

GROUP DYNAMICS AMONG PHYSICAL EDUCATORS AND PRINCIPALS IN BLUE
RIBBON SCHOOLS

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

Although there is extensive literature on group dynamics in K-12 schools, only a few studies have examined group dynamics that occur in physical education departments (Castelli & Rink, 2003; Keay, 2005). Guided by Giddens' Structuration Theory (1984) this investigation sought to explore group dynamics that occur within and around middle school physical education departments. The purposes of this study were (a) to understand the role of group dynamics in schools that have achieved and sustained departmental recognition, and (b) to understand how the role of leadership and the structure surrounding the department impacts group dynamics. Participants in this study were 14 physical educators and 4 principals representing three different Blue Ribbon recognized physical education departments. Each physical education teacher and principal participated in formal and informal interviews designed to explore their perceptions of group dynamics and leadership within and around their respective department. In addition, 80 hours (10 full school days) of observation were conducted around each department to monitor group dynamics that occur on a daily basis. Miles and Huberman's four stage process (1994) guided data analysis. Results of this study indicate that teachers valued communication within and around the department, a team atmosphere, and distributed leadership. Both teachers and principals shared a desire to place the needs of students first and projected the same philosophy regarding the purpose of physical education. This study provided an initial glimpse as to what constitutes a quality middle school physical education program, however additional research is warranted.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Group dynamics that occur within successful physical education departments is a relatively unexplored topic. Considering the unique working conditions that often impact physical education (ex. teachers needing to share teaching space and equipment) it seems valuable to explore the relationships that occur within and around physical education departments that have garnered recognition. Insights into successful programs may provide a “blueprint” that will help other schools elevate the quality of physical education through productive interactions.

This chapter will (a) discuss the role of physical education in today’s school systems, (b) examine research on physical education departments and group dynamics, (c) explain how successful physical education programs are defined, (d) describe the characteristics of quality physical education programs (e) introduce the purpose of the current research and the research questions, and (f) propose the significance of such research.

The Role of Physical Education in Schools

The marginalization of physical education is prevalent within today’s schools. Physical education has often taken on the role of an inferior subject. The general perception has been that it is a marginalized subject and not a part of the core curriculum (Stroot, Collier, O’Sullivan, & England, 1994; Woods & Lynn, 2001). Additionally, due to an increased emphasis on academic achievement, physical education has experienced a reduction in class time. Five years after the inception of No Child Left Behind Act, school districts have reduced the amount of time spent in physical education and recess by an average of 90 minutes per week (McMurrer, Center on Education Policy, 2008).

The current status of physical education is disquieting considering the fitness levels of our nation's youth; however, many schools continue to provide opportunities for the subject (Stevens-Smith, 2007). Likewise, the positive relationship between physical fitness and academic achievement continues to be confirmed (Castelli, Hillman, Buck, & Erwin, 2007; Zeigler, 2011). Even though a quality physical education program should provide a strong base for achieving fitness goals set out for today's youth, the current policies surrounding the subject have undermined its value. An example of this is the emphasis placed on school-based standardized testing (Stevens-Smith, 2007). Since physical education is not included in standardized testing, it often faces an uphill battle for time and resources. Considering the opposition that physical educators experience, it is not surprising that many studies have examined the attrition rates of teachers in this subject area (Huberman, 1989; Macdonald, Hutchins, & Madden, 1994; Martinez, 2004) and the difficulties that accompany such turnover (Ingersoll, 2001). Due to these challenges and the unique characteristics of the field, a better understanding of the group dynamics within and surrounding physical education departments is warranted.

Group Dynamics in K-12 Schools

Group dynamics in the context of K-12 schools has been the focus of considerable research. Given that group dynamics in schools can involve various populations (leaders, teachers, and/or students, etc.), population sizes, and subject matters (English, physical education, etc.) among other things, a wide range of studies are grouped under the umbrella of this topic. Literature in education encompasses power and micropolitics within and around groups (Blase, 1987b; Blase, 1989a; Blase, 1989b; Blase & Anderson, 1995; Brosky, 2011; Eddy Spicer, 2011; West, 1999), group collaboration and relationships (Baker, 2011; Clark & Clark,

1997; Cwikla, 2007; Somech, 2008), group decision making and distributed leadership (Lambert, 2002; Margolis, 2008; Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, & Myers, 2007; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001), and the relationship between micropolitics and leadership (Flessa, 2009; Hoyle, 1999; Lindle, 1999). Despite the abundance of literature related to group dynamics in education, studies in physical education are scant.

Group Dynamics in K-12 Physical Education

Limited studies have explored physical education department dynamics and the characteristics or perceptions of educators who make up those departments (Castelli & Rink, 2003; Keay, 2005). One such study compared high and low performing physical education departments and the roles of teachers and individuals surrounding their departments (Castelli & Rink, 2003). Using the determinations made by the South Carolina Physical Education Assessment Program of 62 schools, the study explored the characteristics of four high performing schools and four low performing schools. Based on surveys ($n = 22$) and interviews ($n = 14$) conducted, themes emerged that resulted in a list of 24 characteristics found within high and low performing schools (12 each). Teachers at high performing schools, for example, had clear teaching expectations whereas the teachers at the low performing schools found it challenging to deal with their wide range of responsibilities. The teachers at the high performing schools, likewise, were better able to balance their teaching and coaching responsibilities. Group dynamics, such as the ones found in these schools, have essentially gone unexplored within physical education departments. Additional information regarding the navigation of successful programs, along with information about the dynamics among the individuals within departments, and how programs internally handle the challenges they face may provide the field with additional knowledge to strengthen the overall direction of physical education in schools.

Teacher differences within departments include but are not limited to age, experience, goals, and job commitment. Although studies have explored why and when teachers have left the field (Huberman, 1989; Macdonald, Hutchins, & Madden, 1994; Martinez, 2004; Woods & Lynn, 2001), literature regarding the effects of staff turnover on the dynamics of physical education programs is lacking. These studies echo the findings of Huberman (1989) that a high percentage of teachers leave the field within the first five years of teaching. As a result, an understanding of how teachers in recognized programs coexist, and to some extent thrive, in today's turnover ridden physical education world is warranted. Additionally, this research may provide information as to the dynamics needed to extend teachers' careers and/or how changes in the department dynamic are experienced.

Successful Physical Education Programs Defined

Before group dynamics can be examined in high "quality" programs, departmental success should be defined. Identifying departmental success is not a simple task because its definition may differ depending on the goals of the individuals within the department, the goals of the administration, and/or the goals or views of any person who has an opinion or stake in the matter. As a result, it is important that the definition be seen as acceptable on a national scale. Accordingly, departmental success/achievement will be explored through examining programs that align to the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) national standards. Due to the discontinuation of NASPE's national STARS program in 2010 (NASPE, 2013), identifying a state recognition program that aligns to the national standards is necessary. Furthermore, in seeking to better understand the group dynamics and leadership characteristics of successful programs, it is valuable to study schools whose participation in a recognition program are not mandated. One such program is the Blue Ribbon Recognition Program created

and implemented by the Illinois Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (IAHPERD, n.d.).

According to the IAHPERD website, the Blue Ribbon Recognition Program is “A voluntary program to recognize excellent physical education and health programs” (n.d., Purpose section, para. 1). The program’s evaluative criterion reflects state and national standards as well as the standards of the Illinois State Board of Education (IAHPERD, n.d., Process section, bullet point 1). Furthermore, the Blue Ribbon Recognition Program recognizes “excellent programs in all Illinois schools at all grade levels” (IAHPERD, n.d., Why use the Criteria section, bullet point 3).

Characteristics of Quality Physical Education Programs

The NASPE resource brief *Quality Physical Education* (QPE) lists four components of a high-quality physical education program which include: “opportunity to learn, meaningful content, appropriate instruction, and student and program assessment” (NASPE, 2014b, The Four Components of a High-quality Physical Education Program, bullet points 1-4). As a result of high quality physical education, students should develop “health related fitness, physical competence, cognitive understanding and positive attitudes about physical activity so that they can adopt healthy and physically active lifestyles” (NASPE, 2014b, Why is Quality Physical Education Important?, bullet points 1-4). Each of the four components previously listed are present within the Blue Ribbon Recognition Program’s *Criteria for Evaluating Physical Education in Schools: Grades K-12* (IAHPERD, n.d.).

Related to the opportunity to learn component, the Blue Ribbon Recognition Program and QPE presume that physical education teacher requirements will be comparable to teachers of other subjects and that developmentally appropriate programs are led by teachers certified in the

content area. In relation to the meaningful content component, both the Blue Ribbon Recognition Program and QPE suggest that learning and growth should occur in the psychomotor, cognitive, and affective domains. Additionally, the evaluative criteria of the Blue Ribbon Recognition Program match the appropriate instruction component. Each state that all students must participate in physical education and that instruction should reflect best practices. Finally, the student and program assessment component of QPE matches the Blue Ribbon Program principles that Physical Education Programs effectiveness needs to be assessed by supervisors within the school (IAHPERD, n.d.; NASPE, 2014b).

Purpose and Research Questions

Due to the negligible literature on department dynamics in K-12 physical education, additional research is needed to better understand the factors that enhance, as well as constrain, department achievement in such programs. An examination of facilitators and barriers that affect program recognition is warranted to provide insights related to the development and sustainability of well-functioning physical education departments. An analysis of the characteristics of state recognized programs, in alignment with national standards, and the physical education teachers within these schools should help to provide further insight. Consequently, the purposes of this study were (a) to understand the role of group dynamics in schools that have achieved and sustained departmental recognition, and (b) to understand how the role of leadership impacts group dynamics within and around the departments. This study will address the following research questions:

1. What are the perceived roles of the individuals within/around the department and how were those roles shaped?

2. How has Blue Ribbon recognition affected the department and the stakeholders surrounding the department?
3. What influence have the individuals had on the structure of the department?
4. How have departmental expectations both inside and outside of the department defined the roles of the individuals?
5. What are the leadership characteristics that helped to shape the department?

Significance

Group dynamics among teachers, teachers and principals, and principals and department heads within quality physical education departments is relatively unexplored. Although multiple studies have examined the impact of principals and other educational leaders on physical education (Blankenship & Coleman, 2009; Hummel, 2006; Ratliffe, 1986; Ratliffe, 1988; Stringer, 2004; Tannehill, Romar, O'Sullivan, England, & Rosenberg, 1994), only one investigation has examined the departmental characteristics of state or nationally recognized physical education programs (Castelli & Rink, 2003). Furthermore, few studies have examined how leaders and teachers come together to create quality physical education programs (Castelli & Rink; Keay, 2005). Due to limited research in physical education related to the perceptible nature of such departments, research is needed to determine these characteristics in hopes that they can be defined and replicated.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview of the Structuration Theory

The theory underpinning this study was Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory (1984) which focuses on the terms structure and agency. Structure is defined as social norms and societal expectations, while agency is defined as the actions individuals (agents) take to, not only meet, but also influence societal norms. Societal structure, or in this study's case, the school structure, plays a key role in the actions taken by agents by placing certain expectations upon them. In relating this study to the constructs of Giddens' Structuration Theory (1984), the structure of schools are influenced by local, state, and national policies that provide a set of overarching rules that must be navigated by the agents (administrators and teachers) at the building level. In realizing or predicting the consequences of their actions, each individual teacher (agent) (Giddens, 1984) has the power to influence his or her surroundings (physical education department, school, administration, students, etc.).

Another component related to this theory is the concept of duality of structure. This suggests that social organizations impact and are influenced by both structure and agency. Structure and agency continuously affect each other and are dependent upon each other. Furthermore, the actions of the agents within the structure have the ability to change or reinforce the structure itself (Giddens, 1984).

Although the theories use within physical education literature is limited, a few studies related to the field have been influenced (Rossi, 1999) or guided (Lux & McCullick, 2011) by Structuration Theory. Rossi's work examined ten Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) students over three years to understand how they were molded by personal and socially constructed knowledge and influenced by the structural systems that surround PETE programs.

The results of the study suggested that during professional knowledge construction the students experienced dilemmas that challenged their professional self-identities. Rossi proposed that these dilemmas need to be worked through to acquire a sense of security (1999).

Guided by the Structuration Theory, a study conducted by Lux and McCullick (2011) used a single case study design to analyze how one “exceptional” elementary teacher, Grace, functioned in a field that is often marginalized. The emergent themes produced four strategies that the teacher used to navigate the teaching landscape. The strategies were: (a) being one of their own (creating close bonds with non-school personnel), (b) acquiring and managing instructional currency (pursuing tools and resources that would improve the overall physical education program), (c) cultivating and nurturing kinship with a paraprofessional (establishing a high level of trust and a friendship with her paraprofessional), and (d) fostering diplomatic relations with colleagues (aligning with teachers of other subjects who had views similar to her own) (Lux & McCullick, 2011). Within their discussion, the authors stated that the Structuration Theory, “allowed us to explore how Grace’s actions influenced everyday practices in her school structure as well as how that structure informed the agency (strategies and tactics) that she selected to successfully navigate marginality” (Lux & McCullick, 2011, p. 369).

Although a study by Blase, (1987b) titled *Political Interactions among Teachers: Sociocultural Context in the Schools*, did not use the Structuration Theory as a framework, the authors provided a fitting description of the relationship between the school and the teacher. Blase stated, “Teacher interactions can be viewed as, in part, ‘political.’ They affect and are affected by the school’s social structure and cultural orientations” (1987b, p. 286). The intended outcome of the current study is not only to better understand how individuals (agents) in a physical education department coexist, but to understand how their actions (agency) and the

surrounding structure influence each other. Given that this study explores the group dynamics and leadership characteristics present in Blue Ribbon Schools, it is valuable to understand the duality of structure within these schools.

Structuration Theory suggests that the accepted norms of the department, many created by the physical educators, influence the individual agents. The structure, including accepted norms and the environment, influences the actions by the principals, department heads and physical educators and vice versa (Giddens, 1984).

The insights provided by exploring the duality of structure in Blue Ribbon Schools may help to shed light on department similarities (themes) that should be emulated in other schools. Furthermore, this theory may provide additional understanding of how these schools challenge obstacles that are present in modern physical education programs.

Group Dynamics

Cartwright (1951) stated that:

In careful usage the phrase, *group dynamics* refers to the forces operating in groups. The investigation of group dynamics, then, consists of a study of these forces: what gives rise to them, what conditions modify them, what consequences they have, etc. The practical application of group dynamics (or the technology of group dynamics) consists of the utilization of knowledge about these forces for the achievement of some purpose (p. 60).

Dorwin Cartwright (1951) highlighted the early research conducted by previous authors to recognize the challenges and processes that impact individuals in group settings. Cartwright, along with other researchers, examined the processes that affected groups including: “group productivity; communication; social perception; intergroup relations; group membership; leadership and improving the functioning of groups” (Cartwright, 1951, p. 59). Although

Cartwright's review of literature recognized studies conducted by several authors, it was the work of Kurt Lewin that first identified the term group dynamics (Lewin, 1945; Lewin, 1999).

As noted by Cartright (1951), Lewin, who established the Research Centre for Group Dynamics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was the first to recognize that group dynamics needed to be explored in greater detail through scientific methods. Lewin provided several influences that helped mold his Research Centre and, in turn, introduced initial expectations/guidelines related to group dynamics research for future scholars. These included: (a) the study of group life and dynamics should include exploring conditions that create or limit change among groups; (b) all aspects of the group must be considered; (c) the group should be explored with a broad lens beyond the societal expectations of them; (d) much thought should be given to the reliability and applicability of research methods and instruments; (e) updated concepts and theories should keep pace with research findings; (f) field experiments must take into account whether or not the environment is conducive to studying group dynamics; (g) practitioners need to be included in the research processes for them to better accept research findings; (h) quality studies over time will show that practical procedures will provide the strongest theoretical experimental analysis; and (i) group studies need to separate themselves from prejudice and technical difficulties and should prove themselves to be worthwhile endeavors that avoid "group manipulation" (Lewin, 1945).

Since Lewin's initial research (Lewin, 1945), countless studies have explored relationships between and among individuals in a multitude of settings and from a variety of backgrounds. Despite the years that have passed since the seminal work of Lewin, the study of group dynamics has grown exponentially, yet many of the same questions continue to be examined. Stewart, Stewart, and Gazda define group dynamics as "a particularly broad term that

refers to the general study of group processes and behavior” (1991, p. 76). Considering the broad definition, it is not surprising that over a 1,000 journals published over 9,000 articles related to group theory, research or practice between 1980 and 1995 (Stewart, Stewart, & Gazda, 1997). Largely due to the extensive literature review conducted by Stewart, Stewart, and Gazda (1997), the creation of a journal whose singular purpose was to publish articles related to groups and group dynamics was established. This journal, which has been in existence since 1997, is titled *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice* and includes group studies within multiple disciplines (Kivlighan & Miles, 2007). Because of the breadth of studies related to group dynamics, it is necessary to limit further literature pertaining to group dynamics to those articles surrounding general education and physical education.

Group Dynamics in K-12 Schools

The literature review conducted by Coppieters (2005), suggested that schools, as social organizations, should be viewed as complex dynamic systems due to a continuous flow of problems and demands. Considering the dynamic environment of the modern school system, it is not surprising that many studies have explored group dynamics in K-12 schools. Within group dynamics literature, studies have examined, but are not limited to, teacher socialization (Blase, 1985), power and micropolitics within and around groups (Blase, 1987b; Blase, 1989a; Blase, 1989b; Blase & Anderson, 1995; Brosky, 2011; Eddy Spicer, 2011; West, 1999), group collaboration and relationships (Baker, 2011; Clark & Clark, 1997; Cwikla, 2007; Somech, 2008), group decision making and distributed leadership (Lambert, 2002; Margolis, 2008; Scribner et al., 2007; Spillane et al., 2001), and the relationship between micropolitics and leadership (Flessa, 2009; Hoyle, 1999; Lindle, 1999). Such studies only scratch the surface of

group dynamics in schools, but provide some valuable insights as to the breadth of research conducted within this area.

School socialization. In an early study Blase (1985) explored teacher socialization in schools. The author referenced teacher socialization work from Waller (1932) that occurred 50 years prior. Through ethnographic research methods, Waller analyzed common situations encountered by teachers and found teaching to be a restrictive occupation due to community expectations and psychological and social influences (as cited in Blase, 1985, p. 235-236). Relatedly, Blase (1985), through data retrieved from two separate case studies, examined the socialization of teachers from two high schools ($n=43$ and $n=80$, respectively). Blase found that the teachers in both schools were impacted by several factors including the needs and expectations of students, parents, and administrators that caused them to redesign their teaching methods and subject matter. In addition, student-teacher interactions were impacted by forces both within and outside of schools. He concluded that a change in the culture of schools from within is necessary to increase the quality of education (Blase, 1985). In subsequent research, Blase and others examined school cultures by exploring group dynamics in K-12 schools.

