A Qualitative Study of College Student Participation in Volunteer Fundraising through Dance Marathon

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This dissertation titled
A Qualitative Study of College Student Participation in Volunteer Fundraising
through Dance Marathon

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Abstract

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A Qualitative Study of College Student Participation in Volunteer Fundraising through Dance Marathon

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The purpose of this study was to describe the motivation, experience and outcomes of undergraduate students participating in a dance marathon. This research specifically focused on participants of BuckeyeThon at The Ohio State University, a 12 hour student created dance marathon benefitting Nationwide Children’s Hospital, a CMN hospital. I explored how participants were motivated to participate in the event, how they participated in the event, and in turn, how their experience may have influenced their behavior and experiences after the event.

A basic interpretive qualitative methods approach was used to study the experience of dance marathon participants. Data was collected from five dance marathon participants of BuckeyeThon 2015. These participants completed a pre-event interview, three during event interviews during the dance marathon, and a post-event reflection. Themes of connection to the cause, event community, and philanthropy and fundraising were identified as the most prevalent for research participants.

The findings derived from this research may help to influence best practices in cocurricular philanthropy programs. Additionally, nonprofits, including higher education institutions, may learn how to harness past experience in volunteer fundraising into future philanthropic behavior.
Dedicated to my grandma, Irene Fern Horner,
my master editor, best friend, and the smartest woman I know.

And dedicated to my parents, John and Dorothy,

thanks for letting me be me, which includes pieces of you.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

As of 2015, the Millennial generation reached 83.1 million people, becoming the biggest generation in American history by almost 8 million more people than the Baby Boomers (Roth, 2015). Born approximately between 1981 and 1997, the Millennial generation consists of a majority of today’s work force and that does not yet include many current college students (Fry, 2015). Public opinion and news outlets continuously note the antisocial behaviors of the Millennial generation. They are known for their social media usage and for taking pictures of themselves (Stein, 2013). Antisocial behaviors and existence in an online social media world may alter the concepts of society and community by this generation.

News media and public perception perpetuate the belief that millennials are lazy, selfish and narcissistic (Roth, 2015). Their narcissistic tendencies are reported by the National Institute of Health that found, “narcissistic personality disorder is three times greater for those in their twenties today compared to the generation that is now 65 or older” (Stein, 2013, para. 1). Stein (2013) showed, “58% more college students scored higher on a narcissism scale in 2009 than in 1982.” Narcissism lends itself to entitlement; millennials are seen as employees who expect rapid advancement, good pay and benefits, along with work/life balance (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010). At the same time, they are seen as disloyal and unwilling to work hard for the work expectations they have (Silva, 2014). Unrealistic expectations in their work life, along with narcissistic personality concerns, may be a concern for the future of this generation in terms of employment and career projections.
The Millennial generation is not known for being altruistic and is less engaged in volunteering and charity (Roth, 2015). Their lack of civic engagement is also demonstrated in lower political participation than previous generations (Stein, 2013). Millennials are characterized by their individualistic nature, a focus on their own interest, and a diminished interest in settling down (Silva, 2014). This focus on self-interest may be demonstrated in strategic participation in community service because they have been taught it will make them look good for college applications and graduate school (Gordon, 2007). There are many concerns about a large upcoming generation that lacks an altruistic approach to the world.

On the other hand, in 2015, Penn State’s dance marathon, planned and participated in by millennials, raised more than $13 million (Thon, 2016). The more than 300 colleges and universities that plan dance marathons benefitting Children’s Miracle Network hospitals raised more than $20 million during the 2014-2015 school year (Children’s Miracle Network [CMN], 2015). Additionally, the American Cancer Society has created the Colleges Against Cancer program to coordinate college and university Relay for Life efforts (Relay for Life, 2013). The Up ‘til Dawn program at many colleges and universities is the fundraising arm of St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital (St. Jude, 2016). With countless colleges and universities hosting cocurricular student philanthropy programs, little to no research exists on the topic. Why do students participate in these programs when most articles write-off this generation as anti-social and self-absorbed? What do the students learn from their participation? How can more students get involved in prosocial behavior? This dissertation will explore millennial participation in dance
marathon in the context of philanthropy in higher education, cocurricular philanthropy programs, and the growing popularity of charity sport events. These content areas inform the study of student participants in Ohio State’s dance marathon, BuckeyeThon, a 12 hour student created dance marathon benefitting Nationwide Children’s Hospital.

