I guess. There isn’t always a quantitative value that you can place with everything. I know that data is so important and monitoring things is so important but there are times that because you spend so much time—I spend so much time building relationships with people and trying to create a culture and a climate here and a feel here that I sort of know when there is this equilibrium and when there is not.

Dorie said,
I can feel from them, just when you are talking to the group you can tell just the questions they ask if they are comfortable enough to come and ask me questions and it might be questioning a directive or something. I feel like they feel comfortable enough to come in here.

The remaining principals noted other indicators they relied on to let them know if they were leading well including climate, interactions, and stakeholder satisfaction understood through conversation.

I noted earlier that participants evidenced emerging critical voices during interviews. Participant voices were, at times, also accepting of the predominant discourse. Mindy discussed the performance evaluation rating she received.

My [standardized] growth measures brought me into skilled, brought me down to skilled. I probably could have been accelerated as a principal. Which is very similar to what my teachers are going through. I mean, I couldn’t complain. I’m more empathetic to their struggling.

Mindy also said that perhaps she and her evaluator needed more training from the “makers of the model” on how to have collaborative discussions about the performance evaluation. “No one said, ‘This is how you have a conversation.’ You, you don’t see those videos. You know, this is how you have a conversation with XYZ, or, or this is what you’re supposed to do with a principal.” Fern talked about her hesitance to engage in a critical dialogue about the process. “I’ve thought about changes. I don’t know if I’ve thought about suggesting the changes.” Salina referenced her understanding and
acceptance of accountability. “He [evaluator] doesn’t have to tell me that I’m accountable for those scores. I already know.”

Five of the principals spoke to the top down nature of OPES. Mindy and Karmen cited compliance as the driver behind the process; Fern noted accountability; and Tatianna said that legislation drives the process as did Dorie, who specifically cited the Third Grade Reading Guarantee legislation as driving the process for primary principals.

**Summary**

Key findings from participant interviews demonstrated (a) an emphasizing of evidence gathering and presentation; (b) a constraining effect on holistic leadership growth, wisdom leadership and renewal; (c) the translating to individual leadership practice in a variety of ways; (d) the making of local decisions and the impact of those decisions; and (e) experiencing power dynamics that circulate within and accompany the standardized performance evaluation framework and process. Participants were both accepting and critical of elements of OPES and local decisions and implementation. Document and discourse analysis provided insight into assumptions and subtleties regarding expectations of the system and the perceptions of principals regarding performance evaluation in Ohio. These findings represent the lived experiences of individual principals each operating in a unique local context and are able to inform district leaders and performance evaluators regarding things to consider as they conceptualize performance evaluation and critically question assumptions embedded in the standardized system. Additionally, the findings will inform leaders as they approach
the implementation of OPES and how the process is able to guide principals toward meaningful growth and development.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

My research provides a particular qualitative understanding of the perceptions of a purposeful sample of women principals regarding a standardized framework for performance evaluation. My particular research engaged in prompted but open ended dialogue around the Ohio Principal Evaluation System, highlighting the insights of selected women principals’ lived experiences and performance evaluation. My research raises critical questions regarding the use of a standardized performance evaluation framework, looking carefully at assumptions and power relationships within the framework. The findings from participant responses suggest the need for additional critical inquiries into the OPES process and, perhaps, provide some possible critical insights into other standardized evaluation frameworks. I use the term “critical commentary” as I summarize these critical inquiries and insights.

Emerging Critical Commentaries

Key themes that emerged in the analytical work of Chapter 4 were summarized as (a) emphasizing evidence; (b) translating to leadership; (c) constraining holistic leadership growth, wisdom leadership, and renewal; (d) making of local decisions; and (e) experiencing power dynamics. The overall purpose of the Chapter 4 analysis was to examine the perceptions of a purposeful sample of principals concerning the impact of a standardized performance evaluation process on their leadership activities. Their understandings of how the standardized process delimits and influences their holistic leadership growth, their wisdom leadership, and their sense of renewal provide an
empirical basis for raising important critical questions, not only concerning the evaluation process they experienced but also other standardized evaluation frameworks. An important finding of my dissertation research is that a particular standardized performance evaluation process requires a further critical inquiry that generally remains ignored with the current process accepted without question. With reference to the stated professional learning goals of the standardized evaluation process that I studied, holistic growth, wisdom leadership, and renewal through engagement in and reflection on interpersonal experiences and relationships were seriously constrained through both hidden (Apple, 1990) and null (Eisner, 1985) curriculum dynamics. The hidden curriculum is comprised of curriculum, teaching, and evaluation practices that routinely occur in schools and privileges the position of the dominant group or paradigm in order to control participants (Apple, 1990; Null, 2011). The null curriculum consists of the attitudes, beliefs, and values that are transmitted through practice but may not be directly stated in curriculum documents. The explicit curriculum is that which is directly stated within curriculum documents (Flinders, Noddings & Thorton, 1986). The themes that emerged through my research indicate how a hidden curriculum exists in the pressure points and emphasis areas of the OPES performance evaluation process despite the stated goals of the process: pressure points being the unwritten pressure principals feel to increase state report card scores and emphasis areas being that of particular quantitative data. Similarly, the themes indicate a null curriculum consisting of what is not emphasized or transmitted (Eisner, 1985; Null, 2011). The five themes of my research
point to a null curriculum in terms of the performance evaluation process focus on holistic growth, wisdom leadership growth and leadership renewal.