Blase and Anderson (1995) highlighted the work of Blase (1987b) which defined the interactions that occur between teachers and between teachers and school leaders (principals and department heads) as political interactions. Blase identified positive interpersonal politics as “work-related interactions that increase cohesion among faculty” and negative interpersonal politics as “actions that decrease cohesion in schools” (Blase & Anderson, 1995, p. 69). By the late 1980’s limited research focused upon group dynamics through the lens of micropolitics (Blase, 1989a).

In 1989 Blase produced two studies centered on micropolitics in schools (1989a; 1989b). In the first study, Blase surveyed 906 teachers and asked them to describe one factor within their schools that involved politics. Without prompts, 276 teachers discussed their principal's use of control-oriented and manipulative micropolitics when dealing with faculty. Among those teachers, 220 teachers suggested that their involvement within their schools, including their relationships with other faculty, principals, and students, was negatively impacted as a result of micropolitics (1989a).

Blase's subsequent study (1989b) analyzed teachers' use of micropolitics to gain some form of favor or recognition from their principals. The author surveyed 770 teachers and found that 404 deemed their principals as "open" and "effective leaders" (Blase, 1989b, p. 381). Some of the characteristics of these principals were defined as reasonable, honest and nonmanipulative, communicative, and supportive. As a result, the political strategies employed by the teachers included, but were not limited to, diplomacy ($n = 382$), conformity ($n = 76$), and engaging in extra work ($n = 50$) (Blase, 1989b).

Similar to the work of Blase, Brosky (2011) examined the replies of 149 teacher leaders related to micropolitics and teacher leadership. The teachers were respondents from a larger group of K-12 teacher leaders ($N=400$) who participated in a program designed to develop effective leadership. The findings suggested that the main sources of support for teacher leaders, their principals and colleagues, were also seen as barriers to their success. Teacher leaders viewed the use of politics and "political maneuvering" as additional factors that negatively impacted teacher leadership (Brosky, 2011, p. 6), yet participants expressed that, "these political behaviors are inherent in organizations" (Brosky, 2011, p. 6). Additional studies in the area of power and micropolitics in education explored the dynamics of power in professional

collaborations in school settings (Eddy Spicer, 2011) and the ways in which studying micropolitics in schools cultures could help to educate both current and future leaders (West, 1999).

Group collaboration and relationships. Group dynamics related to collaboration and group relationships has etched its own place within group dynamics literature. Of the studies conducted, an exploration of the relationships and collaboration between and among teachers in the same department (Cwikla, 2007) and between and among teachers from different departments (Clark & Clark, 2012) has helped to expand knowledge of such groups. The interviews and observations of 16 math teachers from a low SES, low achieving middle school conducted by Cwikla (2007) provided insights as to what is necessary within a school to create strong communities of practice. The author found that educators require a common goal or mission to find success as a group. In doing so, the educators within this school were able to improve the test scores of their middle school students exponentially (Cwikla, 2007).

Beyond departmental groups, Baker (2011) noted that the culmination of both the macro-culture (school and district level) and micro-culture (faculty sub-groups) affect the amount and type of teachers' professional collaboration. Within the macro-culture of schools, Clark and Clark (2012) highlighted previous studies that suggest that interdisciplinary teams can have a positive influence on teachers. Additionally, Somech (2008) indicated that the conflict that arises within groups or teams of teachers should not be ignored. Rather, such conflict should be accepted as a "necessary and positive aspect of team development" (Somech, 2008, p. 382).

Group decision making and distributed leadership. Via a position statement, Lambert (2002) noted that the time of one-person instructional leadership (principal leadership) should end and schools should look to shared forms of leadership. To the authors' point, multiple

studies have explored group decision making and distributed leadership. Research conducted by Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, and Myers (2007) and Margolis (2008) examined distributed leadership as an alternative to the traditional methods.

In one study, 40 teachers leading staff development sessions regarding literacy strategies were examined through the use of interviews, surveys and field notes, to better understand how teachers in such settings related to each other (Margolis, 2008). Among findings, Margolis noted that the administrators supported teacher leadership, the teachers connected well to the teacher-leaders which caused them to “buy-in” to reform, and that minimal resistance was expressed to the teacher-leaders. The author noted that in contemporary schools, leadership, relationships, and the emotional environment must be taken into account as important aspects of group dynamics (Margolis, 2008).

Similarly, Scribner and colleagues (Scribner et al., 2007) observed two teacher teams at a large Midwest high school to explore distributed leadership. The authors argued that the nature of purpose and the autonomy of the teachers within the teams could influence the social distribution of leadership. They also explained that principals should facilitate teacher teams in determining an appropriate level of autonomy (Scribner et al., 2007).

Micropolitics and leadership. Combining the topics of micropolitics and leadership are the studies of Flessa (2009), Hoyle (1999), and Lindle (1999). Hoyle (1999) believes that there are two “faces” of micropolitics (p. 213) including “policy micropolitics,” which focuses on the relationship between micropolitics in the school and the macropolitics that surround it, and “management micropolitics,” which is the tactics used by teachers and school leaders to achieve their personal interests (Hoyle, 1999, p. 214). Furthermore, Flessa (2009) suggests that although distributed leadership and educational micropolitics share similar concerns, the two topics are

rarely examined together in studies. Lindle (1999) corroborates Flessa's point confirming that the link between leadership and politics is unavoidable and must be recognized and studied for the good of education in public schools.

The relevance and recognition of different components of group dynamics throughout educational literature submits that similar studies would be valuable for the field of physical education. At this time, literature focusing on the relationships that occur in the PE setting could be described as limited at best. This is discouraging considering the close proximity in which physical education teachers are required to work with each other.

Group Dynamics in K-12 Physical Education

The limited research related to group dynamics in K-12 physical education departments (Castelli & Rink, 2003; Keay, 2005) is surprising when compared to the vast amount of literature related to group dynamics in K-12 schools (Baker, 2011; Blase, 1985; Blase, 1987a; Blase, 1987b; Blase, 1988; Blase, 1989a; Blase, 1989b; Blase, 1990; Blase & Anderson, 1995; Blase & Blase, 1999; Brosky, 2011; Clark & Clark, 1997; Cwikla, 2007; Flessa, 2009; Hoyle, 1999; Lambert, 2002; Lindle, 1999; Margolis, 2008; Scribner et. al, 2007; Spillane et al., 2001; Somech, 2008; Eddy Spicer, 2011; West, 1999). This is especially true in that physical educators are typically required to collaborate extensively with co-teachers sharing the same teaching space and resources. Although a plethora of articles have examined the impact of socialization on physical education teachers (Richards & Templin, 2011; Templin & Schempp, 1989, among countless others) and school-based support for physical education teachers (Blankenship & Coleman, 2009; Lock & Telljohan, 1995; Stevens-Smith, 2007; Stringer, 2004), these studies do not provide an overall picture of group dynamics within and surrounding a physical education program. Although additional information about physical education programs would be valuable,

limited studies have attempted to paint an overall picture of the dynamics that occur within and around quality physical education programs (Castelli & Rink, 2003; Keay, 2005).

One such study used data from the South Carolina Physical Education Assessment Program of 62 schools to explore the roles of teachers and individuals surrounding the physical education departments in four high performing schools and four low performing schools (Castelli & Rink, 2003). Based on surveys ($n = 22$) and interviews ($n = 14$) conducted, several themes emerged. These themes resulted in a list of 24 characteristics found within high and low performing schools (12 each). Among the characteristics of high performing schools were clear teaching expectations and an ability to balance teaching and coaching responsibilities. Conversely, low performing schools found it difficult to meet all of the expectations placed upon them.

Finally, Keay (2009) used the data from three previous studies on physical education communities and their impact on beginning physical education teachers to determine their perceptions of departmental influence and power. One of the studies discussed power surrounding physical education. Thirteen newly certified teachers were provided with a questionnaire that asked who they perceived would have the most influence on them as teachers. The teachers viewed the subject departments, their mentors, and the heads of departments as the greatest influences, although other physical education teachers, the external subject community, and the head teacher (principal) were also viewed as important.

The socialization of physical educators. Scholars in physical education (Dewar & Lawson, 1984; Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2009), as well as researchers in other areas (Lortie, 2002), suggest that individuals socialized into a profession progress through three distinct stages including recruitment, professional socialization, and occupational socialization. Recruitment

and professional socialization focus on socialization that occurs before students enter into a profession as teachers. Occupational socialization is the most relevant to the current study. This socialization occurs after students graduate and enter the profession (Templin & Schempp, 1989).

When focusing on the journey of physical educators navigating their ways through the school landscape, the school setting clearly provides a level of socialization. Lawson (1989) defines socialization within the school as organizational socialization. This includes the experiences at the “building level” which are unique to the school in which the teacher is employed, meaning that differences may exist between schools, including schools within the same district. Schools can have certain goals and/or tactics that they intend to communicate to their teachers through organizational socialization, although that is not always the case (Templin & Schempp, 1989).

The overall organizational socialization process lends itself to understanding how and why each school develops an organizational culture. The organizational culture of a school influences the perceptions of individuals within the building regarding certain subjects and the teachers associated with those subjects (Templin & Schempp, 1989). This suggests that within this culture, undefined rules and assumptions may guide the views of administrators, teachers, parents and students alike in regards to the importance of physical education and its teachers in relation to other subjects (Templin & Schempp, 1989).

In communicating with multiple teachers in a department, it is inevitable that these educators will have differences that include but are not limited to their: goals, needs, levels of experience, and/or expertise. Although valuable, the previous studies only begin to inform our understanding of the ways in which physical education departments function. More importantly,

a lack of consensus as to what constitutes “successful” departments is alarming and further research is warranted in physical education. The characteristics of successful physical education programs need to be identified to provide a framework for other schools to attain recognition and elevate the status of their programs. As a result, it is necessary to: (a) explore the make-up of high quality programs, (b) identify a nationally aligned, voluntary recognition program, and (c) explore the potential roles and characteristics of the individuals involved in or surrounding a physical education program through previous literature.

High Performing Schools

It is likely that high performing schools share characteristics comparable to high performing departments due to the similarities of the two. For this reason, an understanding of the characteristics of high-performing schools may provide discernments into what creates and sustains quality physical education departments in K-12 schools. An extensive literature review conducted by the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction titled, *Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools* (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007) examined and highlighted over 140 studies. In doing so, they were able to identify nine characteristics that repeatedly presented themselves in the literature. Included in these characteristics, which closely relate to the literature on physical education departments (Castelli & Rink, 2003), were “a clear and shared focus, effective school leadership, high levels of collaboration and communication, curriculum, instruction and assessments aligned with state standards and a supportive learning environment” (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, p. 1). Castelli and Rink (2003) stated that the characteristics of the high performing schools in their study included, “cohesive, long-standing, positive departments, effective, regular communication, little evidence of marginalization, more facilitators than inhibitors, department leader who served as a liaison and active administration,

supportive of policy.” (p. 519) Conversely, they found that the characteristics of the low performing schools included “department members acted as individuals, informal and procedural communication, evidence of marginalization, ineffective department leader, and passive administration” (Castelli & Rink, 2003, p. 519). An avenue for potentially viewing and learning about high performing or quality schools is to explore programs recognized through the lens of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) physical education standards (NASPE, 2014a).

Stars (National) and Other State Programs

NASPE, an association within the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD), provided physical educators and schools with a national program evaluation tool known as STARS (NASPE, 2012). The STARS program was terminated in 2010. Such a tool was valuable because it aligned with the NASPE national standards for physical education (NASPE, 2014a). Physical education stakeholders have acknowledged these standards and outcomes as the basis for developmentally appropriate physical education. As is the case with the Blue Ribbon program, the evaluation process examined the PE department in its entirety. Although there were clear benefits to a standard national recognition program (STARS), due to the lack of schools that were able to complete the lengthy evaluation process in its six year existence, the program was discontinued (NASPE, 2012).

Despite the programs’ discontinuation, many states offer recognition programs that align with the national standards. Beyond the Blue Ribbon Recognition Program in Illinois, an extensive search of each of the 50 state’s Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AHPERD) websites identified eight states that formally recognize physical education departments for enacting and upholding quality programs. These state AHPERD websites

include: California, Connecticut, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, and Texas (CAHPERD, 2011; CTAHPERD, 2013; IAHPERD, n.d.; KAHPERD, 2013; MAHPERD, n.d.; MOAHPERD, 2014; OAHPERD, 2011; TAHPERD, 2008; TAHPERD, 2013). Considering the high level of accountability required in schools, physical education recognition programs that align to state and national standards and highlight high-achieving schools are important to fostering long-term stability, curricular quality, and promotion of the subject. For the purposes of this study, inclusion in IAHPERD's Blue Ribbon Recognition Program is a criterion to identify physical education departments that are aligned with the national standards.

Blue Ribbon – A Background and Purpose

In an attempt to recognize excellent Illinois public, parochial, and alternative kindergarten through 12th grade physical education programs, and 5th through 12th grade health programs, IAHPERD created the Blue Ribbon Recognition Program in 1998. The goal of this voluntary program is to recognize and support exemplary schools and to promote and provide information about these departments to other schools as a potential resource (Grebner & Kneer, 2000). Each successful program is recognized for a total of five years before a renewal process is necessary. Once accepted, each program is presented a Blue Ribbon Plaque, a certificate that is presented at a school function, and a banner at an IAHPERD awards banquet. In addition, new programs are highlighted in the *Illinois Journal* and are invited to present at future IAHPERD conventions (IAHPERD, n.d.).

Prior to program application potential schools are prompted to contact the Blue Ribbon Chair to express interest. Using the evaluation materials provided through the IAHPERD website (<http://www.iahperd.org/textpages/programs/getforms.php>), each program is required to complete a self-evaluation using the appropriate grade-level material. Next, potential schools

complete the online application and submit a \$150 check to IAHPERD to cover program expenses such as travel for the evaluators. The evaluation criteria for this program were designed to reflect state and national standards as well as the standards of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE, 2014). Areas covered are: curriculum; instruction; facilities, equipment, and finance; medical and safety, and administration of physical education (IAHPERD, n.d.). Within each area, several subheadings are included to provide a thorough evaluation of the program in question. According to IAHPERD (IAHPERD, Criteria for Evaluating Physical Education in Schools Grades K-12, n.d.), each subheading is scored using a Likert scale in which one represents that “no effort or evidence present to support the criteria at this time” to four which represents “exemplary effort or evidence” to support high quality physical education criteria in curriculum, instruction, facilities and equipment, medical and safety and administration. The program is based on state and national standards.” Schools have the opportunity to provide supporting evidence and clarification for each section (IAHPERD, Criteria for Evaluating Physical Education in Schools Grades K-12, n.d.).

Upon completion of the self-evaluation and after schools are granted permission to proceed from the administration, two or more IAHPERD trained volunteers conduct a site visit at the school to ensure the accuracy of the self-evaluation. Upon completion of their observations at the school and after reviewing the self-evaluation, the evaluators meet to discuss their recommendations. Before leaving the school, the evaluators discuss their future recommendations to the Blue Ribbon Program Committee with the head of the physical education department and the school administrators. The school under review is contacted by the Blue Ribbon Program Committee within a few weeks after the evaluation to officially provide the schools’ recognition status (Grebner & Kneer, 2000). According to Maureen Fournier, co-

chair of the Physical Education Blue Ribbon Committee, a school must receive all scores of three or four in the areas of Curriculum and Instruction to be considered for the award (personal communication, January 14, 2013). Additionally, schools may receive a single two in all of the other categories evaluated through the program; however the schools must increase those scores to three before the renewal process in five years. A score of one in the categories previously mentioned or a one or two in Curriculum and Instruction places a school in remediation with the requirement that scores be improved within one year to receive the award (M. Fournier, personal communication, July 27, 2013). Beyond providing recognition to deserving programs, the program was also created to provide a program assessment tool for administrators and teachers of K-12 physical education and health.

Principal's Role in Physical Education

Leadership is viewed as an important factor in achieving school-wide improvements (Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, & Peetsma, 2012). Specifically, principal leadership has a significant role in the well-being and motivation of teachers (Eyal & Roth, 2011), the potential to increase or decrease teacher efficacy (Soehner & Ryan, 2011), and the ability to affect teachers of varying experience levels (Walker & Slear, 2011). Within physical education, departments need appropriate leadership from their principals to set a high standard for departmental achievement in an area that is generally not recognized as a core subject (Cook, 2005). Furthermore, support provided by principals may influence the status of PE in schools and may play a vital role in how it is viewed by others (Blankenship & Coleman, 2009). This type of support likely creates opportunities for physical education teachers and departments to elevate their subject through programs such as the Blue Ribbon Recognition Program.

Although principals have the opportunity to provide much needed support and leadership for physical education departments, multiple studies have shown that not all principals value the subject (Lock & Telljohan, 1995; Stevens-Smith, 2007; Stringer, 2004). A study by Stevens-Smith (2007) found that nearly one-quarter of the principals polled listed physical education as a low-priority course, and none listed the subject as a high-priority. Additionally, 95% of the principals believed they were accountable for knowing and stressing mathematics and language arts standards; whereas only 61% of the same population believed they were accountable for recognizing and emphasizing the physical education standards (Stevens-Smith, 2007). Moreover, Lock and Telljohan (1995) found that principals within their study regarded PE as the second least important subject in their curricula. Findings such as these are of concern because principals are the primary leaders of their schools. For reasons such as these, it is essential to understand the roles that principals assume related to the physical education departments that have Blue Ribbon status.

Sun, Youngs, Yang, Chu, and Zhao (2012) found that among the 88 Michigan principals they surveyed, only 26.25 were evaluated once per year. Furthermore, 40% were evaluated once every three years and 6% have never been evaluated. The lack of principal evaluations may decrease the expectations placed on teachers, especially ones who are not part of standardized testing. The Roslow Research Group (2009) conducted a study on behalf of the NASPE and found that among the 1125 physical educator respondents, 63% were evaluated one time or less during the school year. Additionally, 47% of physical education teachers were observed for a full five minutes less than three times a year, excluding formal evaluations (Roslow Research Group, 2009).

As with teachers, feedback to principals regarding their job performance seems indispensable to ensure that they provide appropriate support and guidance for their teachers. Additionally, principals should acquire appropriate evaluation guidelines for use in physical education settings (Ratliffe, 1988) because the absence of guidance may be a result of a lack of knowledge on appropriate and effective physical education teaching (Hummel, 2006; Staffo, 1993).

Although principal leadership is vital, the job should not be theirs alone; Hoppey and McLesky (2013) suggest that leadership should be a team effort. Spillane (2005) stated, “Leadership practice is viewed as a product of the interaction of leaders, followers, and their situation” (p. 144). Within the school setting, a group effort of principals, department heads and teachers may provide the best scenario for an effective department as has been stated in leadership studies (Lambert, 2002; Margolis, 2008; Scribner et al., 2007).