**Definition of Philanthropy**

As Drezner (2011) explained, “Philanthropy can be defined by its Greek origin, the ‘love of mankind,’ as voluntary action for the good of others” (p. 58). Such a vague definition makes it difficult to examine. Modern philanthropy is commonly defined by an individual’s participation, giving of their time, talent, goods, or treasure. This research specifically examined philanthropy through volunteer fundraising. Volunteer fundraising consists of individuals who volunteer to solicit donations for a nonprofit organization, in exchange for participation in an event benefitting that nonprofit. These individuals may contribute to the cause in other ways, but this research focused on volunteer fundraising through dance marathon participation.

Volunteer fundraising is an example of prosocial behavior. Prosocial behaviors are altruistic actions, helping others, which would include but are not limited to, volunteering and philanthropic giving. According to Benson et al. (1980) prosocial behavior includes both spontaneous and nonspontaneous helping behavior. A prosocial behavior lens guided the analysis of the experience of dance marathon participants who were voluntarily raising funds for a cause, specifically Children’s Miracle Network.
Philanthropy and Nonprofits

As federal and other tax support for nonprofit organizations decrease, contributions by individuals will become even more important for the viability of nonprofits. Individual donors accounted for more than $229 billion in nonprofit contributions in 2008 and accounted for 75% of all non-profit contributions made (Giving USA, 2009). Higher education institutions will face similar challenges as they continue to see a decrease in state and national funding which will require institutions to realign costs and sources of income, including tuition increases and an increase in private donations (Bradley & Ferguson, 2011). As individual donors become even more important in nonprofit fundraising efforts, including higher education, little is known about how individuals learn philanthropy.

The definition of philanthropy identifies its intent for public or community good. Philanthropy has its roots in community service and engagement. Civic engagement is the process by which individuals participate in the improvement of their community (Kirlin, 2002). Citizens participating in philanthropy are actively contributing to society. According to Bauer (1998), “The United States leads the world in philanthropy; it has increased every year since the 1950s” (para. 7). However, there are conflicting reports on the status of financial giving in recent years. Philanthropic behavior will need to continue in order to support the nonprofits that benefit from financial support of donors.

Nonprofit organizations exist for various causes and purposes at local, state and international levels (Bjorhovde, 2002). These organizations participate in various fundraising efforts to support their continued existence. Nonprofit organizations are
changing, in both size and scope, with new organizations being created regularly (Ahmed & Olberding, 2007/2008; Saxton, 2004). With so many opportunities for philanthropic giving, individuals who wish to contribute can be overwhelmed or misled in the process of donating (Mahapatra, 2013). According to Mahapatra (2013), “There are about 6,000 charities that hire for-profit corporations to raise money and end up spending far too little on actual charitable activities” (para. 2). According to the American Institute of Philanthropy, an efficient nonprofit spends approximately 75% of their income on their charitable purpose with only 25% used for administrative and fundraising efforts (Mahapatra, 2013). Not all individuals who donate to nonprofits are contributing to organizations that meet this distribution standard.

Philanthropy can be financial contributions of a group of people or an individual. One of the unique aspects of philanthropy is the individual nature of the act of donating, meaning anyone can be a philanthropist, regardless of their perceived wealth. However, individuals need to learn how to give money, to learn more about the purpose of philanthropy, the impact of donations, and how to evaluate organizations to donate to (Saxton, 2004). In order to teach potential donors, nonprofit organizations need to understand the motivations of donors.

Motivation is personal and as unique as each individual donor. Most often, donors give money because their personal values align with the mission of the organization they are donating to (Bauer, 1998). But where do these values come from? Bentley (2002) identified religious roots as a significant factor in giving, especially in the United States. These religious roots are representative of historical American philanthropic giving.
Encouragement of financial contribution to those less fortunate is not limited to a Christian belief, but included in traditions of Judaism and Islam (Bentley, 2002; Smith, 1999). Regardless of religious or spiritual beliefs, values can greatly influence philanthropic motivations.

Philanthropy today is changing in methods, purpose, and needs. Nonprofit organizations must work to remain relevant, effective, and efficient. American society is expected to become less philanthropic, less altruistic, and less committed to community than in generations past (Kottasz, 2004; Smith, 1999). An understanding of philanthropy includes recognizing the relationship between community involvement and the likelihood of individuals to contribute to nonprofits. Some community-based organizations have created programs to proactively teach philanthropy to the next generation.