**Emphasizing Evidence**

Evidence gathering was noted by several participants as an area that was emphasized during the performance evaluation process, including a heavy focus on quantitative data and achievement measures. Feminist author Nel Noddings (1984), a preeminent educational philosopher, developed the idea of seeing another person as data point and then moving back to the personal. In the case of principal evaluation, this is especially relevant in terms of student achievement measures and the danger of over focusing on quantitative data. Tatianna described her experience with this,

> Your goal was a smart goal it was going to increase by $x$ amount of points. That was your goal. So then you had to determine how many people from basic had to go up and how many people could remain the same—it was very, very mathematical.

Principals Salina, Karmen, and Tatiana talked about testing results not being their most important leadership function prompting them not to lose sight of the necessity of returning to the personal. Principals that remember this believe students are persons that will contribute to relationships of caring and personal fulfillment throughout their lifetime and not only contribute to economic prosperity via achievement (Ylimaki, 2011).

Participants in this study shared their uncertainty about the ability of copious amounts of evidence to demonstrate the full measure of their work and also the ability of the evidence gathering to ensure their understanding of others. A critical inquiry into the
benefits of principals negotiating between quantitative and qualitative understandings might consider less of a focus on collecting evidence (such as minutes, agendas, and newsletters) and consider a greater focus on developing administrators’ capacity to promote student interest, create an atmosphere of trust, promote social justice, and cultivate deep understanding of stakeholder perceptions. I raise the critical question as to whether evidence (even when presented in volumes) such as agendas, outlines, minutes, and copies of newsletters indicate one has been successful in engaging others in a shared vision or common understanding. Both Tatiana and Fern expressed straightforward skepticism about their perception of the ability of evidence to ensure this type of understanding.

Evaluators who wish to operationalize Noddings’ (1984) idea of moving between data and the personal might endeavor to strike a balance between evidence collection and honoring the sharing of personal and lived stories of evaluated principals.

Participants’ choice of language when discussing collaboration during evidence sharing with the evaluator, using words like “you best bet” and “come back,” may exemplify what I referenced earlier in the methodology discussion in Chapter 2 when I stated my goal was to share conflicting views and experiences as evidence of tensions and complexities that exist in the experience of the research problem rather than presenting a smoothed over, simplified version of the experience (Erlandson et al., 1993). The use of language fraught with tension could indicate, for these particular respondents, both their appreciation of being part of an evaluation conversation but also demonstrate an indication of discontent with negotiation required during the conversation as opposed
to productive planning for growth, contributing to a visionary process rather than a backwards focused conversation to assign a designation on a rubric. A forward focused conversation includes refining and planning to use what has already been done to inform future leadership and decision making and could have greater potential to contribute to both growth and renewal of principals providing a potential avenue for future study. A conversation with the primary focus of assigning a rating did not provide strong contribution to leadership growth or renewal for the principals interviewed as indicated in their responses.

Almost every principal shared that it was renewing to hear positive feedback on the work they did well. They all pointed to reflection as key to growth and many pointed to a desire to improve and do better. Two stated that being able to plan and establish for future work was renewing. Two principals shared that the ability to own a project and really take off with an idea or program they had initiated from start to finish was renewing. Further study may be warranted to understand whether an evaluator who is able to designate completed performance and actions on the rubric while planning for future performance and actions during both formative and summative discussions would be more likely to use the performance evaluation process to aide in renewal, something four of the five principals said was difficult for the current implementation to accomplish.

Continued critical examination is warranted to provide information to districts as to how they might structure a forward focus during performance evaluation in terms of feedback and goal setting and how this structure affects principal perception of the
process as well as how such a structure would translate to a leader’s practice with her teachers.

**Constraining Holistic Leadership Growth**

The majority of participants perceived that the performance evaluation process served the stated purpose of evidence collection to demonstrate quality assurance to a greater degree than it did to promote the stated purposes of professional growth and continuous improvement. These perceptions align with the work of Christenson (2011) and Viramontez (2011) in which principals involved in standardized performance evaluations in Massachusetts and California did not perceive their performance evaluation to be strongly related to their professional development. When I spoke with principals about the ways they learned and as they shared with me stories of powerful learning experiences it became apparent that relational learning was important to all of them. Each principal shared with me about times she learned deeply or changed her practice based on a learning experience. All of these stories about powerful learning were not driven by data and formulas but rather by relationships and feedback via trusted conversations and safe dialogue. Principals noted collaboration and two-way conversations that incorporated formative feedback and engagement with others including peers and mentors as well as evaluators that were powerful in the growth process. These same relational components were also related to principal reports of feeling renewed and energized; fueling their capacity to tackle a profession that often takes more than it gives. Formative feedback used to provide individualized professional development is cited in the literature by principals as an ideal and desired practice
(Gaziel, 2008). The characteristics of developmental supervision, including an emphasis on reflection and feedback for improvement of a primarily formative nature, are in keeping with the ways my participants indicated they learned best and most deeply (Berube & Dexter, 2006; Hopkins & Moore, 1995). They are also in line with feminist principles such as equalized relationships and power balance between evaluator and principal (Freed-Rowland, 1995).