Physical Educator’s Role in Department

Physical education departments and the subject as a whole are challenged to succeed in a reality that is separate from the core subjects. Physical education is not included in standardized testing and, as a result, physical education teachers must battle for their principal’s attention and school allocations with subjects that are deemed more important in today’s modern school system. Given this, much leadership must come from within physical education departments. The longitudinal work of Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2001) examined distributed leadership. This is leadership divided among principals, assistant principals, teachers, and possibly others within schools. They indicated that distributed leadership “involves the identification, acquisition, allocation, coordination, and use of the social, material, and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning”

(Spillane et al., 2001, p. 24). While the research on distributed leadership is limited (Hartley, 2007), it seems unlikely that the recognition of all current Blue Ribbon Schools were due to the leadership and impact of principals alone.

The Blue Ribbon Recognition Program's "Criteria for Evaluating Physical Education in Illinois Schools Grades K-12" suggests that, if evaluated correctly, each school's recognition is a collection of the teachers, department heads and administration's willingness to work toward a common goal (IAHPERD, Criteria for Evaluating Physical Education in Schools Grades K-12, n.d.). Both faculty and administration can limit the number of barriers to program recognition. It is the choice of administrators to ensure that physical education teachers' workloads are comparable to other teachers (IAHPERD, Criteria for Evaluating Physical Education in Schools Grades K-12, n.d., Section V), just as it is the choice of the individual department members to ensure that student activity time is maximized (Criteria for Evaluating Physical Education in Schools Grades K-12, n.d., Section II). In the case that enough of these individual requirements are not met, attainment of Blue Ribbon Program Recognition should not be possible (M. Fournier, personal communication, July 27, 2013).

Chapter Three: Methodology

Given the potential impact of group dynamics on the quality of physical education provided by departments, it seems valuable to understand the group dynamics present in schools that have achieved and maintained Blue Ribbon status. Although departments and group dynamics have been explored in other subject areas at various levels, little is known about the effects of group dynamics within physical education departments. As a result, and through the lens of the Structuration Theory (Giddens, 1984), the main purposes of this qualitative study were (a) to understand the role of group dynamics in schools that have achieved and sustained departmental recognition, and (b) to understand how the role of leadership impacts groups dynamics within and around the departments.

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the perceived roles of the individuals within/around the department, and how were those roles shaped?
2. How has Blue Ribbon recognition affected the department and the stakeholders surrounding the department?
3. What influence have the individuals had on the structure of the department?
4. How have departmental expectations both inside and outside of the department defined the roles of the individuals?
5. What are the leadership characteristics that helped to shape the department?

Observations and interviews with physical education teachers, department heads, and principals provided insights into the roles, facilitators and barriers, and leadership characteristics within and surrounding departments. Providing a strong foundation for the study were: investigation approval from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Illinois at

Urbana-Champaign, use of appropriate qualitative methods (Patton, 2002), a secondary quantitative method, and data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002).

Quantitative Methodology: A Secondary Method

Although the programs were recognized by IAHPERD's Blue Ribbon, it was necessary to provide a level of verification regarding the quality of each department. This was needed because program recognition does not guarantee effective teaching. As a result, and in addition to the qualitative methodology, a secondary, quantitative method was used to help confirm the quality of the physical education programs by examining teaching effectiveness. Academic Learning Time – Physical Education (ALT-PE) has been found to be a valid and reliable tool for predicting teacher effectiveness (Silverman, Devillier, & Ramirez, 1991). ALT-PE Version II was used to assess two lessons taught by each teacher. ALT-PE was used to identify the amount of time students were engaged in appropriate motor behavior (Siedentop, Tousignant, and Parker, 1982). The mean of each teacher's two lessons were consolidated into one overall average for each department to provide additional evidence of program quality.

A Qualitative Investigation

The use of qualitative methods is a direct result of the nature of the research needed to explore the subject matter. Mason (2002) stated that qualitative research allows scholars to:

Explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences, and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate. (p. 1)

The school setting, especially when seeking to comprehend a topic as broad as department dynamics, suited the use of qualitative methodology. With utilization of a

naturalistic approach, a common characteristic of qualitative studies, researchers allowed phenomenon to materialize naturally in an authentic setting instead of attempting to control or predict an outcome (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Additionally, another feature of qualitative design implemented was *purposeful sampling* which allowed for the selection of specific cases (Blue Ribbon Physical Education programs) for analysis to provide a wealth of information (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002).

To gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon, data collection included interview transcripts, field notes, and direct observations in authentic settings (Patton, 2002). Coupled with an exhaustive amount of time within the schools, this information provided a “thick rich description” which is the “foundation for qualitative analysis and reporting” (Patton, 2002, p. 437).

Although the strengths of using qualitative inquiry are in a researcher’s ability to inductively approach real world questions in real world settings and to allow for a greater amount of detail not available in quantitative literature, it was necessary to realize the subjectivity that is human nature (Patton, 2002). While it is important to maintain objectivity, Patton (2002) believes that a complete separation from the audience being studied is a problem as well and *empathetic neutrality*, a middle ground, should be sought.

Identification of Participants

Participants were teachers from three Midwest, suburban middle school Blue Ribbon Physical Education Departments ($n=14$). Additionally, each school’s principal ($n=3$) and one assistant principal were participants in the study. To ensure the anonymity of the participants, the schools, faculty, and administrators were given pseudonyms. Due to the limited number of Blue Ribbon middle schools, purposeful sampling was used to identify schools that matched the

criteria (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Furthermore, the goal of understanding the dynamics of successful programs required searching for programs that through which the research questions can be addressed. As suggested by Patton (2002), the sample size was chosen and justified in relation to the goals and purpose of the study and the credibility of the sources.

Middle school physical education programs were chosen because: (a) they are the bridge between elementary schools and high schools, (b) elementary physical education programs are generally limited to one or two teachers, and (c) they impact students before high school programs which may set the stage for students' future involvement in physical activity. Also, given that the recommended time for students to spend in physical education classes increases from elementary (150 minutes per week) to middle school (225 minutes per week) suggests that this is a critical time for physical education programs to ensure departmental consistency and quality content to all learners. (NASPE, 2012). Additionally, a logical progression, due to the lack of department dynamics studies in K-12 physical education programs, would suggest starting with middle school departments with future studies exploring grade school and high school departments.

Schools and School Context

Three Illinois suburban schools were purposefully chosen due to the limited number of programs that were recognized through the Blue Ribbon Recognition Program. Although the programs were similar in location, differences were found in department size, grades taught (although all were in the 5th through 8th grade range), planning time schedules, and principal experience regarding physical education. Value can be found in finding both similarities and differences in each school. Considering that all of the schools achieved Blue Ribbon recognition,

the findings of this study shed light on commonalities that were present in each building. This helped to provide a level of transferability.

The first school, Sky Middle School, served 5th and 6th grades students and had an enrollment of over 500 students. Sky Middle School's physical education department included two veteran physical education teachers, Mrs. Vasser and Mr. Reiter whom had been at the school since its inception in the mid 2000's. Mrs. Vasser had 30 years of teaching experience and Mr. Reiter had 14. Their principal, Mrs. Smith had also been at the school since its inception. Before becoming a principal, Mrs. Smith was a grade school teacher for 12 years. She taught in the same grade school as Mrs. Vasser before they both moved to Sky Middle School.

The second school, Riverton Middle School served 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students and had an enrollment of over 800 students. The physical education department at Riverton Middle School included six physical education teachers, Mr. Patton (the team leader), Ms. Tanner, Mr. Brooks, Mr. Cross, Ms. Lynn, and Mr. Dugan. Their respective years of teaching were 28, 30, 24, 17, 8, and 2 years. The principal at Riverton, Mr. Vincent had been principal at the school for eight years. He previously had five years of experience as an assistant principal. Before his administrative career, Mr. Vincent spent 11 years as a physical education teacher. In addition, part of his physical education career was spent as a department head. His teaching experiences were from middle school and high school.

The final school, Mountain Middle School served 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students and had an enrollment of over 1,200 students. The physical education department at Mountain Middle School had six physical education teachers in the department, Mrs. Borden (the department head), Mr. Wilson, Mr. Leon, Mr. Cole, Mrs. Eva, and Mrs. Frances. Their respective years of teaching were 23, 38 ½, 26, 14 ½, 10, and 9 years. The principal at Mountain Middle School, Mr.

Zoon was in his first year as an administrator at the school. Before his experiences as a principal at Mountain Middle School, he was a principal at a different middle school for eight years. Mr. Zoon also had experience as an assistant principal, dean of students, and athletic director. His career in education started as a middle school science and social studies teacher. He was in that role for seven years.

As a result of it being Mr. Zoon's first year, the assistant principal, Ms. Gustaf, was recruited for this study. Ms. Gustaf was in her third year as assistant principal at Mountain Middle School. Before becoming an administrator, she was a classroom teacher for 11 years. Ms. Gustaf taught most of those years at Mountain Middle School.

Observation instrument. ALT-PE Version II (Siedentop, Tousignant, & Parker, 1982) was used as a secondary method to measure teaching effectiveness. To achieve intra-rater reliability, two 20 minute video-taped physical education lessons were observed and coded by the researcher. Each lesson was coded three times and reliability of each subcategory (Context Level and Learner Involvement Level) was achieved at a level equal to or higher than .90. Inter-rater reliability was achieved with a graduate student by coding the same videotaped lesson on three separate occasions and comparing the responses to each interval. A cumulative inter-rater reliability for each subcategory was 91% and 93% respectively.

The interval recording method was utilized, in that three students at differing levels were chosen from each lesson (Siedentop, Tousignant, & Parker, 1982). The students were observed on continuous rotation. The first student's "Context Level" (ex. Transition, Management, Technique, Skill practice, etc.) and "Learner Involvement Level" (ex. Waiting, Off-task, Motor appropriate, Motor inappropriate) was observed for six seconds and then recorded the following six seconds (Siedentop, Tousignant, & Parker, 1982). Upon completion of the six second

recording interval, the second student was observed, and so on in a continuous pattern for the whole lesson. To ensure proper order and time of observation and recording intervals, an audiotape that announced “observe” or “record” on a repeating cycle was used.

For the purposes of this study, ALT-PE was used to confirm teacher, and to a greater extent department, effectiveness (Siedentop, Tousignant, & Parker, 1982). Two lessons were observed per teacher. Each teacher was observed teaching one sports lesson and one fitness lesson. The amount of time the students spent engaged in motor activity at an appropriate level of difficulty was gleaned from each lesson. This was achieved by dividing the number of motor appropriate activity intervals for all three students by the total number of intervals per lesson. The resulting motor appropriate activity intervals of the teacher’s two lessons were added together and divided by two to provide an overall teacher percent mean. The overall teacher percent mean of each of the department members were added together and divided by the number of teachers to produce an overall program percent mean.

Although ALT-PE is a valid assessment tool, it is not a validation of the overall physical education departments that were observed. It does, however, provide evidence that quality physical education can be found within these programs.

Formal interviews. Standardized open-ended interviews and interview guides, guided by the research questions and grounded by the theoretical framework of Structuration Theory (Giddens, 1984), were utilized to safeguard consistency between formal interviews (Patton, 2002). Additionally, since different parties were interviewed, including teachers, department heads, and principals, the use of related, but position specific predetermined questions was warranted. The interview guide included a broad demographic question with several sub-questions referring to each participant’s educational background, and 30 open-ended questions

(29 open-ended questions for the principals). The interview guide was created and critiqued under the guidance of an expert researcher to ensure the clarity of questions and alignment with the research questions and theoretical framework.

The researcher scrutinized consistency in questions (both initial and follow-up), in the way questions were written, and in the asking of questions to ensure consistency across participants. Patton (2002) suggested that, “each interviewee gets asked the same questions—the same stimuli—in the same way and the same order” (p. 334), aids in limiting variability and ensuring effective use of interviewee time. Additionally, probing questions (in the form of follow-up questions) were used to gain additional information from the participants (Jones, 1985). Each interview was taped and transcribed for the purposes of member checking and analysis of themes.

Teacher and department head interviews. Castelli and Rink (2003) used formal interviews to explore school, department, and program characteristics, as well as, facilitators and inhibitors to physical education department performance. Comparatively, this study employed formal interviews to better understand the characteristics of state recognized physical education programs that attempt to meet the NASPE standards (2014a). Each teacher, department head, and principal took part in two interviews. The interview questions were guided by the Structuration Theory (1984) and were developed in combination with an expert researcher. The questions focused on the teachers’ perceptions of individual roles within and surrounding the department, the facilitators and barriers that influenced program success, and the leadership characteristics of individuals within and around the department (Appendix E & F). The second interview provided further questions guided by the Structuration Theory and allowed the teachers, department heads, and principals to expand upon and clarify their responses from the first interview. Additionally, it

afforded them the opportunity to discuss other issues that arose throughout the observation period (Appendix F).

Principal and department head interviews. Principal and department head interviews mirrored the teacher interviews, but were be slightly modified for relevance to their roles (Appendix G, H, I, & J). Relatedly, the questions focused on the principals' and department heads' perceptions of individual roles within and surrounding the department, the facilitators and barriers that influenced program success, and the leadership characteristics of individuals within and around the department. Additionally, the questions in the second interview allowed the participants to expand upon group dynamics from the first interview through the guidance of the Structuration Theory. It was also used to expound and clarify responses from the initial interview along with other points of consideration that arose throughout the observation period (Appendix H & J).

Informal Interviews. Finally, the use of informal interviews allowed the researcher to expound on any relevant information gathered during observations. Patton (2002) states that the informal interview, "offers maximum flexibility to pursue information in whatever direction appears to be appropriate, depending on what emerges from observing a particular setting or from talking from one or more individuals in a setting" (p. 342). Since the focus of this study was on group dynamics, it was necessary to probe individuals regarding situations that arose (Patton, 2002). Additionally, it was important to question individuals about group conversations to gain a better understanding of the perspective of individuals regarding specific departmental situations or occurrences. Specifically, informal interviews allowed the researcher a greater amount of flexibility and spontaneity that could not be provided by formal interviews (Patton, 2002).

Observations. A total of 10 full school days of observation occurred at each site. The number of observation days allowed the researcher to find redundancy. Regarding observations, Patton suggests, “Fieldwork should last long enough to get the job done—to answer the research questions being asked and fulfill the purpose of the study” (p. 275). Furthermore, observations permit researchers to detect non-verbal forms of expression and help to grasp how and who interacts with each other (Schmuck, 1997).

Field notes were taken to record relevant interactions that occurred within the school setting. A detailed account of each school, including the setting and the teacher and principal interactions within the setting, will help to provide the readers with a better understanding of what is occurring (Lincoln & Guba, 1982; Shenton, 2004). The researcher’s notes were recorded in an observational log method known as a double-entry notebook. This method requires the separation of what is observed and the researcher’s perspective. It should be noted that although personal feelings are separated, they should be included (Driscoll, 2011). The use of direct observations along with field notes helped to triangulate data gathered from interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1982).

Data Analysis

The makings of a strong qualitative study must provide evidence of trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, and dependability (Guba, 1981). Methods used included formal interviews, informal interviews, and observations with program quality verification coming from lesson evaluation. With permission, all formal interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed for in-depth analysis. Additionally, notes were taken during formal and informal interviews to provide a deeper understanding of the interviewees’ perceptions.

Miles and Huberman's (1994) four-stage process guided data analysis. The first stage was data collection. During this stage, the researcher noted initial themes and common threads in the data. The next stage of the process, called data reduction, involved coding the data and organizing it into meaningful themes. Following data reduction was data display which entailed organizing the themes in a visible manner. This took shape in the form of tables. The final step was conclusion drawing. During this stage, data were compared back to the overarching theory (Structuration Theory) (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This process helped to identify any negative cases that were present in the data.

Data were analyzed both inductively and deductively (Patton, 2002). Inductive analysis requires extensively scrutinizing the data to discover themes, patterns, and categories. Specifically, inductive analysis means that attempts were made to understand the complex relationships and group dynamics that emerged from the data void of prior assumptions or hypotheses (Patton, 2002). Conversely, deductive analysis helped to determine the appropriateness of inductive analysis by comparing the themes, patterns, and categories back to the overarching Structuration Theory (Giddens, 1984). Also, an unremitting attempt to find negative cases helped to reaffirm the results of analysis. Finally, through constant-comparative analysis, themes were continuously revisited, tested, and adjusted when necessary (Patton, 2002).

Establishing Trustworthiness. A comprehensive study requires achieving a high level of trustworthiness through the use of various qualitative methods. Both Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Shenton (2004) highlight the importance of establishing trustworthiness in qualitative studies. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that the main issues to achieving trustworthiness are:

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? What arguments can be

mounted, what criteria invoked, what questions asked, that would be persuasive on this issue? (p. 290)

The necessary scholarly rigor required to attain trustworthiness can be met through achieving and demonstrating credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004).

Credibility. Establishing and indicating credibility within qualitative studies ensures the reader that legitimate steps were taken to reveal the accuracy of the findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) believe that it is the job of the researcher to provide enough evidence to both the audience and researcher that the study is both necessary and of a high quality (p. 290).

Prolonged engagement. Recognized by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as a way to increase the likelihood of credible findings, prolonged engagement requires an extended period of time to build trust and to nullify any false information provided through researcher assumptions and interviews. In the current study, a total of ten observation days occurred at each school. Two formal interviews and multiple informal interviews with all parties helped to increase trust in the researcher. It also allowed the researcher to view multiple interactions between individuals to find certain commonalities that occurred. Furthermore, multiple days of shadowing the teachers allowed them time to get used to an outsider's presence. Although the principal was not being shadowed, multiple encounters with the physical educators who were being observed and the individual interview process should have helped to alleviate apprehensions.

Triangulation. The purpose of triangulation is to strengthen the results through the use of multiple and complementary methods (Patton, 2002). Within this study, multiple methods were used to establish this credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). A combination of individual interviews and observations helped to minimize each methods shortcomings (Shenton,

2004). Additionally, the use of these combined methods helped to accentuate their individual strengths (Shenton, 2004).

Negative case analysis. Negative case analysis is described by Shenton (2004) as the refinement of a hypothesis until it accounts for all cases without exception. Negative case analysis was utilized to strengthen observed patterns and trends that were occurring within the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002; Shenton, 2004). Additionally, as a researcher, seeking and finding negative cases helped to create a better understanding of the themes and patterns by requiring them to be adjusted to include any outliers (Patton, 2002).

Frequent expert debriefing sessions. Discussions with expert scholars helped to strengthen the credibility of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, the additional knowledge provided through expert insight helped to broaden the perceptions of the primary researcher by making him challenge initial themes and findings.

Peer debriefing. The utilization of peer debriefing in this study ensured that the central researcher challenged the use of certain findings. Moreover, it added an additional level of credibility by pushing the researcher beyond personal beliefs regarding the data and the line of questioning (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A colleague with a similar background in qualitative research was utilized in this role.