Bjorhovde (2002) stated, “We must teach our children how to be philanthropic if we expect to maintain philanthropy as a cornerstone of American society” (p. 8). Studies have linked the connection between philanthropy and charitable giving to citizenship in American society. Cone/Roper found in their research that more than 90% of Americans believe that children participating in charity make them more likely to be better citizens (Bjorhovde, 2002). Existing K-12 coursework already encourages community and civic engagement that may create a connection to the development of K-12 philanthropy education.

**Philanthropy and Higher Education**

From the creation of the colonial college and a liberal arts curriculum, American higher education has historically been a venue to teach students the values of citizenship
Citizenship has been taught in higher education through efforts in community service, including service learning and other community engagement experiences. Research has found that level of education and income are the greatest factors contributed to active civic engagement (Kirlin, 2002). This research is representative of the service outcomes of American higher education. As the nonprofit sector and societal needs change, colleges and universities can adjust to these needs by thoughtfully incorporating philanthropy into the higher education experience.

While K-12 courses that include philanthropy are still new, courses in student philanthropy at colleges and universities are more than 10 years old. At both the graduate and undergraduate level, institutions are teaching philanthropy in the classroom (Ahmed & Olbdering, 2007/2008; Aronauer, 2005; Ashcraft, 2002; Bartlett, 2003; Damast, 2011; Fuller, 2011; Irvin, 2005; Jan, 2009; Knight, 2010; Masset, 2009; Millisor & Olberding, 2009; Olberding, 2009; Sigler, 2006; Walton, 2003; York, 2006). These courses vary from institution to institution, but course offerings continue to grow. The two primary methods of incorporating philanthropy courses into higher education curriculum are either stand-alone courses focusing on philanthropy in-depth or existing courses are adding philanthropy (Walton, 2003). Some institutions teach philanthropy courses through grants from local, regional, and national organizations and foundations. With so much interest in engaging younger donors, it is not surprising higher education is growing its philanthropy education. While there is much students can gain personally and professionally in philanthropy courses, it is important to remember not all student learning takes place in the classroom.
Outside of the classroom, the cocurricular experience can be a significant part of a student’s time on campus. Research shows youth engagement in organizations as a predictor of future community engagement (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). If there are proven relationships between cocurricular involvement and civic engagement in adulthood, participation in a student philanthropy cocurricular experience may also contribute to philanthropic behavior in adulthood. The emergence of student philanthropy as a cocurricular experience aligns with the mission of higher education and should demonstrate comparable positive outcomes.

Regardless of the method of engaging college students in philanthropy, through curricular or cocurricular experiences, similar learning goals emerge. Students should learn that philanthropy is a method of civic engagement and is an expression of personal values (Walton, 2003). Through personal and intentional experiences, students can further develop knowledge of philanthropy. This learning should not be limited to surface level understanding of doing good, but a multilayered understanding of society, values, and need (Walton, 2003). A thoughtful and intentional foundation must be set for such learning to occur.

**Charity Sport Events**

Active sporting events are a growing fundraising opportunity for nonprofits (Filo, Funk, & O’Brien, 2008; Snelgrove, Wood, & Havitz, 2013). Hosting fundraising events with a focus on sports, non-profits are able to extend their reach in many ways. Commonly referred to as CSEs, participants pay a registration fee to participate in a sport event, with proceeds benefiting a nonprofit organization (Higgins & Lauzon, 2003).
Participants in these events extend beyond the typical donor audience for many nonprofits.

Just as nonprofit organizations must understand the motivation of volunteers and traditional donors, so too must they understand the motivations of individuals who may be interested in participating in CSEs. These motivations can then influence participation and attachment, which may affect contributions and donor loyalty. Successful CSEs build community among participants, and this community can broaden the reach of a CSE. While cocurricular events for college-aged students are not included in CSE research, many connections can be made to the physical challenge of a dance marathon with walks, runs, and biking events.

**Need for the Study**

In an increasingly globalized society, the line between nonprofits, causes, and need are blurred across geographic boarders. While individuals may continue to give in their backyard, donors are being solicited in-person and virtually to contribute to causes around the world. As the Millennial generation outnumbers the aging Baby Boomers (Roth, 2015), this emerging population is at the beginning of their professional careers. Their engagement in philanthropic practices will influence the non-profit sector for years to come. Participation in cocurricular philanthropy events may impact future philanthropy behavior among this population of college students.