Regarding wisdom leadership, McClain et al. (2010) discussed the wisdom of interdependence that includes the ability to look at things from multiple perspectives and purposefully engage in reflection and action with others, developing openness and empathy. They further noted that these relational exchanges allow one to learn in a way that is meaningful and to grow in an environment of trust. These authors pointed out that this is not necessarily easy and may evolve from struggle and discomfort as participants work through cycles of reflection and action with invested partners and peers.

Feminist author Petra Munro (1995) pointed out that simple isolated reflection or singular reflection with one’s supervisor is not as effective as being able to see multiple viewpoints. She astutely questioned the concept of the supervisor acting as a mirror for the practitioner holding up reflections of what has been observed. She further said that this “mirror” concept confirms the idea that there is an objective bystander who can point out good and bad of what was observed, instead of a complicated, sometimes messy dialogue regarding what is most effective in educating students. Regarding power she stated, “The supervisor still assumes the role of ‘expert,’ with its implicit power base,
instead of placing the learning experience in a reciprocal, mutually interactive framework” (p. 106).

The critical feminist lens whereby I approach my work prompts me to ask whether relying on a supervisor as the only formative feedback a principal receives and then only infrequently, both noted by principal interview responses in my research, has the propensity to set up imbalanced power relationships and less effective feedback than could be accomplished by collaborative others on an ongoing basis.

The literature I reviewed in Chapter 2 provided viable options for relational and collaborative learning practices such as peer review, mentoring, critical friends, and professional learning communities (Barnes et al., 2010; Drago-Severson, 2012; Fahey, 2011; Gil, 2001). Further inquiry regarding how these learning practices might fit within and in relationship to a performance evaluation provide next steps for research.

In terms of democratic and equitable power relationships in principal performance evaluation, Noddings’ (1984) understanding of the grading of students in terms of care theory may be directly applicable. She postulated that the caring relation is broken between students and teacher when grades are assigned because grades are for others whereas feedback is for the student, to encourage reflection and growth. Once the teacher publishes a grade, the caring relationship is disrupted. She suggested an external summative grader be considered. If this same thinking were applied to principal evaluation, the focus could be on a developmental relationship with growing and learning taking priority in which pairs of professionals dialogue and learn together with an emphasis on reflection without a summative or grading component to disrupt the
relationship. This relationship could be equal, collaborative, and develop over time. Elements of reflection and accountability might co-exist with decreased tension by divorcing the coaching and dialogue relationship from the summative evaluation component.

Principals’ responses in my research indicated that they felt renewed when they were able to engage with colleagues in learning and collaborative practice, when they were able to hear validating feedback from their evaluator and when they were able “own” projects and initiatives in their school buildings. Renewal is necessary because of realities such as burnout and turnover in the profession. This need was confirmed by all of the principals with whom I spoke during the interviews and is supported by my literature review in this area which found rising pressures on principals in the accountability culture and declining interest in the principal position due to the pressures inherent in the job (Kneese et al., 2003; Portin, 2000). Georgiades (1980) put it clearly when discussing professional renewal. “If we as a society are ever going to create institutions capable of continuous renewal, our society must consist of individuals capable of renewal” (p. 7). Ashby’s (1991) work with principals demonstrates the need for principals to experience mid-career renewal that is not necessarily related to school goals but personal professional goals. Principals in the Ashby study experienced renewal by means of mid-career project-oriented collaborative, mentoring relationships they entered into by choice.

Because renewal is not mentioned in the OPES model, this consideration would be undertaken as a local decision to relate performance evaluation to principal renewal.
Conversations about the importance of renewal to district principals, the place of renewal in performance evaluation, and how to realize renewal might establish a foundation for approaching this consideration locally.

Participant responses and document analysis indicate that learning goals are not included in the OPES process. Document analysis indicates that there is not a prescribed structure to include learning goals, and participant responses indicate that this was not a locally determined component. In Chapter 2 I referenced the literature on adult learning theory and goal setting theory. Adult learning theory incorporates self-directed approaches through experience learning, which allow the adult learner to collaborate and reflect with others whereas goal setting theory shows that learners perform more successfully if they are able to increase their capacity at the same time they are attempting to meet complex goals (Langer & Applebee, 1986; Locke & Latham, 2006; Parylo, 2012). If performance evaluation were to utilize the recommendations of adult learning and goal setting research, the process would seek to systematically increase a principal’s learning and capacity while at the same time setting rigorous goals to meet. Without opportunity to grow capacity to reach goals, attainment has a greater chance to be negatively impacted (Locke & Latham, 2006).