Member checks. Member checks were used to confirm that the views of the participants were accurately portrayed. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated, “The member check, whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected, is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). In the current study, every participant was provided with

copies of their interview transcripts to verify their accuracy. Also, initial themes were discussed with each participant to provide them the opportunity to either confirm or refute the findings.

Thick description of the phenomenon observed. An additional step for credibility was to provide a thick description of the observed departments and the surrounding settings. Providing this information should help readers, “to determine the extent to which the overall findings ‘ring true’” (Shenton, 2004, p. 69).

Transferability. Although it is not possible to recreate specific situations in other physical education departments, providing a detailed description of the relationships and the setting will allow other researchers to determine whether the information provided is applicable to their study. In doing so, a level of transferability, similar to external validity in quantitative studies, was sought to extend the current research to similar settings (Shenton, 2004). A study that provides a detailed account of the settings may find its greatest reward in justification from future studies using similar methods and settings (Shenton, 2004).

Dependability

Detailed description of the research design

The credibility of a study also relies on its dependability, so evidence of the latter is critical (Guba, 1981). To endorse dependability, it was important to provide a detailed description of the research design. Furthermore, it was just as valuable to describe why certain methodologies were utilized to justify their use in the study. This will help future researchers to determine if certain research designs will be useful for their setting, regardless of whether findings are similar (Shenton, 2004).

Utilization of overlapping methods. Similar to credibility, Lincoln and Guba suggest the utilization of overlapping methods to provide dependability. By doing so, this study attempted to

triangulate the findings through the use of multiple methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Individual interviews and observations were employed to achieve triangulation.

Confirmability

Expert Audit Review

Multiple communications between my advisor and me as well as quality assessments from my research committee helped to confirm the appropriateness of the methods and the research process. Weekly meetings with my advisor were used to set research timelines, discuss and revise methods and research questions, and to create and revise interview questions. Expert scrutiny regarding the research findings also helped me to consider how well the findings represent the participants.

Investigator Bias. As a young scholar and a former physical education teacher, it is important for me to recognize the bias that comes along with my previous and current experiences. Although steps were taken to limit my investigator bias, I must recognize that I might associate myself more with the teachers than I would with the principals.

Considering that these are Blue Ribbon programs, I expected that I would see considerable communication between and among the teachers. It was my assumption that certain teachers took the lead during the Blue Ribbon application process, but I anticipated that all of the teachers participated to some degree steps to ensure that the department would receive the award. I also assumed that physical education teacher/principal communication would be present at these schools but still might not be as consistent as other subjects. I also expected that the resources readily available to the teacher participants in the study may have been greater than those available at other schools in the state.

I expected that the department head at each school would have certain characteristics that are usually found in good leaders. It was my assumption that the department heads were instrumental in their school's attaining Blue Ribbon status. Realizing all of my assumptions, steps have been and will continue to be taken to achieve an appropriate level of confirmability.

Chapter Four: Results

Although researchers have examined group dynamics in a multitude of settings, research pertaining to group dynamics in physical education is limited (Castelli & Rink, 2003; Keay, 2005). As a result, an exploration of the unique characteristics that are present within quality physical education programs is necessary. The purposes of this study were to (a) to understand the role of group dynamics in schools that have achieved and sustained departmental recognition, and (b) to understand how the role of leadership impacts group dynamics within and around the departments. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What are the perceived roles of the individuals within/around the department, and how were those roles shaped?
2. How has Blue Ribbon recognition affected the department and the stakeholders surrounding the department?
3. What influence have the individuals had on the structure of the department?
4. How have departmental expectations both inside and outside of the department defined the roles of the individuals?
5. What are the leadership characteristics that helped to shape the department?

Structuration Theory (Giddens, 1984) was selected to ground this investigation and helped to ensure that a theoretical approach was taken throughout the study. The following includes an account of the participants and the physical environment of each Blue Ribbon program. The results of the study are broken down into themes and subthemes that represent one, two, or all three of the programs.

Group Dynamics among and between the Schools

Each program had unique characteristics that are important to understand because they may provide insights related to group dynamics in each department. Discernments into the similarities and differences in the number of department members, the backgrounds of the teachers and principals, and the physical space, among other things at Sky, Riverton, and Mountain Middle Schools may help to explain the group dynamics that was observed in each department.

Sky Middle School (Fifth and Sixth Grades)

Sky Middle School, according to the Illinois State Board of Education (2014), had an enrollment of 500+ students: 76.6% white, 9.2% black, 8.6% Hispanic, 2.8% Asian, and 2.6% multiracial. Additionally, 43% of the students were classified as low-income, indicating that their families received public aid, they lived in alternative care, or they were eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches. Thirteen percent of the students received special education services. The average class size was 23 students.

The principal. Mrs. Smith was the principal of Sky Middle School, which was her first principal position. In addition, she was the first and only principal, besides assistant principals, in the school's short history. She had been in the principal role for seven years. Prior to that, Mrs. Smith was a classroom teacher in the district. She taught at the same grade school at which Mrs. Vasser was a physical education teacher. She had 12 years of teaching experience divided between time spent as a first grade teacher in another district and Sky Middle School. She had coached youth soccer but did not have any coaching experience in the school setting.

The teachers. The department consisted of two people, neither had a leadership title in the program. Both had been teaching physical education at Sky since its inception. In previous years, there was a third teacher who lost her position at the school due to a decrease in the

number of fifth and sixth grade classes. Mrs. Vasser had 30 years of experience as a physical education teacher. Her first 23 years of teaching were at the elementary level, and all but one of those years was spent at the same school. She had currently taught seven years at Sky Middle School. Although she did not have her master's degree, she had several hours of graduate education. Her most extensive coaching experiences were junior high and high school volleyball. She had been coaching throughout her entire teaching career. She also led middle school intramurals.

Mr. Reiter had 14 years of experience as a physical education teacher. Before he joined Sky's physical education staff, his previous seven years of teaching were divided between two grade schools. He had spent the last 7 years teaching at Sky Middle School. Mr. Reiter also had a master's degree in educational administration. Mr. Reiter has been coaching for the last 11 years. He has coached junior high basketball and volleyball. He also led middle school intramurals.

The physical environment. Sky Middle School was built in the mid 2000's. Upon entering the front doors of the school, a short hallway to the right led to the gymnasium. Visitors had to walk through two sets of double doors to enter the gym. Between the sets of doors, classes, two at a time, would wait to enter. Within this small space, student jump rope achievements were posted on the walls. Once inside the gym, students were greeted by Mr. Reiter and/or Mrs. Vasser. Beginning every lesson, the students would walk over to the opposite wall and read what was written on the warm-up board and then began their activity. On either side of the whiteboard were doors that lead outside.

The walls of the gym were covered with various signs that included motivational signs, information about healthy living, and the value of physical education. Also listed were the expectations, other student achievements, and the large Blue Ribbon banner. The teachers' office

window looked into the full basketball court sized gym. Additional room in the gym was provided by collapsing the bleachers. The six basketball hoops in the gym could be raised by the teachers. Storage for the PE teachers was supplied in the form of a small closet within their shared office and within two large closets located behind the gym wall opposite the office.

There were two sets of doors in the gym that led to outside. The outdoor area consisted of a large field that could accommodate several classes. To access the field, the teachers had to lead their students across a service road that could be blocked by a gate the teachers were allowed to close.

The number of days spent on a specific unit varied, but never exceeded 10 days. Depending on the sport or activity, the space, and their perceptions of what was best for the students, the teachers team taught and/or rotated classes according to their teaching strengths. When they rotated classes, Mrs. Vasser and Mr. Reiter would teach their own class for a unit and then switch classes. For example, Mrs. Vasser taught pickleball to both classes, and Mr. Reiter taught football to both.

Riverton Middle School (Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades).

Overview. Riverton Middle School had an enrollment of 800+ students: 70% white, 1.9% black, 12.5% Hispanic, 12.5% Asian, and 2.7% multiracial. Furthermore, 14% of the students were low-income 13% of the students receive special education services. The average class size was 28 students (Illinois State Board of Education, 2014).

The principal. The principal of Riverton Middle School was Mr. Vincent. This was his second principal position. He had been the head principal at Riverton for eight years. In his three previous experiences as an administrator he served in the role of assistant principal. Those experiences occurred over a five year span. During his time at Riverton, he received his PhD in

Educational Leadership. Before he became a principal, Mr. Vincent was a physical education teacher. His teaching experience encompassed one and one half years teaching at a middle school and 10 years at a high school where he eventually became department head. Mr. Vincent coached several sports at various levels throughout his teaching career. These included soccer, cross country, track, and basketball.

The teachers. There were six teachers in Riverton Middle School's physical education department. Although the teachers considered themselves as a staff with equal roles, Mr. Patton was chosen by the members of the department as the team leader. Riverton did not have any department heads. Mr. Patton defined the role of the team leader as a representative of the department and not the head of it. He commented, "I attend the team leader meetings and I disseminate info. But I'm more of a facilitator." His fellow department members described the role in a similar fashion. Mr. Patton had been a physical education teacher for more than 30 years. His experience came from 17 years at the elementary level. These years were divided between two schools. Finally, the last 11 years were spent at Riverton. Mr. Patton also had a Master's degree in physical education. Mr. Patton had coached soccer at various levels throughout his entire teaching career.

Ms. Tanner had 30 years of experience as a physical education teacher. She had taught physical education at Riverton for 11 years and had the title of the school's athletic director. Before coming to Riverton, she spent the previous 11 years teaching physical education at a grade school in the district and the previous eight at a grade school outside of the district. She received her Master's degree in Educational Administration. Ms. Tanner had coached track and basketball at various levels throughout her teaching career.

Mr. Brooks had 24 years of experience as a physical education teacher. All of his teaching experiences had come from within the district. Thirteen years of his teaching career came from two different middle schools. He had spent the last 11 years teaching at Riverton Middle School. He had a Master's degree in both physical education and Educational Administration. Mr. Brooks had experience coaching cross country, track, and basketball. He had been coaching throughout his entire teaching career.

Mr. Cross had 17 years of experience as a physical education teacher. He spent his first year at a middle school and then moved to an elementary school for the next four years. Since that time, he had spent the last 11 years teaching at Riverton Middle School. Mr. Cross had a Master's degree in Curriculum Design, and had coached middle school basketball and track for the past 16 years. Mr. Patton, Ms. Tanner, Mr. Brooks, and Mr. Cross had all taught at Riverton since its inception.

Ms. Lynn had eight years of experience as a physical education teacher. Her position at Riverton Middle School was the only one she has had in her career. She had a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership. Ms. Lynn had coached junior high soccer throughout her career.

Mr. Dugan had two years of experience as a physical education teacher. He spent his first year as a high school teacher. His next year was spent at Riverton Middle School. He did not have his Master's Degree. Mr. Dugan had coached high school baseball the past two years.

Several of the teachers had coached together. In addition to extracurricular responsibilities, the teachers were involved in the hiring process for new teachers.

The physical environment. Riverton Middle School was built in the early 2000's. The hallway that led to the gymnasiums was utilized by the physical education department. This hallway included information related to physical education and school sports teams on bulletin

boards. The doors to the locker rooms were on the left, and the doors to the gym were on the right.

Upon entering the first gymnasium (called the “big gym”), the Blue Ribbon banner was visible on the far wall. That wall also included multiple white boards for instruction and the door to the office. The gym space consisted of one large basketball court with additional room on the sides when the bleachers were collapsed. The six basketball hoops could also be raised by the teachers. The wall adjacent to the office door was a moveable wall that, when open, connected the “big gym” to the “little gym.” This gym included a smaller basketball court with six basketball hoops that could be raised and a white board for instruction. The main basketball courts in the gymnasiums were facing different directions (a right angle). Equipment storage was in the form of two large closets that were located in the larger gymnasium. Both gyms had a door that led outside, doors that led to the hallway (two doors in the bigger gymnasium and one door in the smaller gymnasium), and a door that led to the office.

The office was a narrow, but long space that housed all six of the teachers. Each teacher had his or her own desk, but several were pushed against each other. A white board in the office usually had agenda items that were written by multiple teachers. These items were discussed during the department’s team planning time. Both of the gyms were visible from the office windows.

When the students entered the gym after changing in the locker rooms, the classes would go to their normal warm-up area. The teachers chose their warm-up area based on the number of physical education classes during that particular period. The largest number of classes taught at one time was five. This meant that three classes were in the big gym and two were in the small

gym. After roll was taken, the classes in the same gym did a warm-up run together using all of the space and then separate to whatever activity their class was doing that week.

The schedule of activities was set in five week blocks wherein teachers rotated to a new sport or activity every week. When every class was inside for instruction, certain activities caused classes to be combined and the teachers to team teach. At other times faculty members team taught by choice instead of necessity. The teachers were willing to team teach with any teacher in the department. The opportunities to team teach were based on the rotation and the content being taught during that teaching block. The consistency of the schedule allowed the teachers to use similar content, while also allowing for minor adaptations based on teacher preference. Also, it was not uncommon for teachers to trade classes for a week to give students an opportunity to work with a teacher who was more knowledgeable in a certain sport or activity.

When classes were held outside, the fields that were utilized by the teachers were only a few feet away from the doors. The teachers had a large grassy area that was big enough to accommodate several soccer fields.

Mountain Middle School (Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades).

Overview. Mountain Middle School had an enrollment of 1,200+ students: 70.3% white, 4.8% black, 11.7% Hispanic, 9.5% Asian, and 3.7% multiracial. In addition, 21% of the students were classified as low-income (Illinois State Board of Education, 2013). Nine percent of the students received special education services. The average class size was 25 students (Illinois State Board of Education, 2014).

The principal. Two principals were interviewed, head principal, Mr. Zoon, and assistant principal, Ms. Gustaf. This was to account for additional experiences/encounters with the teachers and administration since Mr. Zoon was in his first year at the school. Although the

number of encounters between Mr. Zoon and the physical education department were less than those at the other two schools, the knowledge gained in viewing a school in an administrative transition was seen as valuable.

Mountain Middle School was Mr. Zoon's second position as a head principal of a school. This was his first year as principal of Mountain Middle School. Mr. Zoon's first position was in a middle school as well, and he spent eight years there. He also had experience as an assistant principal, a dean of students, and an athletic director. Before becoming an administrator, Mr. Zoon spent seven years teaching science and social studies at the middle school level. Additionally, he had experience coaching boys' basketball, track, and cross country at the middle school and junior high levels. All but three of his years spent in schools were in a middle school setting.

Mountain Middle School was Ms. Gustaf's first position as an assistant principal. She had been in her role as assistant principal for three years. Before she became an administrator, she was a classroom teacher for 11 years, all at the middle school level. Several of those years were spent as a teacher at Mountain Middle School, so she had previous contact with the physical education department before becoming an assistant principal. Ms. Gustaf had experience coaching several sports during her time as a teacher including softball, volleyball and basketball at various levels.

The teachers. There were six teachers in Mountain Middle School's physical education department. The teachers in the department voted to elect the department head, and Mrs. Borden had been in that role for more than 10 years. The teachers viewed the department head as a leadership role within the department. Although her role as department head had been a constant, she was stepping down as department head before the next school year, because she was ready

for a change. It was uncertain as to who would become the next department head. Mrs. Borden had a part-time physical education position at a grade school before joining the department at Mountain 23 years ago. She had her Master's degree in physical education. Mrs. Borden had coached track, cross country, volleyball, and basketball at various levels at different times throughout her career.

Mr. Wilson had a total of 38 ½ years of teaching experience. He spent the first 1 ½ years between a middle school and an elementary school. Since that time, he had been at Mountain Middle School for the last 37 years. He received a Master's degree in physical education. Mr. Wilson also received a personal trainer certification to be able to start a fitness lab at Mountain Middle School. Mr. Wilson coached high school basketball and football throughout most of his career.

Mr. Leon had a total of 26 years of teaching experience. Before beginning his career at Mountain Middle School, he taught for one year at the elementary level and eleven more at a different middle school. He had taught at Mountain for the past 14 years. Mr. Leon received a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction. Mr. Leon had coached track and field, cross country, and volleyball at various levels throughout most of his teaching career.

Mr. Cole had a total of 14 ½ years of teaching experience. He spent a half of a year teaching at a grade school before spending the past 14 years at Mountain Middle School. Mr. Cole had received a Master's degree in Educational Leadership. He had coached volleyball and track and field at various levels throughout most of his teaching career. He was also the intramural director at Mountain Middle School.

Mrs. Eva had a total of 10 years of teaching experience. She spent one year as a high school physical education teacher before being hired at Mountain Middle School nine years ago.

Mrs. Eva received a Master's degree in Biomechanics and Educational Leadership. Mrs. Eva had coached softball and track at various levels throughout most of her teaching career.

Mrs. Frances had a total of nine years of teaching. All of those years were spent at Mountain Middle School. She received a Master's degree in Personal Training and Educational Leadership. Mrs. Frances had coached cross country, volleyball, basketball, and track at various levels throughout most of her teaching career. Mr. Leon had taught Mrs. Frances while she was in middle school.

Several of the teachers had coached together. In addition to extracurricular responsibilities, the teachers were given the opportunity to be involved in the hiring process and several had been involved in hiring their current colleagues.

The physical environment. Mountain Middle School was established in 1956. Once inside the front door of the building, the entrance to the office was on the right. Straight ahead was a hallway that had a few classrooms on the left and a door to the gymnasium on the right. Upon entering the gymnasium, labeled as "Gym B", the entrance wall was covered in grips for rock climbing and the wall on the left had the entrance to Mrs. Borden, Mrs. Eva, and Mrs. Frances' office. The opposite wall had a white board for instruction and one of the two Blue Ribbon Banners. The other banner was in the other gymnasium. Within this gym was a small basketball court and a storage closet. Outside of the office door was a white board that listed where the students would be having class that day.

On the opposite side of the gymnasium from the entrance was a small hallway that led to the other gymnasium labeled "Gym A." To the right in this hallway was another storage closet and stairs that led to a teaching space on the stage that overlooked Gym A. This stage could be converted into a teaching space by a moveable wall on the stage. When all teachers had to teach

inside and were not team teaching, one teacher could occupy this space for activities such as dance or yoga.

Upon walking into gym A from the hallway, there was a stage on the left and two doors that led to another part of the school on the far wall. Next to the stage was a white board that listed the daily location of each teacher's class. The doors to Mr. Cole and Mr. Leon's office and Mr. Wilson's office were on the wall to the right of the stage. Located on that wall was the additional Blue Ribbon banner. This gym was bigger than the other and had six retractable basketball hoops and a set of collapsible bleachers on the wall opposite the offices.