Additionally, volunteer fundraising through CSEs is a different kind of philanthropy. While many CSEs only expect a registration fee that will become a donation to the nonprofit, some participants may also seek donations from others to
increase their contribution to the cause (Higgins & Lauzon, 2003; Scott & Solomon, 2003). What motivates an individual to participate in this type of event, knowing that participation requires fundraising and the physical activity? Are CSE participants more or less engaged in the charity the event benefits than traditional monetary donors? Does participation in a CSE relate to future or continual engagement with charity, either through event participation or other means?

**Statement of the Problem and Purpose**

Cocurricular student philanthropy efforts are growing. The CMN Hospitals dance marathons report a 33% annual growth rate (CMN, 2015). However, there is still no longitudinal, let alone anecdotal research, on the student event participants. The purpose of this study was to describe the motivation, experience and outcomes of undergraduate students participating in a dance marathon. This research specifically focused on participants of BuckeyeThon at The Ohio State University, a 12 hour student created dance marathon benefitting Nationwide Children’s Hospital, a CMN hospital. I explored how participants were motivated to participate in the event, how they participated in the event, and in turn, how their experience may have influenced their behavior and experiences after the event.

The findings derived from this research may help to influence best practices in cocurricular philanthropy programs. Additionally, nonprofits, including higher education institutions, may learn how to harness past experience in volunteer fundraising into future philanthropic behavior.

The following research questions guided the study:
1) What motivates students to participate in dance marathons?
2) How do dance marathon participants experience the event?
3) What are the outcomes of dance marathon participation?

The answers to these questions can help better understand how to get more college students involved in prosocial, philanthropic behavior. These answers also identify some of the benefits of their participation in volunteer fundraising.

Method

I used a basic interpretive qualitative methods approach to study the experience of dance marathon participants. Based in both phenomenology and symbolic interaction, a basic interpretive study is a common method in education and applied practice (Merriam, 2002). By exploring phenomenology and symbolic interaction, the personal and psychological impacts of an experience can be better understood. I used a purposeful, criterion-based selection sample for this study, consisting of five students. All students had participated in at least one BuckeyeThon dance marathon prior to the research year participation, though their participation did not have to have occurred in consecutive years. In order to discover the meanings of the experience, I interviewed research participants using a semi-structured interview approach both before and during the event. Interview transcripts were coded for themes in student experience to better understand the dance marathon motivations, experience, and outcomes.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

American Higher Education Environment

In the context of higher education, philanthropy can be taught through curricular and cocurricular experiences. The purpose, tradition, and values-based context of philanthropic behavior can be reinforced in the higher education setting through an educational perspective (Walton, 2003). By incorporating philanthropy education into higher education, the purposes and economic functions of philanthropy can be taught to a new generation.

Citizenship. By nature of its position in the education of society, American higher education is a strong conduit for citizenship. Peloza and Hassay (2007) stated, “Citizenship behaviors are defined as those behaviors involve the giving of one’s time and energy toward a specific charitable organization” (p. 140). These skills are not singularly learned; they are facilitated through active participation. Higher education can aid this learning through academic means, intentional experiences, and by creating communal contexts examining an individual’s role in society (Morse, 1989). In these ways, higher education creates opportunities to develop citizenry among its students.

However, the nature of community involvement has changed in American society. Participation in civic organizations is less likely today than in years past (Smith, 1999). The practice and development of democratic skills are diminishing in the public sphere. Research shows participation in both local and national community-based organizations has decreased over the last three decades of the twentieth century (Putnam, 2000). Knowing that the general population has decreased in their community involvement
increases the importance and relevance of higher education’s contribution to developing citizens in American democracy.

**Civic engagement.** Our changing world, from globalization to technology, has changed the face of the higher education in the United States. As higher education institutions have changed, becoming more modern and research based, many civic engagement outputs have changed (Walton, 2003). A business approach to running higher education institutions influences their overall priorities, creating student consumers who may not actively pursue civic engagement opportunities (Harrison & Mather, 2016). Higher education is only one conduit to learned civic engagement, though it cannot be the only outlet.

Research by Verba et al. (1995) found adult civic participation was influenced by individual motivation and capacity to contribute. These influences relate back to the concept of citizenship being incorporated into American higher education experience. While these skills and practices may not be incorporated into the comprehensive higher education curriculum, opportunities for this development still exists in other intentional ways such as service learning and cocurricular programs.