A critical question that my research prompts is whether the propensity for negatively impacted goal attainment is especially true for principals in urban districts. The participants in my research from urban schools felt pressure to meet proficiency requirements not in line with students’ current or projected performance on such measures, therefore creating complex goals for attainment. If the emphasis remains on
achievement centered goals without accompanying learning goals for the leader, the potential for disadvantage to urban leaders and schools may exist.

**Translating to Leadership**

Interviewed principals were able to articulate how their involvement and experience with OPES translated directly to their individual and unique work in schools with teachers. These responses represent the lived experiences of each leader and how the OPES process impacted her leadership translating to the work she emphasized with students each day and with the climate surrounding evaluations of assistant principals and teachers.

Cultural reproduction replicates norms and values over time through practice as ways of knowing and doing are transmitted from veteran to entering professionals (Ylimaki, 2011). Principals’ discussions with me about their interactions with their supervisors were sometimes mirrored in their discussions of interactions with their teachers via the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) which is the performance evaluation counterpart to OPES for teachers but were also sometimes rejected as being a negative model. There is the potential with any practice, including performance evaluation, that the practice will be either reproduced or interrupted by those experiencing it with the result being either cultural reproduction or the lack thereof.

Feminist philosopher Peggy McIntosh (2008) discussed how certain values are understood and reproduced as the normal ways of doing and being in the world and are often viewed as gender neutral but are in actuality gendered value systems that have been systematically and traditionally honored as the only or best way of being with
frameworks and epistemology that over-empower traditionally male valued ways of knowing and doing. In terms of leadership evaluation, my critical research questions whether prevailing assumptions may include a prioritization of external behaviors and less emphasis on developing wisdom in leadership and addressing both self and social understandings of others. Additional inquiry is required to understand if traditional quantitatively driven performance evaluation frameworks have the potential to reproduce gendered assumptions that translate to principals’ leadership decisions and evaluative practices with staff or conversely, if educational leaders view the evaluative process as one designed for reflection, renewal and growth and whether they are more likely to approach teacher evaluations in the same way.

Considering whether performance evaluation ratings might contribute to inequalities across race, gender, and socio-economic status is an area open for further examination. Just as Salina shared that her high achieving students were often at a disadvantage because the staff and she were afraid of sanctions being imposed through the evaluative process so to others may find themselves in similar situations in which groups of students are systematically underserved. Program evaluation, critical reflection, action research, and qualitative studies all have potential to yield information regarding whether inequalities exist in other lived contexts.

**Making of Local Decisions**

It became evident through my discussion with principals that local decision making and evaluator role was very important to the process and impacted how the performance evaluation system was perceived by these particular principals. Local
implementation and interaction was able to make the difference between a stifling and supportive evaluative environment for those interviewed and principals made this connection directly by their dialogue and interview responses. Local decision making determined to what extent collaboration occurred and the extent to which meaningful formative feedback practices were employed. Districts have the opportunity to conceptualize evaluators as coaches, mentors, monitors, sounding boards, or partners. Each of these holds distinct meanings and assumptions that cause performance evaluations to look, feel, and be experienced differently by individual principals in unique lived circumstances.

The literature is considerable regarding the nature and complexity of local context. Goldring et al. (2009) noted what I believe is a critical point concerning local factors. “Although the domains of effective learning centered leadership are universal . . . contextual factors should be considered in interpreting leadership accomplishments” (p. 24). They go on to say that variables such as experience level, local policies, geography, and the student body should all be considered as important factors in an evaluation. In addition, Militello et al. (2013) pointed out that standardization of evaluation takes for granted the assumption that all school contexts are essentially the same with the idea that if a set of leadership behaviors are catalogued and executed with precise fidelity success in schools will undoubtedly follow. Radinger (2014) also highlighted the importance of contextual factors in the ability of principals to positively impact student achievement. An example he cited is the obstacles a leader might face in instituting change in practice in face of community or staff resistance. This type of
resistance varies widely among settings even with a standardized state evaluation system. Noddings (1997) also talked about the necessity of local goal and standard setting. This rings true for evaluation standards. Local contexts are radically different for school leaders. For example, a school just finishing a lengthy, arduous strike will need much different leadership behaviors supported by wise core values to assist students through the rough terrain than will a harmonious school lulled into complacency or assumptions about social relationships. Not only will the leadership behaviors look different but so also will the types of supports and learning goals associated with the context be different, as will means and method of renewal for such a principal.

Ylimaki (2011) cautioned readers about the de-contextualization of a leader’s individuality. In the OPES performance evaluation of the participants in my purposeful sample, this type of de-contextualization occurred at both the district and personal levels. At the district level it occurred as districts implemented a standardized process without taking time to establish local priorities and understandings. De-contextualization occurred at the individual level of principals assigned improvement goals and for those whose professional development was not designed to meet individual needs.