The teachers were on a daily rotation in which four teachers taught at the same time, while two others were at their planning periods or lunch. The teachers had certain lessons in which they taught on their own and other lessons in which they team taught. Since their schedules were the same as one other teacher, those two teachers always worked in pairs. The teams were Mrs. Borden and Mr. Cole, Mr. Wilson and Mrs. Frances, and Mr. Leon and Mrs. Eva. Like Riverton Middle School, the teachers rotated around to the same sports or activities and taught them in a similar fashion, but were allowed to make small modifications. Unlike Sky and Riverton Middle Schools, the teachers rotated sports or activities on a daily basis, meaning a teacher only taught on the same topic once every five days. Each teacher taught each sport or activity for 10 or 12 class periods. After the students finished changing in the locker room, they checked one of the two white boards to see where their class was meeting for the day.

When the classes went outside for physical education, the teachers led them out the front doors of the building and walked on the sidewalk all the way around the building to the back of the school. The field in the back of the school was large enough to contain two or three soccer fields.

Unlike the shared offices of Sky and Riverton Middle Schools, the teachers at Mountain Middle School were divided into three separate offices. Mrs. Borden, Mrs. Eva, and Mrs. Frances' office was connected to the girl's locker room and Mr. Leon and Mr. Cole's office was connected to the boy's locker room. Mr. Wilson's office was connected to the boy's locker room as well. The teachers noted that they had to talk in passing or make a conscious effort to communicate due to their different schedules and offices.

Quantitative Results

The observation instrument ALT-PE Version II was used to measure teacher effectiveness, specifically by demonstrating "the amount of time pupils are engaged in motor activity at an appropriate level of difficulty (Siedentop et al., 1982, p. 1). For the purposes of this study, ALT-PE was used as a means of justification for using Blue Ribbon schools examples of quality schools. Table 1 on page 111 provides each teacher's overall teacher percent mean (the number of motor appropriate behavior intervals from both lessons divided by the total of all intervals (motor appropriate and all other types) from both lessons) and each department's overall program percent mean (the total number of motor appropriate behavior intervals from a department divided by the total of all intervals from the department).

Results of ALT-PE suggest that, comparatively speaking, the amount of motor appropriate activity in these programs was relatively high compared to other studies using the observation instrument (Parker, 1989). Very few physical education studies were found that included students who were engaged in 40% or more motor appropriate behavior (Beckett, 1989; Behets, 1996; Martinek & Karper, 1983). A factor that influenced the amount time engaged in motor appropriate activity at Sky Middle School and Mountain Middle school was the time spent in warm-ups.

Another observation that might suggest unity was the consistency of scores across the department. This would suggest that content is being taught in a similar fashion which matched a statement made by Mr. Cole in an informal interview. He said, “Their might be different teaching styles, but we get the same result.” Finally, it was interesting that the two teachers with the most experience (the one teacher at Sky Middle School) on each staff had the highest student engagement in motor appropriate behavior.

Qualitative Results

Interviews and observations of 14 physical education teachers and four principals from three different middle school Blue Ribbon programs yielded 10 themes and 13 subthemes. Themes were developed under the umbrella of the Structuration Theory. Each participant was interviewed on two separate occasions for approximately 30-45 minutes. Interviews were conducted in a private room or office chosen by the interviewee. Interviews were scheduled during the participants break times or a time of their choosing. Additionally, field notes were taken from direct observations of each physical education program and the interactions between and among the participants. Field notes included detailed accounts of the space, team teaching, and interactions involving the participants, among other things. Access to departmental and team meetings was also granted. In addition, notes were taken regarding before and after the school day and during lunch. Although attempts were made to observe each teacher instruct a lesson daily (necessary due to the daily rotation at Mountain Middle School), team teaching situations took precedent over individually taught lessons. This was due to the increased opportunity of interactions between the participants. Each program was observed for a duration of 10 days (approximately 80 hours each program).

Direct quotes are included to provide to support themes that emerged. Each quote will identify the participant's pseudonym, school, and status. Abbreviations will help to clarify the status of the individuals (physical education teachers = PET, department head = DH, team leader = TL, principal = P, and assistant principal = AP). The participants in the study were: From Sky Middle School, two physical education teachers, Mrs. Vasser (PET) and Mr. Reiter (PET) and one principal Mrs. Smith (P); from Riverton Middle School, six physical education teachers, Mr. Patton (TL), Mrs. Tanner (PET), Mr. Brooks (PET), Mr. Cross (PET), Mrs. Lynn (PET), and Mr. Dugan (PET) and one principal, Mr. Vincent (P); and from Mountain Middle School, six physical education teachers, Mrs. Borden (DH), Mr. Wilson (PET), Mr. Leon (PET), Mr. Cole (PET), Mrs. Eva (PET), and Mrs. Frances (PET), and two principals (Mr. Zoon (P) and Mrs. Gustaf (AP)).

Communication Plays a Role in Satisfaction

All of the physical education teachers and principals from each middle school voiced the important role that communication played between and among the major stakeholders surrounding each department. Specifically, the parties interviewed articulated the necessity of (a) communication within the department and (b) communication between and among department members and the principal/principals.

Communication within the department. Participants from all three schools expressed the extent to which communication played a major role in the successful functioning of their departments. An important venue for departmental communication was a time set aside each day for faculty to meet together. The best example of this meeting was at Riverton Middle School, wherein the schedule created and implemented by the administration included a half-hour team planning time in the middle of each school day. During this period, all teachers within the

physical education department were able to meet as a whole. The group gathered in a large office that housed every member of the department. In these meetings, the physical educators typically discussed issues that were written on a small white board that hung on the office wall. Each team member had the freedom to post topics that were relevant to the department. Regarding the whiteboard, Mr. Cross (PET) commented that “everyone contributes” to what is written and to the discussion. Mr. Dugan (PET) spoke to the value of having this planning time and the departments approach to using this time, “It makes things a lot simpler, it’s well organized. And at team meeting time, a lot of questions are answered before they are even asked.” Likewise, Sky Middle School’s two teachers had identical schedules and planned together daily. At Mountain Middle School, teachers had joint planning/meeting time with at least one other individual in the department. The teachers were observed almost daily finding the other teacher on break to see if anything needed to be discussed. It was more difficult to meet with the other teachers because of the differing schedules. As a result, the teachers would talk “in passing” while they were waiting for their next class. While this planning period with at least one other teacher was helpful at Mountain Middle School, clearly a unified meeting each day would have been more ideal.

Although the structure of each department encouraged communication, it was the culture created by the individuals, or agents, (Giddens, 1984) within each department that made the time worthwhile. Ms. Gustaf, assistant principal at Mountain Middle School, commented,

I feel like they are willing to have the difficult conversations with one another, and, you know, they do a lot of peer observation. You can hear them giving each other feedback in terms of expectations and things like that. You know, it’s not just the warm and fuzzies, but it’s like how are we going to be better? What do we need to do in the department? How do we need to move forward?

Several statements made by the teachers at each school noted the importance of an open line of communication within the department. Mrs. Vasser, physical education teacher at Sky Middle School, commented that the relationship she developed with Mr. Reiter (PET) over time allows them to, “Go back and forth and still remain professional. I don’t think that we have ever really ever fought or had any problems that way. He’s pretty easy going, and he’s very easy to work with.” Field notes from each school also suggested that the teachers worked through issues until everyone in the department was comfortable. In an informal interview, Mr. Cross said, “We all help each other and come up with ideas together. We analyze as a group.” Similar statements were made by other teachers at each school.

Despite the fact that all three departments communicated on a regular basis, Sky and Riverton Middle Schools had an advantage over Mountain Middle School due to the teachers sharing one office. Sharing the same space and having the same planning periods made communication easier for the teachers at Sky and Riverton.

Communication between the department members and the administration. Several teachers at Sky and Riverton Middle Schools mentioned having open lines of communication with their building administration, however, this was not necessarily the case at Mountain School. Mrs. Vasser (PET), Sky Middle School, mentioned,

I know that my principal is very good. I like the fact that she lets me do what I, not do what I want, but listens to me when I have legitimate complaints or not very same complaints. She can talk me down. Actually I have a pretty good rapport with her.

Relatedly, Mr. Vincent, principal at Riverton Middle School, stated regarding his physical education department, “I feel I have a pretty good relationship with them. They know my door is always open, and they know they can come in and talk to me about anything.”

Although the other members of departments perceived their levels of communication with their principals as strong, the teachers at Mountain Middle School voiced concern that the communication between their new principal and the department was lacking. Specifically, they perceived that they did not currently have a voice in relation to the direction in which the department was headed. This perception was specifically manifested as a result of feeling powerless to policy changes within the department. Because physical education and health were being combined for the next school year, the current policy of daily physical education was being revised. Mr. Wilson (PET) mentioned that he thought that his discussions with the principal regarding the issue, “is not going to help. We are not going to be heard.” Mrs. Borden (DH) added, “The principal makes it seem like we have some input, and we can help make the decisions. Or we can make the decisions all on our own, but ultimately that’s not the way it seems.” A common thread between the department members’ statements was that the changes have created a level of uncertainty with the future that was not felt in previous years. This type policy change, the removal of daily physical education, could potentially decrease the perceived value of the subject in the school. At the very least, it was perceived by members of the Mountain Middle School Physical Education Department as a step backwards for physical education in their school. By possibly changing the perception of the subject’s value, Mr. Zoon (P) demonstrated the ability of agents to influence structure.

An Emphasis on Team

Formal and informal interview responses and field notes clearly revealed that the physical education teachers at each school in each program placed a high value in creating a team atmosphere. Related to an emphasis on team, the data suggested that this theme encompassed (a)

collaboration, (b) team-teaching, (c) consistency between teachers, and (d) an effort to share responsibility.

Emphasis on collaboration. Interviews with the department members and administrators and field notes suggested that there was an emphasis placed on collaboration within the departments. In this vein, Mr. Vincent, principal of Riverton Middle School, said,

I think the relationship and the ability of them (department members) to collaborate and not to be afraid to express their own opinions, while at the same time setting aside their own... I guess their idea or opinion for the sake of the rest of the group, because they see things differently, without getting angry, upset or frustrated by that. I think that's a real critical piece to the success of that department. They really do work well together. They all chip in. They all set up equipment. They all cover for each other if they need to, it really... So, I think it's a critical piece of what makes that department tick, is their ability to work together so collaboratively.

Mr. Zoon (P) made a similar statement regarding the physical education department at Mountain Middle School. He commented, "The style in our PE department that I see, at times, is collaborative and certainly seeking out information from the department to make department decisions".

Additionally, the teachers and the principal at Sky Middle School noted that collaboration with classroom teachers was important as well. Mrs. Smith (P) commented,

I think teachers see PE as more than just a class where I get a break. I think they see that as a needed activity for their students to come back and be ready and energized to learn. That it activates the brain. Our PE department does a really good job of talking about

how physical education activates the brain, and we do things in the classroom that the PE department has suggested, promoted especially during testing times.

Team teaching is valued. Team teaching was an example of collaboration at work in each of the three schools. Team teaching, which occurred on a daily basis at each school, resulted from both lack of teaching space and by the teacher's choice. At all schools both were valid reasons to teach with another faculty member. The teachers expressed a positive attitude toward this collaboration with colleagues. Riverton teacher, Mrs. Tanner (PET), stated the following related to team teaching,

It's forced because of the situation, and I think, you know there are times when we go outside and we have all the space in the world and we still choose to team teach something. But sometimes, in our situation, it's dictated by the space, the number of kids, and the time that we have. But I have no problem, you know, team teaching with anybody. I think we do our best to share the leadership role when we're team teaching. I really enjoy team teaching, and I would hate to go back to being isolated by myself in a teaching situation. Yeah, I've learned so much from every one of these people and stolen many ideas from each one of them for my own.

The other teachers at Mountain Middle School echoed the thoughts of Mrs. Tanner (PET). Additionally, Mr. Reiter (PET) from Sky Middle school suggested that team teaching has positively affected the lessons for students. He stated,

I would say just having two teachers in there, you know, allows us to have quicker transitions from one activity to another. When one teacher might be giving instructions, the other teacher might be getting equipment ready and kind of positioning. A lot of times when one teacher is giving instruction the other teacher is counting to make sure that

there are equal numbers on each team. . . I just think having two teachers in there allows us to keep lessons moving smoothly.

Furthermore, the team teaching concept was so engrained in the culture at Riverton and Sky Middle Schools that the teachers said that it made for more effective curriculum delivery. In team teaching, for example, instructors often selected lesson content based on their levels of expertise. Regarding this matter, Mrs. Vasser (PET at Sky Middle School) explained,

We do co-teaching as much as we can, and there are some units that we will go into different sections. Like, he might teach a health lesson and then I would do something in the gym. We also do separate lessons on pickleball. Pickleball is at the same time as football. So, he'll teach my classes football and I'll teach his classes pickleball, and then they flip-flop.

In observing team teaching at Sky Middle School in particular, the high number of team taught lessons has produced an environment where the lead teacher and the assistant teacher change regularly based on proximity to the students and individual interactions with students. It was also of note that many times, this role exchange was done without any verbal communication.

Mutual sense of trust. In addition to rotating classes, the teachers at Riverton and Sky Middle Schools trusted each other to provide grades for students on each other's class rosters. When asked about how the teachers handle grading at Riverton Middle School when they rotate classes, Ms. Lynn (PET) talked about how she and Mr. Patton (PET) dealt with taking each other's classes for a week long unit, "I'll give them the tests and the participation grade, so I'm kind of in charge of the grading of those kids for that week." These faculty stressed the need to

be on the same page to achieve consistency. Mr. Brooks, physical education teacher at Riverton Middle School, said about teacher consistency,

I think that is always a goal. Teachers have to (be consistent). When you don't have that type of accountability I think some teachers get to be the fun teacher, other people have to be the bad guys. You know, and so, when everybody can agree on a set of both written and unwritten expectations, it's the same. Any teacher would say "hey what's going on right there," "hey you need do better here," or this or that, or "this is the rule here." It's just six people representing one presentation. I think that's what makes it successful.

There are no real weak spots. In terms of kids, and it's all for the kids' sake. It's all about a consistent presentation.

Regarding the faculty in Mountain Middle School physical education department's desire for consistency, Mr. Cole said,

So, we've really evolved into a pretty unique group where we all teach from the same block plan and lesson plan. We all just do it. It just works. We have our own teaching styles, but we all teach the same stuff.

It should be noted that the similarities of the schedules, at Riverton and Sky Middle Schools, where all teachers have a common planning period enhanced their abilities to engage in activities such as switching classes and providing grades for each other's students. In other words, a duality of structure could be observed, meaning that the agents and the structure have impacted each other (Giddens, 1984). The agents make the most of their opportunity to work as a team in an environment that was conducive to collaboration.

An effort to share responsibility. All departments portrayed that sharing the departmental responsibilities was commonplace. In the mornings and at the end of every day, the

task of equipment set-up and clean-up was not left to the teacher who last used the equipment. Each group continuously showed a willingness to assist each other. In relation to locker room supervision at Riverton and Mountain Middle Schools (the students at Sky Middle School do not change their clothes for physical education), they rotated the responsibility based on their schedules.

Beyond assisting each other with daily departmental duties related to equipment set-up, clean-up, and supervision, the teachers at each of the schools noted that they take on extra responsibilities to distribute workloads. These responsibilities are based on the strengths of the teachers in the department. An example of this is provided by Mr. Patton, team leader of the Riverton Middle School department. He noted,

Well, we all have our jobs. Ms. Tanner's the budget person. Mr. Cross covers a lot of the meetings, and there are a couple of other committees he's involved in...Ms. Lynn is involved in technology committees. I do the newsletters, the team newsletters. Mr. Dugan keeps the minutes. Mr. Brooks is involved in SIP, which is the building wide goals and things that we need to do. So, were all picking up different jobs that need to be done, and if someone needs to cover for someone we do that.

Mrs. Eva (PET) provided a summary of the departmental roles at Mountain Middle School,

Mrs. Frances is in charge of 6th grade track meet, and that's a big undertaking because that affects the school. I suppose I do roller blading, a big financial unit. Mrs. Borden is really good at ordering supplies. She does a great job with the schedule. She creates a unique rotation where sometimes we team teach and sometimes we don't. Mr. Cole is

great at technology, and Mr. Wilson, obviously the fitness lab. Mr. Leon is definitely very organized with the equipment and getting the units ready.

Ms. Gustaf (AP) provided an administrative perspective on this topic regarding the teachers in the physical education program at Mountain Middle School, “They kind of stand out in different ways. You know, I see that they really are like a family.” The principals at the other buildings echoed her sentiment.

At Sky Middle School, the sense of team and shared responsibility was extended to student teacher guidance. In relation to sharing student teachers, Mr. Reiter (PET) stated, “We’ve kind of found it easier to share them completely... We have just kind of found that shared responsibility works better for us, and it also works best for the student teacher because we can both give them input.” Field notes provided evidence of this through interactions with two practicum students from a local college. These students observed and were given the responsibility of teaching certain activities to the students. Throughout the lessons, Mrs. Vasser and Mr. Reiter engaged the students in conversation, both separately and together. After a few days of observation, Mrs. Vasser and Mr. Reiter gave the students opportunities to team teach with each other while being observed by both.

An Emphasis on the Students

Information gleaned from interviews and field notes demonstrate the desire of each department and the principals was to place the needs of the students first. The actions of the individuals also suggested this to be true.

Stakeholders at all three schools mentioned that both departmental and individual decisions were influenced by the desire to do the best for the students. These sentiments were evident by the statements of the leadership in each department. Mr. Vincent, principal at

Riverton Middle School, spoke to the student-first mentality of his physical education department,

I think again it focuses more on servant leadership. It's more of a collaborative I'm going to put an idea out there and let's talk about it. Does this have benefit? Does this have merit, and how would we go about implementing or integrating this into what we do? If we see that it has merit then we'll take it to the next level and let's plan it out. What would this look like? What are the activities? How many kids? How many stations? How many groups? They're very scientific in their approach, and that's as a group. I mean you've seen them, they sit down and they plan. They throw it up on a white board, they mark out the calendar, they figure out how many days and who's going to do what. They mix and match and I think that is, they just are seamlessly focused on kids and what's going to be good for them. So, I see it as servant leadership. I see it as collaborative leadership, flexible. I don't think they would ever ask a kid to do something they themselves wouldn't do.

Relatedly, statements made at Mountain Middle School suggested this mentality was at the forefront of what they did as a department and as teachers. Mr. Leon (PET) at Mountain Middle School said that the purpose of PE was to, "Teach every child...Sometimes you have to step outside of the box." Mrs. Borden (DH) said that part of the reason she is stepping down as a department head next year is because, "I really feel a disconnect with my students. I feel a lot like I am getting caught up in the paperwork. What's going on outside the department rather than thinking about my students."

Because of student-centered focus of Sky Middle School's physical education program, Mrs. Smith (P) used Mr. Reiter (PET) and Mrs. Vasser (PET) as a resource for students who were having difficulties. She expressed,

I mean, obviously, they meet the needs of all their students. But we have students who have special areas of concern, and they step up and provide extra support for those students so that impacts my job. Because when I have a student who is out of control in a classroom, and I can offer them an extra ten minutes of time in PE somewhere throughout the day, that really has a huge impact on how successful that student is going to be.