**Philanthropy Education**

**Higher education.** Philanthropy education incorporated into higher education curriculum is often referred to as student philanthropy. Ahmed and Olberding (2007/2008) define student philanthropy as an experiential learning experience being implemented within higher education to teach students about nonprofit organizations and involving a grant making process. As an academic discipline, student philanthropy is still
relatively young. Within higher education, there does not seem to be a limit to the kinds of institutions that are providing philanthropy courses in their curriculum. According to Campus Compact, more than 100 institutions offer philanthropy courses (Knight, 2010), up from the 40 institutes identified by Millisor and Olberding (2009) the previous year.

Goals for philanthropy courses vary greatly by discipline and institution. One noted outcome is allowing students to gain a greater understanding of how individuals impact a greater good (Walton, 2003). Even this broad goal can be applied to the immediate community of the institution. Philanthropic studies course goals center on teaching the concepts of civic engagement in a democratic society (Ashcraft, 2002). With a broad goal of increasing the philanthropic understanding and behavior of students in higher education, the goals of philanthropy courses can also influence fundraising efforts of nonprofit organizations, including higher education institutions.

**Service learning.** Many higher education institutions provide cocurricular opportunities for students to participate in community service. These community service programs are voluntary with no academic relationship or benefit for participation (Blanchard, 2007). However, service learning courses provide credit for academic endeavors connected to community service participation (Blanchard, 2007; White, Parker, & Disco-Scheerer, 2008). This distinction highlights the connection between service learning and the academic experience.

Service learning courses are noted for their use of reflection as a means of connecting service activities with the societal issues involved in their service (White, Parker, & Disco-Scheerer, 2008). Hands-on service and reflection facilitated through
traditional academic structures are commonly identified functions of service learning courses.

Service learning became an official curriculum designation through the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (Blanchard, 2007). The signing of this act included financial support from the federal government, as well as access to grants from foundations and organizations when courses met the definition. These efforts were further supported through the National and Community Service Act of 1993 (Blanchard, 2007). Though the funding from these acts no longer exists, service learning courses are still facilitated by many institutions.

Service learning has been studied and recognized for the outcomes of student participants. Astin and Sax (1998) found service learning during a student’s undergraduate career positively influenced academic success, life skills, and civic engagement. Students have demonstrated communication skills, critical thinking, and the ability to integrate concepts learned in their service learning experience (Cohen & Kinsey, 1994; Reinke, 2003). In addition to practical skills, students have shown personal and emotional development as a result of participation in service learning courses (Dicke, Dowden, & Torres, 2004; Eyler & Giles, 1999). Service learning courses provide a holistic learning environment beyond the community engagement activities.

**Cocurricular philanthropy.** Through the cocurricular experience many higher education institutions provide opportunities for students to participate in community service. These community service programs are voluntary with no academic relationship or benefit for participation (Blanchard, 2007). Campus Compact (2013) indicated
students having opportunities for philanthropic learning in curricular venues but
cocurricular as well.

Philanthropy is emerging in the academic realm, as well as in the cocurricular
experience of American higher education. As discussed in youth philanthropy programs,
extracurricular involvement as youth, and in college, contributes to the natural network of
individuals and increases their social capital (Smith, 1999). Social capital can be created
through these extracurricular environments and then applied to a variety of contexts.
Cocurricular involvement, as early as 8th grade, has been shown to impact future political
and future civic engagement (Smith, 1999). Similarly, research has shown a connection
between cocurricular involvement in college with future political involvement (Beck &
Jennings, 1982; Hanks, 1981; Hanks & Eckland, 1978; Youniss, McClelland, & Yates,
1997). By encouraging cocurricular involvement among students, colleges have the
potential to increase future civic engagement.

However, there is limited research into philanthropy cocurricular programs and
activities (Jan, 2009). Some institutions have recently formed philanthropy boards
(Olberding, 2009). These boards operate as cocurricular versions of student philanthropy
courses, including lessons in philanthropy practices, nonprofit organizations, social
issues, and the distribution of funds from a sponsor to local nonprofit organizations
(Olberding, 2009). Some student organizations have been created to serve as the primary
fundraisers for the resources distributed by philanthropy courses (Jan, 2009). Other
institutions are creating philanthropy cocurricular opportunities for students for their own
benefit. Students are active members of fundraising teams at Georgia Tech, University of
Kentucky, Penn State and Indiana University, working on university advancement and
development efforts with alumni (Gordon, 2007). While these institutions have harnessed
cocurricular philanthropy for institutional purposes, they are not the only cocurricular
philanthropy opportunities for students.