All of the districts in the study implemented OPES without conversations with principals about the purpose, vision, aims, and implementation of performance evaluation. The districts did not articulate a district specific purpose statement or document associated with performance evaluation that would address the emphasis areas of the district as well as desired outcomes. One district considered local context by creating an alignment document detailing how their Ohio Improvement Process work fit
within the OPES rubric but principals were not participants in this process and a review of this document suggested that evidence collection was the emphasis area.

Accepting and implementing the system without engaging in dialogue regarding feedback, learning, and growth points to a potential acceptance of legitimate and expert power sources as conceptualized by French and Raven (1959). Legitimate power comes from assertion of leadership position and expectations. Expert power is established when the power source maintains expertise or knowledge that is specialized and others are reliant upon that knowledge (French & Raven, 1959).

An interpretation of Dewey’s ideas about democracy as a shared process constructed together by those who partake in it is provided by Noddings (2013) and may be applicable to performance evaluation. She contrasted this co-construction with the ideas of Hutchins and Adler in which ideals and values are established first and then lived up to and worked towards by participants. In other words, in a Deweyan sense communication and dialogue would promote democracy by the co-construction of values. My document review indicated that a large portion of the Ohio Principal Evaluation System (OPES) consists of detailed, established proficiencies principals use to build a growth plan to assist them in becoming more effective. The principals in my study did not engage in shared dialogue about what constitutes good leadership as part of the evaluation process. These descriptors were already established. Establishing performance evaluation as a democratic shared process may allow co-construction of values associated with ideal leadership in the local district. Further inquiry in how to
establish performance evaluation as a shared democratic process would be a next step to my research.

The principals I interviewed noted that local decision making affected things such as time devoted to the process, how often observations take place, what observations look like, how often and what type of feedback and learning supports are provided, how goals are set, and the types of relationships built during the process. These decisions were made in all of the districts in which the principals worked, but they indicated they were not involved in contributing to decisions. How to engage principals in this type of work as equal players in the process to establish a culture of collaboration and ownership on the part of principals, making certain that all voices are heard is worth continued study.

Noddings (2013) presented the idea of maintaining a balanced perspective when she urged readers not to “caricature” opposing views but rather to find intersections, commonalities, and negotiated spaces for dialogue (p. 14). Noddings’ discussion of balance is insightful and holds great potential with reference to principal performance evaluation.

We should avoid buying views and methods “hook, line and sinker,” but we should also avoid simply discarding them. Instead, we should ask how some of the ideas can be used, for what purposes, at what time, and with which students. (p. 21)

Identifying how to increase leaders’ capacity to contribute to their own development in meaningful ways may be an avenue to capture the spirit of Noddings’ (2013) admonition to capitalize on positive and promising ideas in established structures. In this same vein,
Rose Ylimaki (2012) talked about modeling balance while working within standardized management contexts. As applied to principal performance evaluation, the ideas of Noddings (2013) and Ylimaki (2012) point to leveraging aspects of a system such as OPES neither buying into the “package” hook, line, and sinker nor discarding it altogether because disconnects or gaps have been noted by a purposeful sample of participants in structure, purpose, or implementation.

Principals’ responses indicated self-reflection appears to be a beneficial piece of the current system and that they valued this activity. Further work with principals may consider how this piece fits into the overall larger evaluation process and how it can be used to create meaningful experiences—perhaps using the work of educational philosopher Stephen Brookfield as a springboard in this area. Critical reflection is a touchstone of Stephen Brookfield’s (1984) theorizing in terms of how adults learn and grow in a holistic fashion. He defined this type of reflection as an inquiry into one’s own and others’ practice. Such critical reflection calls for an examination of the social functions of education and the way one’s own beliefs reproduce established patterns of inequity. This definition moves well beyond reflecting on the day-to-day operations to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

Brookfield (1987) brought attention to the development of self-understanding when he called for an infusion of self-criticism into adult self-directed learning. When talking about critical thinking, he made sure to point out that this type of thought includes dimensions of positive as well as negative questioning and that asking questions about why things are the way they are does not mean that a complete deconstruction is required
of values, ideas, or institutions, thus dovetailing with Noddings’ (2013) call for finding balance by neither wholly accepting or rejecting ideas. One’s critical examination may decide that in an imperfect world, the current thought and practice is appropriate or that varying levels of adjustments and alterations are needed in order to manifest an improved democracy. He asserts that when individuals engage in this type of reflection, it allows them to connect with broader social situations, applying self-understandings and situations to broader political, cultural, and contextual circumstances.

Four participants responded pretty strongly that they appreciated the clear expectations of the OPES process, but at least two felt that sometimes the expectations felt constraining to them. Finding how to strike a balance in this area of tension could be a way that local evaluator-principal teams could optimize these features in their district, finding balance. Similarly, all principals at some point talked about the value of feedback to their practice. Feedback via formative practices is a feature that the OPES model outlines as evidenced by the document analysis. However, the timing, spirit, depth, and relevance of formative feedback principals received made the difference with the interviewed principals between meaningfulness and compliance and offer an area for local participants to consider the right balance for the unique individuals involved.