When (or if) the opportunity for additional space arose, each department carefully deliberated on how best to use that space. At Sky Middle School, the teachers have used their identical schedule to their advantage. Mr. Reiter (PET) noted in regards to the use of team teaching,

It completely depends on the activity. You know, what I think the students can benefit from more. In certain situations, I think it is better if we separate if the students are going to get more participation. Something like pickleball, it's understandable that they have larger courts, especially with the racquet. Just depending on the activity.

Giddens would point to this example as a demonstration of the power of agency. Team teaching has become a central part of what was utilized in all of these schools, especially at Sky Middle School. Mrs. Vasser (PET) noted that before she and Mr. Reiter (PET) were the only teachers in the department, she had previous team teaching experiences with another teacher in the district. Her previous experiences with team teaching helped her decide that it was something that would be more affective for Mr. Reiter and her than dividing the gym in half. Giddens noted that social structures can be the result of past actions of agents (1984). Her past experiences helped to frame

the current structure of the department and the utilization of team teaching based on student needs.

A Culture of Self-promotion

Both interviews and field notes provided evidence of the self-promoting mentality that was present within the departments. The physical teaching space for each department was a visible reminder of what was valued by the teachers.

Both Sky and Mountain Middle School programs displayed student achievements in their respective gyms. In addition, each program highlighted their achievements by displaying their Blue Ribbon Banners on the gym wall. Other posters and signs that hung in the gyms promoted physical activity and the subject of physical education. Also, bulletin boards at each school listed physical education content as well as upcoming events including intramurals and school sports team information.

Each program also attempted to share program information with information for parents and guardians. Both Mountain and Sky Middle schools create physical education newsletters to inform the parents and guardians. In addition, all three schools promoted their programs and the subject of physical education through their websites. Each website included teacher information, a department philosophy statement, pertinent information about the curriculum, and an announcement about the departments status as a Blue Ribbon physical education program.

Multiple statements and actions by the teachers confirmed their intention to promote their departments. Mr. Cole (PET) at Mountain Middle School stated regarding Blue Ribbon recognition,

I'm pretty proud of it. I tell a lot of people about it. I make sure every time we have parents in front of us on a faculty night or a student open house that we always talk about

it. I always point to the banners on the wall. I always bring it up. And, I always say, you know, your child is not just getting physical education here, you're getting physical education that is above and beyond the states requirements.

Mr. Brooks (PET) from Riverton Middle School also expressed the value of the Blue Ribbon Banner on the wall, "When I'm not here and other people come in the gym, it is still there speaking. And so it speaks for us, and it's a nice accomplishment."

The teachers' attempts to promote their programs represent examples of agency. Meaning, the teachers (agents) actions were meant to influence others opinions of physical education within their school (structure) (Giddens, 1984).

Significance of Administrative Support

Members of all three departments expressed the value of administrative support. Each department suggested that their principals have shown them support through (a) monetary support and (b) curricular freedom.

Monetary support. Both the administration and the physical education teachers within each school suggested that a large part of principal support was monetary. Ms. Gustaf, assistant principal at Mountain Middle School indicated that purchasing equipment that will benefit their program was a high priority. She stated, "I think that my role is to say, if they're really feeling like they need something within their budget. You know, how can we make that happen?" A member of her physical education staff, Mr. Wilson, reaffirmed her statement, "We have always gotten what we ask for."

Mrs. Tanner, a physical education teacher at Riverton Middle School, suggested that her department felt supported monetarily as well. She commented about her principal, "He's very, very generous with the budget. He's kind of got our backs on that. If we need something, he will

most likely be able to get it.” Both the departments at Sky Middle School and at Riverton Middle School also benefited from an influx of new equipment that came when their buildings were built. This type of support has continued throughout the years. Mrs. Smith, principal of Sky Middle School provided a statement related to the annual money given to her physical education program, “Well, every year we put a substantial amount of our budget towards the physical education department.”

Curricular Freedom. Faculty members in each department noted that they valued the ability to collectively decide the direction of the physical education curriculum. Minimal principal involvement in the decision making process was not perceived in a negative way. Regarding this mentality, Mr. Cole (PET) at Mountain Middle School commented, “We kind of like that he is not involved, because we get to make our decisions on a day to day basis.”

The physical education departments at Riverton and Sky Middle Schools accepted the lack of principal involvement as a vote of confidence from the administration as to what occurs in physical education. Ms. Lynn (PET) from Riverton Middle School expressed this sentiment regarding her administration, “They’re very supportive with everything...If we need them, then they’ll be involved. But unless there is a problem that arises, they’re pretty hands off... Yes, I definitely think there is an element of trust with them and us.” Similarly, Mr. Reiter, physical education teacher at Sky Middle School, stated about his principal,

She’s not hands on. I would say we’re not micromanaged. I would say we’re supported in a way that allows us to do our job effectively...I would say the experience that we both have teaching, and then the experience that we have together that I think just kind of allows her to take the stance that she has.

Recognition’s Influence on the Department

No matter the reason each program pursued the Blue Ribbon recognition, the notoriety that coincided with acknowledgement elevated the perception of the department to many individuals within and around the schools. This provided a strong example of how agency can influence the structure surrounding physical education (Giddens, 1984). Sub-themes related to the impact of recognition include (a) an improved physical environment, (b) a heightened administrative awareness, and (c) a heightened building/district awareness.

An improved physical environment. To achieve Blue Ribbon recognition, the administration at each school was asked to repair certain physical characteristics within the gym/outdoor space. In each instance, the administration supported the program by making the necessary modifications. These changes ranged from changing door handles to resurfacing a field to be utilized for teaching.

Mrs. Vasser (PET) talked about the changes that needed to be made and the influence of recognition regarding administrative support. She noted,

We were asking for things from our district and it was just falling on deaf ears, you know, well yeah maybe someday, but when we came up with our weaknesses and we identified our weaknesses. When IAPHERD came in and evaluated our school, they gave those weaknesses and then told the district the only way we could get a Blue Ribbon status was if we addressed those weaknesses that we addressed and they did. It ended up costing the district actually about \$15,000 to make sure they did address those things.

A heightened administrative awareness. When Mrs. Vasser (physical education teacher at Sky Middle School) was asked if her administration was active in the physical education program, she replied,

She knows the people that work for her. And, she still knows what you are doing and she is still aware of what you are doing. But, she trusts you, and knows that you are going to be doing it (your job). I mean, she pretty much leaves PE alone.

When a follow-up question asked if this was because she was aware of the quality of the physical education program she said, “I believe so, and I believe the Blue Ribbon also helped.”

Mrs. Vasser was not alone in expressing her belief that Blue Ribbon recognition impacted administrative awareness. Statements by the administration at each school verify the feelings of the teachers. Mr. Zoon, first year principal at Mountain Middle School had this to say about having a department that was recognized by Blue Ribbon,

Even though I had nothing to do with it, it indirectly makes me look good when our PE department is Blue Ribbon. It makes our school look good. It makes our community look good. It makes them (the physical education department) look good. It’s a win, win, win, so I would say they impact me the most through accountability structures.

A heightened building/district awareness. Both the physical education teachers and the principal at Sky Middle School recognized the influence Blue Ribbon recognition had on the perceptions of the district. When asked if the overall expectations of the department changed since they received Blue Ribbon, Mrs. Smith, the principal of Sky Middle School stated, “They’ve been resources for the other buildings in trying to get them to do the same thing. So, they’ve become leaders in the district.”

Mr. Cole (PET), from Mountain Middle School also alluded to the support he and his fellow department members received from their colleagues. He said,

I think that by getting the Blue Ribbon the first time and the second time, it was something that we could stand up and tell our faculty members at a faculty meeting. And

I think it gave us a lot of recognition from our peers. I think they recognize that. They know how difficult that is to get that, and I think it's really helped.

Similar sentiments were made by others in each department as well.

Significance of Leadership

Within and around each of the departments, the role of leadership and the perception of power helped to shape the actions of the individuals. Related to the significance of leadership, the data suggests that this theme encompassed (a) the emphasis or de-emphasis of titles and (b) the value placed on distributed leadership.

The power of a title...or lack thereof. The teachers and administrators within Sky and Riverton Middle Schools took a different approach to department titles than did the teachers and administrators at Mountain Middle School. Both noted that they do not have a department head, nor do they have more authority than the other. When asked whether certain individuals in the department had more power than others, Mr. Reiter replied, "I mean between the two of us, I don't see one having more power than the other." His response was similar to both Mrs. Vasser (PET) and Mrs. Smith (P). Mrs. Smith commented about the balance of power in the department, "I think it is pretty equal. They are both coaches too, so they are both used to being in a leadership role."

During the interviews, the teachers and the principal at Riverton Middle School were quick to point out that they did not have a department head, but that they did have a team leader. While a title was given, every person interviewed suggested that this title did not carry any additional power or status. Regarding his title as team leader, Mr. Patton stated,

Well, we really don't have a department head. I'm more like a team leader. That's basically by name only because I attend the team leader meetings and I disseminate info.

But I'm more of a facilitator. You know, we have a lot of leaders in our department and on our team a lot of experience from people. We all know each other; we all cover for each other. If I can't make a team leader meeting, Mr. Cross will pick it up for me or Ms. Lynn. So, it's basically, just a go through person that if, um, if something needs, someone needs to be contacted. I'm basically just a go through person that if, um, if something needs to be or someone needs to be contacted. I'm basically a flow through. I'm not really; I'm not going to say. We, as a team, decide how things are going to be done. I really do trust my colleagues because they have a lot more or just as much experience as I do, so.

In the same manner, Mr. Vincent, principal at Riverton Middle School, said that being a team leader is "kind of a thankless job." He went on to say,

I kind of use them (team leaders) as liaisons to go back to the teams if I need to discuss or do things... There's not a whole lot of structure. I think the idea is that anybody can take a term as team leader, but the teams select their team leaders.

As was expressed by every member of the department regarding whether certain individuals have more power than others, Mr. Cross stated, "We all have the same share."

The views of individuals from Sky and Riverton Middle Schools related to individual power based on departmental titles differed from those at Mountain Middle School. Instead of an organic process to the formation of leadership, the title of department head suggested additional power. Mr. Leon, a Mountain Middle School physical education teacher, commented on the additional power that the title of department head carried. When asked if certain individuals in the department have more power than others, he said, "Well, our department head for sure. And

that is the role, title, respect that you give that person.” His viewpoint was shared by the other individuals in the department.

The additional power given to the department head at Mountain Middle School, coupled with the uncertainty of the department head next year due to Mrs. Borden stepping down from her role, has led to an uneasy feeling among members in the department. This was in stark contrast to the power and value placed on the role of team leader at Riverton Middle School. In comparing these two schools, the difference in perceptions of power based on titles provides an excellent example of how the structure of a program can influence the agents.

“It’s our department” (a distributed approach to leadership in and around the department). The teachers at all three schools and the administrators at both Sky Middle School and Riverton Middle school suggested that they are stronger as a collective because all voices in and around the department are heard, and because the strengths of the individuals within the department are recognized and utilized.

The principals and the physical education teachers at Sky and Riverton Middle Schools stress a distributed method of leadership. Regarding her leadership style at Sky Middle School, Mrs. Smith (P) said, “Empowering. And strengthening their department through my leadership skills. See I don’t think you can define it under one leadership style, if I had to I would say that.”

Mr. Vincent, principal at Riverton Middle School, also expressed the need for distributed leadership. He explained,

I’m definitely on the servant leadership end. My job, my role here as the principal is to provide the support. Coaching, mentoring, training, whatever it might be, to make the lives of my teachers as seamless and easy as possible in the school.

He also had the same view regarding the leadership in the physical education department.

He commented,

Leadership is an interesting term for that department. Technically, Mr. Patton is the team leader, and yet Mr. Brooks definitely leads in terms of some of the conversations and relationships that he builds with kids. Mr. Cross is kind of thought of as the cool P.E. teacher. He's in his forty's and they still love him, they think he's young and cool. You know it's, they each have their own strengths. Ms. Tanner leads more from the interscholastic. Ms. Lynn from the intramural side. I think when push comes to shove, leadership in that department is really about servant leadership. They want to do what's best for kids. They are all willing to pitch in and do whatever they have to do.

Although the team leader and department head seemed to have different connotations related to the structure of the physical education program, the teachers at Mountain felt that their curriculum and the direction of the department was collaborative. Mr. Wilson (PET) used his fellow department members' unique strengths as an example,

Everybody has a strong point whether it be the curricular part, the organization part, or just the activity part. Everybody has floated their own strengths, and everybody has let them do that. Mrs. Frances is in charge of the sixth grade track. She's fully in charge of it. Mr. Cole does all the dance stuff, because he's good at it. So everybody pretty much grabs their strong point.

Even though Mrs. Borden was the department head and the role gave her additional power in the eyes of many in the department, she continued to encourage a sense of ownership in the program. She said,

I feel like they (the department members) look to the department head as the leader; however, there's something else going on, you know. Mrs. Frances is the leader who we look to when we're doing the 6th grade track meet. Mr. Cole is the leader when we need something with technology. So, you know, providing the leadership comes from the department chair unless a specific task has been taken over by another department member.

Mr. Zoon (P), however, saw his leadership role differently from the leadership concepts valued by his staff and the principals from the other programs. He viewed his leadership style as one that is "top-down." He stated,

Leadership style from me is I want us doing what is best for the kids. And, there is enough research out there. We know what works and we're not doing it, then my question will be why. And, again, we're a big school it might be because of space. So, are we even, though we're a Blue Ribbon school for PE, are we doing what's best. Maybe we are, maybe we're not. So, what I want is, my leadership style will be a little bit top down, because I want us to do right by kids and that's non-negotiable. So, I'll interject myself in a situation that I don't think is right, but more importantly is I want to motivate them to do what's right.

With change, as was the case at Mountain Middle School, the new leaders' actions (agency) may provide a different set of expectations and a novel way of doing things. Also, there seemed to be a level of uneasiness in waiting for a new department head to be appointed. This new school structure may provide a challenge to the old way of doing things which may push individuals from a place of comfort and contest what was previously a solid foundation.

Multiple teachers within the department expressed that they were having trust issues due to the changes that were being implemented in physical education for the next school year. Specifically, they were upset about losing daily physical education. Regarding the issue, Mrs. Frances (PET) stated,

Our principal right now, I feel like we are still feeling him out. He came in saying he is pro PE. That this is what he is passionate about it. That he loves it, but he is changing it. You know so I feel like that broke some trust that we would have normally had, if he would have followed through with that. Um, his role with the department, he does listen. I can see that he cares and that he tries, I just don't know if he has ever been in a PE program like this.

Regarding his concern with the direction of the department and the perception of a lack of a voice from the members of the department, Mr. Leon (PET) said,

Trying and get to know the administration. Feeling a little bit back on my heels about some of the decisions they have made for our department. Because we have gone from daily physical education, to we are losing it next year...I think there is a trust issue with me personally right now, with that. So we will see if that changes for better or for worse.

Consistent Perceptions Regarding Purpose

Interviews and field notes suggested that a high value was placed on a unified purpose within each department. Additionally, the perceptions of the purpose of physical education were consistent across all three programs. Although additional concepts and skillsets were included in many of the participant's statements, lifelong physical fitness was all-encompassing.

Multiple teachers in each program listed lifelong fitness as a goal of the program. In fact, the website for each school included statements made by the teachers. On this topic, Mrs.

Frances (PET) from Mountain Middle School said,

I have so many...My goal for my students, my mission statement is that I want them to find something that we are doing that's going to make them be active forever. We do such so many different activities sixth grade through eighth grade, that by the time they leave here I want them to have something they enjoy. It doesn't have to be excelling at it, but something they enjoy.

In addition to the teachers' views of the purpose of physical education, the administrators all agreed that educating students on how to stay healthy for life should be a physical education program outcome. Mr. Vincent, principal of Mountain Middle School and former physical education teacher, stated,

I think PE serves an integral part of what we do here. I have a little different perspective, I think, because I was in the field for so long myself. I see the importance of teaching kids not just skills but healthy lifestyles. I'm trying to tune them into interests so that they're going to be into activities they can do for their entire lives. It's not just about physical activity; it's about a lifestyle and the impact that that lifestyle can have on an individual student. From team sports, to game sports, to individual sports, it's fitness, life skills they teach. You know, so I would say it plays a very integral part of what we do here.

In terms of the effect a unified front might have on the school community, their agency (actions) may influence other agents (students, colleagues, parents) and ensure a solid position for physical education in the school for many years to come. Field notes from each school

identified that fitness lessons were incorporated regularly. Additionally, several teachers were observed explaining the value of using certain pieces of exercise equipment to stay healthy. These included weight machines (Mountain), jump ropes (Sky and Riverton), and medicine balls (Riverton) to name a few.

Leadership outside of physical education

All of the teachers within each school have interwoven themselves into the fabric of the schools by taking leadership roles beyond the scope of physical education. Several of the teachers, for example, led intramurals which provided another outlet to connect with students.

Beyond coaching and intramurals, several teachers belonged to committees in their respective building. Of importance, some of the leadership roles taken on by these teachers, as was the case with Mr. Patton acting as the team leader for Riverton's physical education department, were voluntary.

Additionally, the perceptions of these physical education teachers were that they have a unique connection with the students. Mrs. Smith, principal of Sky Middle School commented on Mr. Reiter and Mrs. Vasser's leadership among the classroom teachers. She remarked, "They impact the classrooms with their leadership. Getting them involved in making sure their students have some sort of movement even in the classroom."

Their leadership was also evident in situations like when these teachers quieted and dismissed students from all-school assemblies. Detailed field notes described how Mrs. Borden (DH) and Mr. Cole (PET) took charge after an assembly at Mountain Middle School and the extent to which Mr. Reiter (PET) did the same after an assembly at Sky Middle School. These actions (agency) may help to elevate their roles in the school setting (Giddens, 1984).

A Sense of Caring for the Individuals

Within each program, comments and cordialities at the beginning and end of the day and during breaks provided evidence of attempts to build relationships within the department. Field notes demonstrate multiple questions about a broad range of topics including family. For example, Mr. Cole (PET) and Mr. Leon (PET) asking Mr. Wilson (PET) about the health status of his family member, and related to athletics, Mr. Reiter (PET) asking Mrs. Vasser (PET) how her volleyball team played the previous night. Mr. Leon (PET) summed up the importance of building relationships and connected to the current policy change within the department. He said,

Sometimes, I guess I am glad I am personally invested in this PE program and with these PE people. (Pause) I have been fortunate to work other places that have had that type of friendship in their department and other places where it wasn't. So it makes it nice to come into work. I know this year we have had a pretty rough year with some changes and what not, but nothing to the fact that is going to make me stand up and walk away. There has been too many good things this department has done and done for each other. Both in the school and out of school and how we support each other.