Cocurricular philanthropic programs can benefit various entities and not simply
the host institution. One of the largest and longest running cocurricular philanthropy
programs is THON, the dance marathon event at Penn State University. As of 2007,
THON had raised over $41 million in 34 years benefiting the Hershey Medical Center’s
fund for children with cancer (Gordon, 2007). Student participants in THON seek
donations from individuals and businesses, and are specifically known for “canning,”
going to a public place or door-to-door to collect donations of loose change to dollars
(Gordon, 2007). Nonprofit organizations are partnering with students to create
cocurricular student initiatives to financially benefit various causes throughout the world.

Learning philanthropy. While there is no common curriculum in teaching
philanthropy, Bjorhovde (2002) outlined a comprehensive model that could be applied to
curricular and cocurricular philanthropic learning. This follows the findings of Bentley
and Nissan’s (1996) literature review of philanthropy which found a common agreement
that caring and prosocial behaviors can be taught directly or indirectly. Regardless of
where a curriculum on philanthropy is incorporated in an educational environment, the
opportunity to learn prosocial behaviors exists.

Bjorhovde (2002) identified modeling, cognitive, and experiential learning as the
three primary educational practices that can influence an individuals’ behavior toward
future philanthropy. To implement these practices, educators should incorporate factual, motivational, procedural, and personal development concepts into the curriculum (Bjorhovde, 2002). These four concepts can provide a comprehensive understanding of philanthropy, though individual concepts may be effective independently.

In teaching factual concepts of philanthropy, the historical context along with present day implementation and societal contribution of philanthropy are learned (Bjorhovde, 2002). Motivational concepts include why someone contributes to philanthropic causes, how everyone can make a difference, and that financial status does not limit an individual’s capacity to be a philanthropist (Bjorhovde, 2002). To put philanthropy education into practice, the process must be learned so procedural concepts focus on the practices of the nonprofit sector, fundraising, solicitation, and distribution of resources (Bjorhovde, 2002). Finally, in learning philanthropy, individuals must learn their own personal agency in participation. Personal development concepts focus on engaging and developing individual awareness of their values, morals, and intrinsic motivation to engage in philanthropy, including choosing causes, organizations, or communities to contribute to (Bjorhovde, 2002). By including all four of these concepts into philanthropy education, a more robust, and potentially meaningful, learning environment can be created.

Both cognitive and experiential teaching methods are suggested to be the most appropriate for philanthropy education (Bjorhovde, 2002). Curriculum utilizing cognitive teaching methods includes discussion, reflection, and writing (Bjorhovde, 2002). Modeling is also discussed as a cognitive teaching method. While modeling may not be
easily implemented in a classroom setting, students who see their parents, guardians, or significant others participating in philanthropy are more likely to learn from that experience (Bjorhovde, 2002). These cognitive methods of teaching focus on how students think about philanthropy.

An experiential teaching method allows students to practice what they are learning and reinforces the desired future behavior (Bjorhovde, 2002). Experiential teaching can be implemented through giving, where a student gives of their own resources or means to a cause of personal interest to them (Bjorhovde, 2002). Even Bjorhovde (2002) noted until there are ways to measure philanthropic learning and behavior that even a well-constructed curriculum does not necessarily result in the desired outcomes. However, students exposed to philanthropy in an educational setting through curricular or cocurricular experience may have a greater understanding than if not exposed to philanthropy at all.

**Philanthropy**

In the broadest sense, philanthropy can be defined as the means of support that enables nonprofits to do their work. While there are many practices and means of philanthropy, for the purpose of this research, philanthropy will be considered in reference to the motivations, behaviors, and actions of individuals in support of a non-profit organization or cause. Philanthropy can be understood as the generosity of individuals toward a cause through the contribution of financial support, donation of goods or services, and volunteering of time (Bjorhovde, 2002). Though this research will
focus on financial contributions, it is important to consider relevant literature of all philanthropic contributions.