**Experiencing Power Dynamics**

Understandings from the research that I completed with women principals allows the concrete lived experiences of women being evaluated to find voice and provides a basis for additional critical inquiry regarding OPES evaluation.
Adult learning and goal setting theory principles include relevance, continuous and job embedded development, as well as active, collaborative, goal oriented, and self-directed learning (Zepeda, Parylo, et al., 2014). Means of maintaining principals as equals in the performance evaluation process may include the use of adult learning and goal setting theory principles. Principals responded that they experienced powerful learning when engaged directly with others in collaborative learning endeavors. Principals also discussed self-direction as a method of renewal, citing a feeling of empowerment when they were able to take a project or initiative and run with it, creating and leading to help students or adults grow. Three principals talked about the demotivating effect of prescribed goals, which prompted feelings of disempowerment that did not lead to growth or development.

Goal setting theory has established that setting challenging goals assists in developing professionals as opposed to goals that are easily mastered (Locke & Latham, 2006). Document analysis of the OPES model indicated that one of the outcomes of the stated accountability goal is to make compensation decisions. If principals know they will be compensated only if they meet goals, they may tend to set goals that are easily attainable. When I was in the principal role, this was a reality for me and I found that it was for Fern as well when we talked about goals and goal setting. She stated, “Maybe we’ve just . . . maybe we design them to be met.” This type of goal setting, setting easily attainable goals, could also contribute to evaluators’ prescribing goals for principals, which then diminish the principal’s power. The possibility may exist that the process has the potential to diminish principal power either through punitive sanctions for not
meeting goals or by evaluators’ propensity to set goals for principals to compensate for principals setting goals they feel they can easily meet so as to avoid sanctions. This possibility would need to be further explored by additional study. More studies designed to elicit principal perceptions regarding performance evaluation could open space for democratic evaluation practices as principal needs are systematically articulated, including those of goal setting. Post RTTT research concerning performance evaluation conducted by Viramontez (2011) noted that principals perceived collaborative goal setting as specifically helpful to development and provides a further basis for inquiry.

In Chapter 4 I noted that Salina talked about her school’s increased focus on lower students while neglecting the needs of higher performing students as directly related to her performance evaluation. Individual districts and contexts have the capacity to prioritize the achievement of a specific population, such as the lowest students or the highest students, with the potential to influence restricted curriculum or a neglected population of learners.

For example, a district that puts pressure on principals to increase the lowest reading scores may find that this has the unanticipated result of restricting the curriculum and learning opportunities for high achieving math students. In addition, an over emphasis on tested subjects may similarly mean that untested subjects are given less priorities by building leaders who are under direct pressure to raise test scores or face evaluative sanctions such as lack of pay raise and promotion, both of which the OPES model documentation lists as potential rewards/sanctions for successful/unsuccessful OPES completion.
Principals responded to questions and chose to share stories and experiences that indicated a tension between emotionality and rationality, between qualitative and quantitative ways of knowing. This was evidenced as they responded in ways that were at odds with a top down standardized management quantitative approach—an approach that elevates what have been traditionally male normed or male guided values of competition, numerical data, ranking and rationality. The participants spoke of knowing they were leading well by indicators such as the way staff interacted with them, the climate or feel of the building, and the quality of daily conversations as well as the questions that staff members asked. Traditionally male guided indicators do not highly value relationships and qualitative ways of knowing and have not been commonplace in an education system established and maintained by male values (McIntosh, 2008). Feminist author Peggy McIntosh asserted that male privilege or norming often takes “institutionalized and embedded forms” (p. 62). A standardized evaluation process such as OPES is in keeping with an institutionalized or embedded form of practice. Because of its data driven nature and emphasis on evidence and accountability, the embedded values appear to be those of an historically male guided nature.

In my study, three principals shared stories about sources of pride that were rooted in relationships. All of the principals noted intuitive knowledge, not numbers, when they talked about how they knew they were leading well. Three principals talked about progress indicators other than standardized testing measures. I noted that within the same conversation at least two principals spoke about finding ways other than standardized mechanisms to understand growth as well as efforts to increase state report
card results, trying to navigate both ways of knowing and being. It was interesting to note that at least two qualitative responses were explicitly accompanied by statements that appeared to minimize the importance of the statement such as, “this sounds corny” or “this sounds cheesy.” I understood these statements to serve as a learned behavior of these principals to caveat qualitative knowing as secondary or less accepted in the current accountability landscape. Ylimaki (2011) talked about leadership identity and the fact that principals tend to value the qualities and priorities that are emphasized by district leadership. If efficiency and productivity are valued over relationships and passion, leaders may have a tendency to also honor these traits. Salina was deliberately attempting to change her leadership style from nurturing to straight talking and direct, noting that her evaluator had brought the need for change to her attention.