Chapter Summary

In summary, the results of this investigation demonstrate that communication was an important part of the relationship between department members and between department members and the administration. It was seen as a valuable component of a well-functioning department. An impasse in communication can cause a rift between the stakeholders.

Related to the purpose of physical education, the teachers and the principals placed value on providing instruction that promotes lifelong fitness. The teachers believed that it was important for the department members to agree on the subject's purpose within their perspective schools.

Another component that was important in each department was a sense of cordiality. Having an invested interest in the well-being of others beyond the school helped in establishing a strong professional work environment. In the case of Mountain Middle School, the teachers felt that the unity they had formed as a staff gave them strength to deal with upcoming changes affecting their department.

In addition to taking an interest in each other's personal lives, each program saw the importance of creating a team atmosphere within the department. Teachers felt that collaboration, both inside and outside of the department, was valuable. Beyond collaboration, team teaching was welcomed and utilized almost daily. Furthermore, the teachers at Riverton and Sky Middle School created a foundation of trust that resulted in them rotating classes, at times, to match teacher strengths.

Both principals and physical education teachers suggested that the needs of the students come first when making decisions. This decision process referred to both individual and departmental decisions. Additionally, teaching methods, such as team teaching or individual teaching were selected based on the needs of the students.

It could be perceived that what was best for students, related to physical education, was it being perceived as a valued subject that has the necessary capabilities to meet their needs. The self-promoting nature of all three departments has most likely contributed to outsiders' views of the subject and the departments themselves. All three schools sought and received Blue Ribbon recognition, promoted the physical education curriculum through their websites, and posted physical education content on bulletin boards in their respective gym spaces, among other things.

Whether recognition was sought for self-promotion or for other reasons was not as important as the impact of being recognized by Blue Ribbon. All three programs mentioned that

having a recognized physical education department provided an increase in notoriety in the minds of some stakeholders within and around the school. Not only did it increase the perception of the program, it also resulted in an improved physical environment (equipment, fields, gyms, etc.).

Within each school, the teachers also valued administrative support. The principals in all three schools provided support both monetarily and through curricular freedom. Each program accepted minimal principal involvement in curriculum decisions as a positive.

Also important to the teachers in each department was the role of leadership in the department. All three programs mentioned that every teacher had a voice in department decisions, but Mountain Middle School placed more leadership responsibilities on the department head. The teachers at Sky and Riverton viewed all teachers as having equal power within the program and de-emphasized titles. Although the programs viewed titles differently, teachers in every program believed in distributed leadership. This suggests that everyone takes a leadership role in different aspects or areas of the department.

Beyond leadership within the department, all of the teachers have taken leadership roles within their schools. This includes involvement in coaching, intramurals, and leadership committees. Additionally, other within the schools (principals, teachers, etc.) sought the teachers out on certain occasions due to their unique relationships with the students.

The dynamics within and surrounding these departments had an impact on the individual teachers. The impact of the agents on the structure and vice versa (duality of structure) was evident within each of these schools.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Since the early 1950's researchers have explored and placed value on group dynamics and the impact it has on individuals (Cartwright, 1951). Coppieters (2005) advocated for the exploration of the complex dynamic systems formed in school environments because of the demands placed upon schools and the stakeholders within those environments. Recognizing the importance of group dynamics within schools, research has been extensive; however, limited studies have explored the unique dynamics that occur within physical education departments (Castelli & Rink, 2003; Keay, 2005) The purposes of this study were (a) to understand the role of group dynamics in schools that have achieved and sustained departmental recognition, and (b) to understand how the role of leadership impacts groups dynamics within and around the departments.

Structuration Theory, which was used to ground this investigation, allowed the researcher to explore group dynamics by examining the impact the individuals (agents) have had on the social norms and accepted routines (structure), by noting the impact the social norms and accepted routines (structure) have had on the individuals (agents), and by observing how the accepted cultural norms (structure) impact and influence what actions individuals take (agency) to influence these norms (duality of structure) (Giddens, 1984). This chapter discusses the literature related to group dynamics within schools, specifically physical education departments. Finally, this chapter addresses the results of this study in relation to the Structuration Theory, the limitations and implications of the study, and future research recommendations.

Duality of Structure

With a global view, everything within and surrounding the programs under study was influenced by the duality of structure. The agent's actions were informed by the current

conditions placed on them by the social structure, while at the same time; the structure was being modified due to the actions or collective actions of the individuals. It is impossible to separate the two (Giddens, 1984). However, moments in time allow individuals to explore the current state of programs and provide examples of specific instances when the actions of agents informed the structure and when the structure informed the actions of agents. Specific examples of structure and agency demonstrated through the themes will be scrutinized by comparing them to the existing body of literature regarding physical education departments and schools.

Structure and Agency: ALT-PE

Teachers within the departments emphasized that a common vision of physical education existed within their programs and also noted the consistency in the content taught by the teachers. In relation to the ALT-PE, the teachers tended to have similar scores in terms of the amount of student motor appropriate behavior per lessons. The similar scores between and among teachers within each department suggests that the structure within the programs was one of consistency. Castelli and Rink (2003) found that “cohesive departments” and “effective, regular communication” were among the characteristics of high performing physical education programs (p. 519).

In comparison to other studies, for example, Parker, (1989), the ALT-PE results for each program within this study suggested a high level of student motor appropriate behavior within their classes (see Table 1). Related to high levels of motor appropriate behaviors, Zeng, Leung, and Hipscher (2010) created a summary of the characteristics of effective physical education teachers using the findings of multiple studies. One of the characteristics listed within this literature review was “meaningful tasks and high success rate” within physical education lessons (p. 19). The teachers in this study generally provided meaningful tasks and high success rates

and created a department structure that promoted student achievement. This structure was strengthened by principal expectations of a student-centered environment.

Structure and Agency: Communication Plays a Role in Satisfaction

Communities of practice is defined as “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 4). Department members indicated that collegiality played an important role in their career satisfaction. Woods and Lynn (2001) found that isolation contributed to job dissatisfaction among the teachers they studied. The actions of the agents in the current study, including the principals, created environments in which communication, instead of isolation, was encouraged. Also, the structure created by the administration, which included a joint planning time with at least one other individual at all three schools, and an office that accommodated all members of the department at Sky and Riverton Middle Schools helped to create environments that promoted communication. Castelli and Rink (2003) listed effective, regular communication as one of the twelve characteristics of a high performing physical education department. The structure created within these departments was one of consistent communication.

In contrast, at Mountain Middle School, there were department-wide expressed feelings of distrust toward the administration due to principal initiated policy changes to be implemented during the next school year (removal of daily physical education). Because of this policy change, teachers’ perceived that their principal did not place a high value on physical education. This action altered the way in which the teachers communicated with the principal. Blase defined negative interactions between teachers and between teachers and principals as negative

interpersonal politics or “actions that decrease cohesion in schools” (Blase and Anderson, 1995, p. 69). This type of interaction suggests the impact that agency has on the schools.

Structure and Agency: Consistent Perceptions Regarding Purpose

Beyond communication, consistency of views among members within each department also likely played a role in the structure surrounding physical education programs. The unified perception of the purpose of physical education within the departments created a high level of consistency in the statements made by the individuals. The departments and their principals viewed the purpose of physical activity to be the promotion of lifelong fitness. Repeated attempts to instill the same ideals in students and their parents, through physical education newsletters and websites, may have acted as influencing agents in the perceptions of these and other stakeholders. Additionally, teachers may have influenced stakeholders by demonstrating a consistent repetition of physical education objectives and providing opportunities to participate in activities that promoted lifelong fitness. In reference to communities of practice, success as a group is triggered by the development of a common goal or mission (Cwikla, 2007).

Structure and Agency: A Sense of Caring for the Individuals

Beyond the structure, agents within an environment can impact each other. In addition to departmental purpose, relationships between and among members within departments have been found to influence the structure and camaraderie felt by the individual players. Margolis (2008) noted that leadership, relationships, and the emotional environment are all aspects of group dynamics that must be taken into account by everyone involved with the department. The personal connections of the teachers within the departments were made by taking an interest in what influences the individuals beyond the physical education setting. Such interests positively influenced the group as a whole. Within the departments studied, differences in opinion

occurred, but an awareness of what was impacting the other individuals in the department created a strong sense of togetherness. These findings matched with those of Wenger (2007) in suggesting that effective communities of practice are able to overcome occasional conflicts because of the strong personal and professional relationships present within the group.

Structure and Agency: An Emphasis on Team

The positive view of professional collaboration of individual teachers, combined with administrator expectations of positive collegiality, created an environment in which a “team mentality” could thrive, while also allowing for group member autonomy. Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, and Myers stated regarding teacher teams, “Autonomy varies according to the quantity and quality of the constraints put upon the group by the administration” (2007, p. 19). Within each of these schools, a team mentality was encouraged by the administration and through the structure surrounding the teachers. In addition, team teaching was valued because the teachers could learn from and help each other and share ideas. Anderson (1989) noted that team teaching can lead to student benefits due to their exposure to multiple teaching styles. Currently, there is a lack of recent research related to team teaching in physical education. More research is needed to clearly detail the potential benefits or short comings of this teaching method. In reference to student achievement, Castelli and Rink (2003) stated, “Departments that identified and collaborated on a common vision had greater percentages of competent students” (p. 530). Certain factors influenced each program to use or not use team teaching on a lesson-by-lesson basis. Factors included a lack of gym space for the number of teachers and students in each class, as well as, the amount of space needed to effectively introduce an activity, among other things. Based on these factors, lesson considerations were made due to the teachers’ collective concern to do what they deemed as best for the students. The student-centered approach of the teachers

matched those of the principals. In addition, a united departmental view helped to define the structure of physical education related to its student-centered focus. Hunuk, Ince, and Tannehill (2012) found that strong communities of practice that meet the needs of the teachers, in this case the desire for a student-centered philosophy, also promote student learning.

Structure and Agency: A Culture of Self-promotion

The teachers within each department took it upon themselves to promote their departments and, in turn, attempted to influence the structure surrounding their departments. They did this through Blue Ribbon recognition, departmental websites, parent newsletters, visible student work, and physical education related bulletin board content. In doing so, they helped to inform school and district expectations placed on their departments. Studies show that, many times, physical education is perceived as a marginalized subject (Stroot, Collier, O'Sullivan, & England, 1994; Woods & Lynn, 2001). Furthermore, Templin and Schempp (1989) noted that the organizational culture of a school, as well as, assumptions of administrators, teachers, parents, and students alike may guide school stakeholders' views regarding the value of physical education. Findings such as these stress the importance of self-promotion. Deglau and O'Sullivan (2006) believe that the steps taken by these departments would help them to create a new image of themselves as teachers. This could also be defined as agency.

Structure and Agency: Recognition's Influence on the Department

Along the lines of self-promotion, the pursuit and achievement of departmental recognition through the Blue Ribbon Recognition Program benefitted each of the departments. Benefits included a more positive perception of the physical education department, updates made to the facilities and surrounding fields, and a heightened awareness of program quality from the

administration. This provided an appropriate example of how agency can influence structure (Giddens, 1984). O'Sullivan (2008) found that a positive outcome of communities of practice is a commitment to advocate for physical education at the policy level. Through receiving Blue Ribbon recognition, the departments elevated their standing within the district. In the instance of Sky Middle School, the program was currently being used as a standard for the other physical education programs in the district. Such recognition should help promote the importance of physical education within their school.

Structure and Agency: Significance of Administrative Support

Teachers also expressed the importance of administrative support. The departments believed support was shown both monetarily and through curricular freedom. The latter was discussed by Lawson (1989). Through his organizational workplace and personal-social factors, he suggested that providing teachers with more control over what or how they teach will help prevent wash-out. Although this might be the reason why, previous studies have shown that the absence of guidance may be due to a lack of knowledge related to physical education content (Hummel, 2006; Staffo, 1993). In either case, the support that the teachers' perceive through monetary support and curricular freedom modifies their perceptions of the structure surrounding the department. The structure is both influencing and being influenced by both the principals and the teachers (Giddens, 1984).

Structure and Agency: Significance of Leadership

Beyond administrative support, the perceived roles of leadership within each department have influenced the individual's perception of departmental structure. Neither of the teachers at Sky Middle School had a department title nor did either believe that they had more power than the other. Similarly, the Mr. Patton at Riverton Middle School had the title of team leader, but

neither he nor the other teachers in the department perceived him to have any additional power or status. Conversely, the teachers at Mountain Middle School believed that the title of department head did provide an additional measure of power, and had increased the tension around the department since a new department head would be identified in the coming year. In looking at this through the lens of the Structuration Theory, although all departments were similar in beliefs about their departmental purpose and their strong relationships, the structure created by having a title that carried a measure of power created a slightly different dynamic than those of the other two departments (Giddens, 1984).

Faculty in all three departments believed that leadership within their programs was distributed. They suggested that their individual strengths as teachers and colleagues informed what the other individuals believed were that member's leadership role. Lawson (1986) proposed that individuals within the physical education setting are influenced by organizational socialization. This suggests that individuals who enter the department are influenced by the surrounding structure and actions of agents informing that structure (Giddens, 1984). At Riverton Middle School, such distributed leadership allowed Mr. Dugan, a second year teacher, to take a leadership role in use of technology within the department based on one of his strengths. Research suggests that leadership within a school should be a team effort (Hoppey & McLesky, 2013) with leadership that is the collective group effort of principals, department heads, and teachers (Lambert, 2002; Margolis, 2008; Scribner et al., 2007). This type of environment seems to provide a much different structure than one in which there are a limited number of leaders. The agents within this study, regardless of age or experience, perceived that they had a role in leadership and a voice in their departments (Giddens, 1984).

Structure and Agency: Leadership Outside of Physical Education

Though the teachers' leadership roles originated within their departments, the teachers made sure to represent themselves and their departments in leadership roles around their schools. They influenced the structure of the school, for instance, through involvement with coaching, intramurals and building committees. Ojeme (1988) noted that physical educators are often required to perform multiple roles. Ms. Tanner from Riverton Middle School was an example of a teacher who balanced multiple roles within her workplace. In addition to her instructional responsibilities, she was the athletic director and a coach at the school. The quality of these programs could be perceived as surprising considering the potential difficulties that may have arose due to dual roles such as teaching and coaching (Ervin & Stryker, 2001). Their visible roles and their ability to connect with the students put each department and its members in situations where agents, including the principals and classroom teachers, placed them in a role of influence within the structure of the school (Giddens, 1984).

Since the 1940's, (Lewin, 1945) researchers have explored the impact of group dynamics, and its effect on relationships between and among individuals. Although the literature is expansive in K-12 schools (Baker, 2011; Blase, 1985; Blase, 1987a; Blase, 1987b; Blase, 1988; Blase, 1989a; Blase, 1989b; Blase, 1990; Blase & Anderson, 1995; Blase & Blase, 1999; Brosky, 2011; Clark & Clark, 1997; Cwikla, 2007; Flessa, 2009; Hoyle, 1999; Lambert, 2002; Lindle, 1999; Margolis, 2008; Scribner et. al, 2007; Spillane et al., 2001; Somech, 2008; Eddy Spicer, 2011; West, 1999), it is limited in K-12 physical education departments (Castelli & Rink, 2003; Keay, 2005). The current study contributes to the literature base by providing a better understanding of group dynamics that occur within successful middle school physical education programs, and by highlighting the leadership characteristics present within and around the departments.

Limitations

The researcher realizes that although 80 hours in each program provides a solid sample, it does not provide a view of the whole school year. The majority of time was spent away from the principals, so there was less of an opportunity to build a rapport. Also, despite repeated assurances of anonymity and confidentiality, participants still could have had reservations about being fully transparent regarding their fellow co-workers.

In addition, the views of principals and physical education teachers may be different than those of the other stakeholders within the school. The agency of these stakeholders also influences the individuals within and around departments (Giddens, 1984). For instance, it is difficult to understand the views of the classroom teachers without learning their perspectives through personal interview. Future studies should consider interviewing key informants such as classroom teachers and students to get a better understanding of the school climate in relation to physical education.

ALT-PE was for the purpose of confirming the quality of program. Although their scores were relatively high compared to other studies (Parker, 1989), two observations per teacher was not enough to assure that all or a majority of lessons would provide a high level of motor appropriate behavior. The teachers were able to choose the lessons in which they were observed.

One downfall of using Blue Ribbon schools was that the teachers saw their students five days a week. This is something that should not be taken for granted regarding the ability of the teachers to help create a structure that sees physical education as beneficial. Future studies should find programs they deem as successful that have physical education less than five days a week.

Also, a longitudinal study design would be beneficial because it would provide information about how groups form over time. In addition, observing a group before, during, and after program recognition would allow for a greater understanding of the impact of such programs. Finally, a longitudinal study that observed both high and low achieving schools would help to confirm the uniqueness of characteristics within quality programs.

Implications for Physical Education Teachers

The teachers within these programs did not wait for other individuals to promote their programs, nor did they assume that the status quo would be enough to sustain physical education within their schools. Every new stakeholder who enters a school will enter with their own predispositions toward the relevance of physical education. Changes were enacted at Riverton Middle School despite all of the strengths of the department. It is the jobs of teachers to advocate for their subject (O'Sullivan, 2006) and to portray a positive image of themselves (Deglau & O'Sullivan, 2006). Any opportunity to showcase the physical education curriculum and program objectives to stakeholders within or around the school should be seized.

Additionally, physical education departments should create a mission statement that provides a framework for the purpose and goals of the program. Doing so will help members of the department to achieve consistency when engaging stakeholders within and around the school. A mission statement should be cumulative and include the viewpoints of the teachers within the department. Such collaboration should facilitate faculty members' sense of departmental pride and ownership.

Recommendations

Further research should be conducted that includes an examination of individual teacher's career cycles. This may help researchers understand how factors within, beyond, and

surrounding schools influence group dynamics based on teacher's career development. To extend the findings of this study additional research is warranted regarding group dynamics in successful middle schools. Also, research should be extended to elementary and high school programs to learn more about the nuances that make each level and each program different. Also, although assumptions were made regarding curriculum due to the requirements of the Blue Ribbon Recognition Program, future research should delve into curricular analysis to further inform the knowledge-base regarding program quality.

Ultimately, every program is unique; therefore middle school departments should base curricular decisions on characteristics such as faculty members' content knowledge, physical characteristics of the teaching environment, class sizes, equipment, and planning time. Basing a program on such relevant information can promote the program and its potential influence within the school and community.