Individual acts of philanthropy are as different as the individuals involved. From causes, charities, need, and economic situation, there is much to understand about individual contributions to philanthropic causes (Bentley, 2002). While there are many forms of philanthropy that are not recorded, either through person-to-person contributions or other methods of giving that meet a need that may otherwise go unnoticed, a majority of data on philanthropic giving is reported through nonprofits and tax records. According to the 2009 Giving USA report for 2008 behavior, individual giving accounts for 75% of all forms of philanthropic giving in the United States. Knowing that individual contributions are so significant, much can be learned about these actions.

**Religious roots.** Many concepts of philanthropy are rooted in religious practice. Regardless of denomination or even faith, lessons in societal contributions and distribution of wealth are common (Smith, 1999). Religion is one of the first ways individuals are exposed to practices of philanthropic giving. Verba et al. (1995) identified religious involvement, along with other non-political areas of adulthood such as professional environment and voluntary organizations, as motivators for further community engagement. Regardless of religious practices, exposure to beliefs in the value of giving to others perpetuates a model of philanthropy through positive religious support.

Jackson, Bachmeier, Wood, and Craft (1995) found individuals who are involved in religious activities, from church attendance to religious related organizations, are more
likely to participate in helping behavior, including volunteering and contributing to charities. While it is important to recognize the influence religion and faith can have on philanthropic behavior, it is not the only venue that promotes philanthropic behavior.

**Youth.** Research shows that civic skills can also be learned from family, vocation, and fraternal organizations (Ayala, 2000). Early intervention and experiences may be just as influential. Verba et al. (1995) identified high school involvement in extracurricular activities was highly influential in adult political engagement. If teaching our youth philanthropy is a predictor of future civic engagement, society could benefit from early intervention.

Youth philanthropy education has increased over the last three decades. National youth organizations such as 4-H, Girl Scouts, and Junior Achievement have philanthropy educational programs, while localized efforts of nonprofits such as United Way programs and community foundations are spreading across the United States (Bjorhovde, 2002; Cretsinger, 1999; Siska, 2006; Tice, 2002). The primary message of many youth philanthropy programs is that anyone can be a philanthropist.

Youth participation in community organizations, similar to community engagement by adults as previously discussed, has shown to positively influence civic engagement (Kirlin, 2002). However, there are differences in types of youth organizations. What Kirlin (2002) defined as expressive organizations, such as musical groups, cheerleading, or athletics, have less of a connection to civic organization than instrumental organizations that are focused on collective contributions, such as student government, debate teams, or community organizations. These kinds of extracurricular
involvements allow students to learn cooperation for a common purpose, aligning with the potential for future civic participation (Conover & Searing, 2002). Regardless of the reasons behind the connection between community involvement and future civic engagement, youth participants in these programs are becoming participants and leaders in philanthropic efforts into adulthood (Tice, 2002). Research and experience has shown that youth can be positively influenced by participation in community organizations, still further understanding is needed to know if cocurricular experiences in higher education may influence college students in the same ways.

**Fundraising and charity marketing.** Philanthropy is not only about the donor’s act of giving, but also the process of soliciting contributions. Fundraising is an integral part of philanthropy in practice. The framework of philanthropy fundraising is relationship marketing and social exchange theory (Drezner, 2011). Relationship marketing is a business-marketing concept that can be applied in the nonprofit sector. By definition, relationship marketing is the process by which a company or organization attracts new customers, maintains current customers, and enhances the experience of its customers (Berry, 2002). Within the context of a nonprofit organization, “customers” can be considered volunteers, donors, or other partners. By focusing on both existing customers, and potential new customers, a business or organization is able to grow loyalty and commitment among a greater total pool of people (Berry, 2002). Nonprofits must then segment their audiences, providing different experiences to increase the potential for donations.
Additionally, the social science model of Social Exchange Theory further develops the concept of charity contributions. Rather than evaluating the decision making process of charitable contributions to strictly economic processes, Social Exchange Theory considers the relational process among individuals in making contribution decisions (Emerson, 1987). These concepts elevate the concept of philanthropic fundraising beyond transactional. While some philanthropic fundraising may be strictly transactional, fundraising may be increased when relationships exist between donor and non-profit (Walton, 2003). However, relationship building is just one aspect of fundraising for nonprofits.