In her work on emotionality, feminist philosopher Alison Jaggar (2004) made it clear the impact male norms have had on current thinking, “by construing emotion as epistemologically subversive, the western tradition obscured the vital role of emotion in the construction of knowledge” (p. 378). Reason, rationality, and numerical data are taken for granted as universal and the best ways of knowing with emotion being relegated to irrationality and the particular (Alcoff, 2008). Emotion is understood by feminist thinkers to be necessary rather than detrimental to the construction of knowledge. Emotions are what allow human beings to engage with the world and make sense of ideas, others, and relationships. Emotions are what fuel critical thinking and investigating the taken for granted (Jaggar, 2004). Jaggar stated, “Emotions, like other data . . . should be attended to seriously and respectfully rather than condemned or
Principal Fern stated that she thought it was advantageous to be evaluated by a woman supervisor who “got” the emotionality of the position. By this she explained that, at times, emotions were either assigned to her or misinterpreted by others during her interactions with them. She felt a woman supervisor understands this and applies this knowledge when evaluating her performance. This is an interesting dynamic that may be an avenue for continued study to gain more insight into this phenomenon.

Evaluators who remain sensitive to the potential of prevailing or pervasive discourse to influence evaluation relationships may be able to allow space for critical thinking and questioning by principals. It appears that evaluators might also be important to accomplishing the work that feminist philosophers discuss when calling for the legitimizing of relationship oriented norms of interconnectedness that operate in opposition to autonomy and reasoning not in tune with emotion, viewing immersion in social networks as moral development and not a sign of weakness (Benhabib, 2008).

Principals talked about learning with others through book studies, retreats, conferences, and discussion in interconnected ways as being pivotal to their growth and development. These responses indicate that the evaluators of these principals can assist in operationalizing opportunities for relationship oriented practices where meaningful feedback and learning can occur.

**Implications for Future Research**

Several areas of future research exist with regards to the principal performance evaluation process and holistic leadership growth including wisdom leadership. A limitation of my research was that it was confined to principal perceptions and
understandings without utilizing robust triangulation methods such as observation of performance evaluation conferences or analyzing specific case performance evaluation documentation.

Further study involving principal performance evaluation in a standardized environment include and inquiry to understand whether the way a principal understands and defines her professional development impacts her perceptions about how the OPES affects leadership growth. Do principals that equate school growth with their professional growth perceive the process to be more impactful in a positive manner to their development than those who do not equate school growth with their own professional growth as a leader? In the Parylo et al. (2012) study, principals strongly equated school growth with their own professional development and perceived the performance evaluation process to be continuous and formative.

Another potential area of further research has to do with principal perceptions regarding the best ways to increase holistic 3S or wisdom leadership. The responses in my research point to a possible gap in the current OPES implementation in all four districts to contribute to leaders that learn deeply about their subject matter, themselves and others while developing strong ethical orientations to leadership and responses to leadership challenges.

An item of critical research surrounding principal performance evaluation and the intersectionality of feminist thought could be an understanding how principals in varied school settings experience different emphasis areas in their evaluation process and whether school setting impacts the distribution of power in the relationship between
principal and evaluator. This type of critical research may indicate whether there are systematic biases that evidence themselves within a structure such as OPES.

Further research could also include a qualitative perspective of evaluators’ understandings of the OPES process to look at their perceptions about the role they play and how they believe they impact the power balance in the evaluation relationship as well as how they impact principals’ holistic growth and propensity toward wisdom leadership. This type of research would build on the work done by Bingham (2013) who began research in differences and similarities of superintendent and principal perceptions of standardized performance evaluation.

Finally, an opportunity for further research regarding renewal would encompass what principals need in terms of renewal at various career stages and how relationships, feedback, and goal setting of a performance evaluation process might contribute to renewal most effectively.

**Summary**

Interviewing women principals regarding perceptions of their engagement in OPES provided insight into how they experienced the framework. Although the stated intentions of the OPES process are to increase professional development and growth of Ohio’s leaders, it appears to fall short of these intended purposes when hearing from a purposeful sample of women leaders regarding their concrete lived experiences while engaged in the process. Critical commentaries emerged from my research to indicate that growth and development outcomes have not materialized for principals who continue to experience pressure to increase standardized assessment scores as the strongest indicator
of student growth under a standardized evaluation framework. Both hidden and null curriculum aspects are at work to ensure a greater focus on accountability (via student growth measures) as opposed to responsibility, a distinction made clear by philosopher Nel Noddings (2013), responsibility referring to the ethical and moral dimensions of leading involved in holistic and wise leadership. Specifically, the interviewed principals discussed their understandings of OPES in (a) emphasizing evidence; (b) translating to leadership via decisions they make regarding curriculum and teaching that are often limiting in nature; (c) the constraining impact of the process to holistic leadership growth, wisdom leadership, and renewal; (d) the making of local decisions and the importance of these decisions to the process; and (e) the experiencing of power dynamics within performance evaluation to systematically empower or disempower specific principals.