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Table 1**Percent of Motor Appropriate Behavior by Program**

School Name	Teacher Name	Overall Teacher Percent Mean – Motor Appropriate Behavior	Overall Program Percent Mean – Motor Appropriate Behavior
Sky Middle School	Mrs. Vasser	47.6%	44%
	Mr. Reiter	40.4%	
Riverton Middle School	Mr. Patton	42.6%	40.1%
	Ms. Tanner	47.2%	
	Mr. Brooks	42.4%	
	Mr. Cross	40.1%	
	Ms. Lynn	36.5%	
	Mr. Dugan	31.9%	
Mountain Middle School	Mrs. Borden	48.6%	46.9%
	Mr. Wilson	49.4%	
	Mr. Leon	45.4%	
	Mr. Cole	47.7%	
	Mrs. Eva	45.7%	
	Mrs. Frances	44.6%	

Appendix A

Initial Contact Email

Dear _____,

I hope this email finds you doing well. My name is Chris Gentry and I am a PhD student at the University of Illinois. The reason I am contacting you is because I will be doing a study on Blue Ribbon Schools and PE department dynamics next school year and would like to check with you to see if observing at your school would be a possibility. If possible, I would like to observe you and the other PE teachers in your department early in the next school year. I would also like to interview you, the other teachers in your department, and your principal.

If it is possible for me to observe, I would not be paying attention to the students or interactions with classroom teachers. My goal is to observe the interactions between the teachers in the department and with your principal. By doing so, I hope to better understand the leadership characteristics that take place in Blue Ribbon schools. This will hopefully provide a guide for future programs as to the characteristics of Blue Ribbon schools.

If you feel that conducting this study at your school would be a possibility, I would be happy to email your principal and fellow department members. If you have any questions please feel free to email (cgentry2@illinois.edu) or call me (618-593-3217) and I will be happy to answer any of your questions. It would be a great pleasure for me to observe you and your colleagues next year so please consider. I will be happy to work with your schedule.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Sincerely,

Chris Gentry
PhD Student
Department of Kinesiology
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Appendix B

Performance Site Form

Performance Site Form

School: _____

Group Dynamics among Physical Educators and Principals in Blue Ribbon Schools

Your school is invited to participate in the above entitled research study. This study is being conducted by Chris Gentry, Doctoral Student in the Department of Kinesiology and Community Health at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Dr. Amelia Woods, Associate Professor in the Department of Kinesiology and Community Health at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. This study will examine the group dynamics and principal involvement in the physical education department to better understand how Blue Ribbon selection was achieved.

Participation within this study will be voluntary. Participants in this study will be asked to sign a document of informed consent after all of their questions have been answered. After completion of the informed consent, an entry interview and exit interview will be conducted with each participant. These interviews will be conducted in person and will last for approximately forty-five minutes to an hour. Interviews will be audio taped, and later transcribed for further analysis. Participants may choose not to be audio recorded and still participate in the study. If participants decline to be audio recorded, detailed notes will be taken during the interview process. Interviews will be scheduled at the participants' convenience. Also, informal interviews (conversations) will be noted as well to gain further insight. Between the two formal interviews (entry and exit) will be observations of the interactions between fellow teachers and the teachers and the principal. Additionally, lessons from each teacher will be assessed using Academic Learning Time-Physical Education (ALT-PE) to provide additional evidence of the quality of lessons produced in Blue Ribbon schools. This instrument is designed to measure how the teacher utilizes the minutes within the class period. Although lessons will be observed, no specific student information will be recorded. Furthermore, interactions between students and teachers will not be recorded. This is because the focus of the study is on faculty and principal interactions. A request for documents such as a curriculum outline or other documents that provide information about the program may be requested, but both teachers and principals have the right to refuse providing such documentation.

Results from this study may be used for research presentations and professional journal publications. The primary benefit of this study is that it will help us to better understand the

department dynamics that create a successful program. This information will help to provide guidelines for other programs and may provide insights to physical education teacher education programs as to how to best prepare students to deal with department interactions. This study will benefit principals and teachers by helping them understand practices that occur in schools with successful programs.

There are no foreseeable risks for the participants besides possibly responding to questions to which you are uncomfortable answering. In anticipating such a case, you may choose not to answer specific questions or ask that specific observations be removed from the study. Also, participants have the right to decline the utilization of ALT-PE. You may also discontinue participation in the project at any time without prejudice. Furthermore, a school may decline participation at any point during the study. Participants must be 18 years of age or older to participate in the investigation. While participants will not derive any direct benefits from their participation in the project, they will be contributing information that may lead to a better understanding of what constitutes a successful physical education program.

Every effort will be made to keep all information confidential. Participants will be given pseudonyms for interview and observation data that will be used within the study. The information provided by both parties will not be shared with anyone who is not an investigator involved in this study. Any direct quotes that are deemed derogatory will not be used and every effort will be made to ensure that all parties will not be viewed in a negative light. This should ensure that information provided by teachers and principals within the same school is truly confidential. Audio tapes and transcriptions will be locked and secured in the Pedagogical Research Laboratory at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Data that is collected will be kept for a period no less than five years, and will then be destroyed. Only the researchers listed in this form will have access data that includes any identifiable information.

Questions about this research can be addressed at any time by calling or writing Dr. Amelia Woods, Department of Kinesiology and Community Health, 219 Louise Freer Hall, University of Illinois, 906 S. Goodwin Avenue, Urbana, IL 61801 (phone: 333-9602 or e-mail: amywoods@illinois.edu). If you desire additional information about participant rights, please feel free to contact the UIUC Institutional Review Board Office at 217-333-2670 or irb@illinois.edu. Collect calls will be accepted if you identify yourself as a study participant.

Your signature and a check in the yes box indicate that the researchers may conduct data collection within your school. Please check no if you do not wish for your school to be a part of this study. Schools and participants may choose to decline participation at any time.

Superintendent/District Supervisor:

Yes: _____ No: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Principal:

Yes: _____ No: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C

Informed Consent

Informed Consent

Group Dynamics among Physical Educators and Principals in Blue Ribbon Schools

You are invited to participate in the above entitled research study. This study is being conducted by Chris Gentry, Doctoral Student in the Department of Kinesiology and Community Health at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Dr. Amelia Woods, Associate Professor in the Department of Kinesiology and Community Health at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. This study will examine the group dynamics, and principal involvement, in the physical education department to better understand how Blue Ribbon selection was achieved.

Participation within this study is voluntary. If you choose to participate in this study, you are asked to sign this document of informed consent after all of your questions have been answered. After completion of the informed consent, an entry interview and exit interview will be conducted with each participant. Additionally, teachers will be asked to participate in a career cycle interview to better understand their career path. These interviews will be conducted in person and will last for approximately forty-five minutes to an hour. Interviews will be audio taped, and later transcribed for further analysis. You may choose not to be audio recorded and still participate in the study. If you decline to be audio recorded, detailed notes will be taken during the interview process. Interviews will be scheduled at the participant's convenience. Also, informal interviews (conversations) will be noted as well to gain further insight. Between the two formal interviews (entry and exit) will be observations of the interactions between fellow teachers and the teachers and the principal. Additionally, one lesson of each teacher will be observed using the ALT-PE lesson evaluation tool. Although a lesson will be observed, no specific student information regarding student interactions will be recorded. This is because the focus of the study is on faculty and principal interactions. A request for documents such as a curriculum outline or other documents that provide information about the program may be requested, but both teachers and principals have the right to refuse providing such documentation.

Results from this study may be used for research presentations and professional journal publications. The primary benefit of this study is that it will help us to better understand the department dynamics that create a successful program. This information will help to provide guidelines for other programs and may provide insights to physical education teacher education programs as to how to best prepare students to deal with department interactions. This study will benefit principals and teachers by helping them understand practices that occur in schools with successful programs.

There are no foreseeable risks other than responding to questions to which you are uncomfortable answering. There is also a minimal risk that your principal, your fellow teachers, or your PE staff could discover your identity. This is made less likely due to the use of pseudonyms. In anticipating such a case, you may choose not to answer specific questions or ask that specific observations be removed from the study. You may also discontinue participation in the project at any time without prejudice. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in the investigation. While you will not derive any direct benefits from your participation in the project, you will be contributing information that may lead to a better understanding of what constitutes a successful physical education program.

Every effort will be made to keep all of your information confidential. You will be given a pseudonym for interview and observation data that you provide that is used within the study. The information provided by both parties will not be shared with anyone who is not an investigator involved in this study. Any direct quotes that are deemed derogatory will not be used and every effort will be made to ensure that both parties will not be viewed in a negative light. This should ensure that information provided by teachers and principals within the same school is truly confidential. Audio tapes and transcriptions will be locked and secured in the Pedagogical Research Laboratory at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Data that is collected will be kept for a period no less than five years, and will then be destroyed. Only the researchers listed in this informed consent will have access data that includes any identifiable information.

Questions about this research can be addressed at any time by calling or writing Dr. Amelia Woods, Department of Kinesiology and Community Health, 219 Louise Freer Hall, University of Illinois, 906 S. Goodwin Avenue, Urbana, IL 61801 (phone: 333-9602 or e-mail: amywoods@illinois.edu). If you desire additional information about your rights as a participant, please feel free to contact the UIUC Institutional Review Board Office at 217-333-2670 or irb@illinois.edu. Collect calls will be accepted if you identify yourself as a study participant.

Completion of this form indicates that you have read and plan to participate in this study. Completion also indicates that you provide consent to utilize your audio-recorded interview. A copy of this informed consent will be made available immediately upon request.

DO NOT TAKE PART IN ANY INTERVIEWS OR OBSERVATIONS UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETELY READ THIS DOCUMENT

Permission to audio-record the interview (Please check one): Yes: _____ No: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D

Parent/Guardian Information Letter

Parent/Guardian Information Letter

Group Dynamics among Physical Educators and Principals in Blue Ribbon Schools

Your school has been invited to participate in the above entitled research study. This study is being conducted by Chris Gentry, Doctoral Student in the Department of Kinesiology and Community Health at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Dr. Amelia Woods, Associate Professor in the Department of Kinesiology and Community Health at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. This study will examine the group dynamics, and principal involvement, in the physical education department to better understand how Blue Ribbon selection was achieved.

The focus of the study will be to watch the interactions between members of the physical education department and physical education teachers and their principals. These observations will occur throughout the day both in and out of classes. As a result, your student may be observed but no identifiable information will be recorded. This is because the focus of the study is not on student/teacher interaction. Furthermore, your student will not be asked to participate in the study in any way. The purpose of this letter is solely to let you know of our presence within your school.

The primary benefit of this study is that it will help researchers to better understand the department dynamics that create a successful program. This information will help to provide guidelines for other programs and may provide insights to physical education teacher education programs as to how to best prepare students to deal with department interactions. This study will benefit principals and teachers by helping them understand practices that occur in schools with successful programs.

Questions about this research can be addressed at any time by writing or emailing Chris Gentry, Department of Kinesiology and Community Health, 131 Louise Freer Hall, University of Illinois, 906 S. Goodwin Avenue, Urbana, IL 61801 (e-mail: cgentry2@illinois.edu). You can also email Dr. Amelia Woods at amywoods@illinois.edu. Thank you for your time and understanding.

Sincerely,

Chris Gentry and Dr. Amelia Woods
Department of Kinesiology
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Appendix E

Physical Educator Interview Questions: 1st Interview

1. Can you tell me about your educational background?
 - Experience as an undergraduate?
 - Graduate degrees?
 - Coaching?
 - Wellness director?
 - Prior teaching experience?
 - Student teacher supervision?
 - How did you end up here?
2. What purpose does PE serve within your school?
3. How do you believe that PE is viewed by students, colleagues, parents?
4. Describe your foundational/basic beliefs about teaching physical education.
5. Tell me about your experience with the Blue Ribbon program?
 - What does being a program recognized by Blue Ribbon mean to you personally?
6. How did the idea come about to go after Blue Ribbon recognition?
 - Who initiated the process?
7. Explain the procedures that the department followed to gain Blue Ribbon status.
8. What were the roles of the individuals within/around the department?
9. What was your role in program recognition?
10. What was your department head's role in program recognition?
 - Other PE teachers in the department?
11. What was your principal's role in gaining Blue Ribbon recognition?
12. Describe the way in which you view the relationships within your department.
13. Are there certain individuals who seem to have more power than others?
14. Related to those who hold power—do some individuals tend to want to please the powerful individuals?
15. Are there certain individuals who tend to work harder than others? Are more professional? Take their jobs more seriously?

16. Are there others who hold power beyond your colleagues and the administration?

- If so, who?

17. Describe the role of the department head in the department dynamic.

- Describe the role of your principal in the department dynamic.
- Describe your role in the department dynamic.
- How were these roles formed?

Appendix F

Physical Educator Interview Questions: 2nd Interview

18. How has the department evolved over time?
 - How did the department function prior to the recognition?
 - Were changes were made during recognition?
 - How does the department currently function?
19. Have the overall expectations of the department changed since Blue Ribbon Recognition?
20. Have expectations of individuals within the department changed since Blue Ribbon Recognition?
 - If so, how?
21. Has the Blue Ribbon recognition impacted the way in which your department functions on a daily basis?
 - How or why not?
22. What facilitators/barriers did your department face in achieving Blue Ribbon recognition?
 - Were all department members supportive and helpful?
 - Administration?
23. How, if at all, has the support for the PE program changed since receiving recognition?
24. How have departmental expectations (both inside and outside the department) defined the roles of the individuals?
25. How have the individuals in the department affected the structure of the department?
26. What has been your impact on the department?
27. Who/what impacts you as a teacher?
 - PE colleagues?
 - Other colleagues?
 - Students?
 - Administration?
 - Parents?
 - Other stakeholders?
28. How are you impacted as a teacher by this department?
 - By the individuals within/surrounding this department?
29. Describe the leadership within/around the department?

- Who provides the leadership?
- What are their leadership styles?

30. Has the leadership roles/expectations shifted over time?

31. Is there anything else that you would like to add about issues we have or have not discussed?

Appendix G

Department Head Interview Questions: 1st Interview

1. Can you tell me about your educational background?
 - Experience as an undergraduate?
 - Graduate degrees?
 - Coaching?
 - Wellness director?
 - Prior teaching experience?
 - Student teacher supervision?
 - Department Head?
 - How did you end up here?
2. What purpose does PE serve within your school?
3. How do you believe that PE is viewed by students, colleagues, parents?
4. Describe your foundational/basic beliefs about teaching physical education.
5. Tell me about your experience with the Blue Ribbon program?
 - What does being a program recognized by Blue Ribbon mean to you personally?
6. How did the idea come about to go after Blue Ribbon recognition?
 - Who initiated the process?
7. Explain the procedures that the department followed to gain Blue Ribbon status.
8. What were the roles of the individuals within/around the department?
9. What was your role in program recognition?
10. What were the other teachers' roles in program recognition?
11. What was your principal's role in gaining Blue Ribbon recognition?
12. Describe the way in which you view the relationships within your department.
13. Are there certain individuals who seem to have more power than others?
14. Related to those who hold power—do some individuals tend to want to please the powerful individuals?
15. Are there certain individuals who tend to work harder than others? Are more professional? Take their jobs more seriously?

16. Are there others who hold power beyond your colleagues and the administration?

- If so, who?

17. Describe your role in the department dynamic.

- Describe the role of your principal in the department dynamic.
- Describe the other teachers' roles in the department dynamic.
- How were these roles formed?

Appendix H

Department Head Interview Questions: 2nd Interview

18. How has the department evolved over time?
 - How did the department function prior to the recognition?
 - Were changes were made during recognition?
 - How does the department currently function?
19. Have the overall expectations of the department changed since Blue Ribbon Recognition?
20. Have expectations of individuals within the department changed since Blue Ribbon Recognition?
 - If so, how?
21. Has the Blue Ribbon recognition impacted the way in which your department functions on a daily basis?
 - How or why not?
22. What facilitators/barriers did your department face in achieving Blue Ribbon recognition?
 - Were all department members supportive and helpful?
 - Administration?
23. How, if at all, has the support for the PE program changed since receiving recognition?
24. How have departmental expectations (both inside and outside the department) defined the roles of the individuals?
25. How have the individuals in the department affected the structure of the department?
26. What has been your impact on the department?
27. Who/what impacts you as a teacher?
 - PE colleagues?
 - Other colleagues?
 - Students?
 - Administration?
 - Parents?
 - Other stakeholders?
28. How are you impacted as a teacher/department head by this department?
 - By the individuals within/surrounding this department?

29. Describe the leadership within/around the department?

- Who provides the leadership?
- What are their leadership styles?

30. Has the leadership roles/expectations shifted over time?

31. Is there anything else that you would like to add about issues we have or have not discussed?

Appendix I

Principal Interview Questions: 1st Interview

1. Can you tell me about your educational background?
 - Undergraduate major?
 - Graduate degrees?
 - Coaching?
 - Prior teaching experience?
 - How did you end up here?
2. What purpose does PE serve within your school?
3. How do you believe that PE is viewed by students, teachers, parents?
4. What do you believe should be taught in physical education?
5. Tell me about your experience with the Blue Ribbon program?
 - What does having a PE program recognized by Blue Ribbon mean to you personally?
6. How did the idea come about to go after Blue Ribbon recognition?
 - Who initiated the process?
7. Explain the procedures that the department followed to gain Blue Ribbon status.
8. What were the roles of the individuals within/around the department?
9. What was your role in program recognition?
10. What was your department head's role in program recognition?
 - Other PE teachers in the department?
11. Describe the way in which you view the relationships within your PE department.
 - Describe your relationship with the department and its individual teachers.
12. Are there certain individuals within or around the department who seem to have more power than others?
13. Related to those who hold power—do some individuals tend to want to please the powerful individuals?
14. Are there certain individuals who tend to work harder than others? Are more professional? Take their jobs more seriously?
15. Are there others who hold power beyond your colleagues and the administration?

- If so, who?

16. Describe the role of the department head in the department dynamic.

- Describe the role of the other PE teachers in the department dynamic.
- Describe your role in the department dynamic.
- How were these roles formed?

Appendix J

Principal Interview Questions: 2nd Interview

17. How has the department evolved over time?
 - How did the department function prior to the recognition?
 - Were changes were made during recognition?
 - How does the department currently function?
18. Have the overall expectations of the department changed since Blue Ribbon Recognition?
19. Have expectations of individuals within the department changed since Blue Ribbon Recognition?
 - If so, how?
20. Has the Blue Ribbon recognition impacted the way in which your department functions on a daily basis?
 - How or why not?
21. What facilitators/barriers did your department face in achieving Blue Ribbon recognition?
 - Were all department members supportive and helpful?
 - Did you face barriers in supporting them?
22. How, if at all, has the support for the PE program changed since receiving recognition?
23. How have departmental expectations (both inside and outside the department) defined the roles of the individuals?
24. How have the individuals in the department affected the structure of the department?
25. What has been your impact on the department?
26. Who/what impacts you as a principal related to your relationship with the PE department?
 - PE teachers?
 - Other individuals in the school?
 - Students?
 - Other administration? Superintendent?
 - Parents?
 - Other stakeholders?
27. How are you impacted by the PE department?
 - By the individuals within/surrounding this department?
28. Describe the leadership within/around the department?

- Who provides the leadership?
- What are their leadership styles?

29. Has the leadership roles/expectations shifted over time?

30. Is there anything else that you would like to add about issues we have or have not discussed?