Hearing about women principals’ lived experiences may inspire areas for change by those who are implementing OPES as well as those engaged with other standardized evaluation frameworks. In addition, women principals’ insights may prompt readers to consider things such as relationship oriented growth, development, and renewal practices as part of performance evaluation and think critically about how power relationships are established, maintained and culturally reproduced. Certainly further research is warranted to understand how principals perceive that processes such as OPES and other standardized performance evaluation frameworks contribute to holistic leadership growth, wisdom leadership and renewal as well as how power is distributed throughout the process.
Noddings (1984) advocated engagement in question raising instead of rule following. Current evaluative processes may not necessarily lend themselves to a dialogue that starts with, “what if?” but could put leaders in the position of proving completion of prescribed competencies, considering several principals I interviewed noted that the evaluation process was driven by compliance and consisted of a series of jumping through hoops driven by external legislation as did principals in the Kimball et al. (2009) and Cassavant et al. (2012) studies on performance evaluation in the accountability era.

As additional studies are completed regarding standardized principal performance evaluation, evaluators and principals can be prepared to move beyond the taken for granted by re-imagining the process in new ways. Noted philosopher Maxine Greene (2000) discussed breaking boundaries of routine thinking when she talked about linking the imagination to possibility. “There are many instances of images of the possible calling attention to what is lacking that break through the boundaries laid down by the taken-for-granted” (p. 273). These words prompt me to think about the images of possibility expressed in the conversations I had with six dedicated principals all committed to growing and developing by whatever means available, including performance evaluation. Current standardized performance evaluation dynamics and practices represent the taken for granted situation for evaluators and those being evaluated. Considerations arising from my research and future research may constitute images of the possible, ready to be capitalized upon by evaluators and principals as they move forward to improve educational leadership performance evaluation.
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW TEMPLATE
Appendix A

Interview Template

Session 1

Introductory Questions

Can you tell me how you came to be an administrator?

Can you tell me about your school and current leadership position?

Research Question 1: “How do women principals leading in Ohio schools perceive the Ohio Principal Evaluation System? “How do women principals leading in Ohio schools perceive the Ohio Principal Evaluation System to impact holistic leadership growth?

What does good leadership mean to you? How did you come to think of it in those terms?

Can you tell me what you are most passionate learning about?

Can you tell me how you come to understand and develop personal professional development and improvement goals?

How does evaluation relate to your professional growth?

Can you tell me about a time you have been most proud of an accomplishment as a principal?

How do you, as a leader, engage in professional growth?

Can share with me the most impactful professional development you have been involved in?

Research Question 2: What are the power dynamics involved in Ohio leadership performance evaluation? “How do power dynamics involved in performance evaluation translate to the individual’s leadership?”

Can you tell me about your experience of being evaluated?

What is your role in evaluation?

Can you tell me about the goal setting process that you (and your supervisor) use?
What is your supervisor’s role in evaluation?

Where do you meet with your supervisor?

How often do you interact with your supervisor?

Can you tell me about a time when you received powerful feedback in your leadership career?

When are you most and least empowered as a leader?

Can you describe feedback you receive in terms of the how of leading/what to do?

Can you describe feedback you receive in terms of why of leading/why you make the decisions you do?

What kind of feedback do you receive from your evaluation?

What feelings did your last emotions evoke? Your previous evaluations?

What impact does evaluation have on your leadership?

How do you feel that OPES has helped you grow?

How do you feel that OPES has detracted from your growth?

Session 2

Research Question 1: “How do women principals leading in Ohio schools perceive the Ohio Principal Evaluation System? “How do women principals leading in Ohio schools perceive the Ohio Principal Evaluation System to impact holistic leadership growth?”

How does evaluation impact you in terms of understanding things about yourself?

Can you tell me about a time you learned something significant about yourself as a leader?

How does evaluation impact you in terms of understanding others?

Can you talk about a time you learned about the way one of your stakeholder groups understood something?
How does evaluation impact you in terms of understanding the societal culture surrounding your school?

Can you tell me about a time when you came to understand something significant about societal or cultural influences that impacted your school or leadership practices?

Can you tell me about a recent time you felt renewed in your professional capacity?

What part does evaluation play in professional renewal?

What does leadership wisdom mean to you? How is it evidenced in your practice?

How do you gain wisdom in leadership?

**Research Question 2:** What are the power dynamics involved in Ohio leadership performance evaluation? “How do power dynamics involved in performance evaluation translate to the individual’s leadership?”

Tell me about a time when your practice changed. How did it come to change?

Can you tell me how it felt to go through those changes? What support did you receive during the process? What additional support would you have liked during the process?

What do you perceive as the advantages and disadvantages with your experience of the evaluation process?

What is the most important part of your evaluation?

What areas of leadership are most focused on through the evaluative process?

What areas of leadership are least focused on through the evaluative process?

What part do state mandates play in goal setting? Professional development? Evaluation accountability?

What part does accountability play in your evaluation?

Can you talk about how standardized assessments impact your evaluation?

Can you tell me how you have grown as a leader and what were the sources of that growth?
REFERENCES


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