Nonprofits must manage comprehensive communication efforts to engage, inform, and ultimately increase their stakeholders (Goatman & Lewis, 2007). Research on nonprofit marketing is limited. With the growth of the Internet, nonprofits have grown their web presence, reaching a broader audience than traditional outreach methods. A study by Mathew et al. (2007) on blood donations found that focus groups saw television and radio as the most effective ways to encourage blood donations. Yet this model is much more traditional, and is targeted at a very specific type of donation. Technology is quickly changing. It should be noted that Mathew et al.’s (2007) research is limited in scope as it does not incorporate all possible technologies including cell phones, Facebook, and YouTube, just to name a few (Pentecost & Andrews, 2010). Nonprofits can benefit from knowing how best to convey their purpose and need to potential donors. Similarly, they could benefit from potential donors of all ages knowing more about philanthropy and the purpose of nonprofit organizations.
Motivation and Engagement in Philanthropy

In understanding the nature of philanthropic behavior, motivations and actions become interconnected puzzles of human behavior. While rarely is there action without motivation, motivation does not always result in action. Motivation and action are integral elements in understanding the dynamics of individual philanthropic participation and outcomes. This research will not define all possible elements of individual motivation or engagement; though, a general understanding of pervasive themes will be illuminated.

Motivation. Many researchers seek to understand why individuals participate in volunteerism and philanthropy efforts. One way to understand participation is to analyze motivation. Altruism, a desire to want to help others, has been believed to motivate individual participation in volunteerism and philanthropy (Drezner, 2011). A desire to make a difference can be a representation of altruistic intent (Duncan, 2004). Rarely are behaviors and actions singularly motivated. Research depicts motivation to participate in volunteer activities or philanthropy as a blend of altruism and self-interest (Drezner, 2011). To this extent, no behavior can be solely altruistic.

Mutual benefit. While individuals may be motivated by self-interest or personal benefit, this belief is limiting. The nature of volunteerism and philanthropy involves another person or organization, so no action is truly isolated. The concept of mutual benefit recognizes that individual contributors are benefiting from their participation, as are the agencies or causes they contribute to (Drezner, 2011). How an individual benefits from their participation is specific to the individual. By participating in volunteerism or
philanthropy, individuals may benefit intrinsically or extrinsically (Drezner, 2011). Nonprofit organizations can control and develop extrinsic benefits for their contributors. Extrinsically, individuals who donate may receive tax benefits, name recognition in publications, thank you gifts, or invitations to special donor events (Drezner, 2011). Regardless of the size or value of the benefit, recognizing that donor benefits may influence motivation, and potentially lead to action, can help to better understand donor motivations.

**Action.** Motivation must spur action to benefit either party. Drezner (2011) explains, “Donor motivation includes the prior willingness to give and the factors that influence the action” (p. 61). Motivation can inspire action but that action is specific to the individual donor. Donors contribute to organizations whose causes or efforts align with their personal values (Bauer, 1998). Even when analyzing causes of motivation and inspiration of action, there is not a guaranteed formula for results.

France, France, and Himawan (2007) studied the motivational factors of blood donors. While the act of contributing blood and financial contributions are different, the motivational factors may be related. In 2007, France et al. found the Theory of Planned Behavior had a strong connection to blood donation behavior. The motivation of a first-time donor and a repeat donor may not be the same (France et al., 2007). Similarly, a donor’s experience can also impact their future motivation to participate in donation behavior (France et al., 2007). Each interaction a cause or nonprofit has with a donor has the potential to impact the donor, for better or for worse. Mathew et al. (2007) corroborated France et al.’s (2007) findings, noting the significance of understanding
what influences a donor’s decision to be a repeat blood donor. Understanding what inspires first-actions and repeat actions are worth noting for recognizing donor motivations.

In further researching the individual characteristics influencing donor motivation, Giles, McClanahan, Cairns, and Mallet (2004) found self-efficacy had the greatest correlation in predicting motivation to become a first-time donor. However, Giles et al. (2004) noted more information was needed to better understand how an individual’s perception of control is related to motivation and eventual donor behavior. This donor control concept may be related to how the donor believes they can make a difference through their contribution.

The research on motivational factors of potential donors and contributors varies. Schlegelmilch, Love, and Diamantopoulos (1997) found regional differences in methods of charity collection that influenced a donor’s motivation to contribute. There is not a single process to move a potential donor to a motivated, active donor, so fundraisers must be intentional in their efforts.

*Individualized.* Each individual’s engagement in philanthropy is different. Contributions to philanthropy are unique to each individual, their financial circumstances and the cause of interest (Bentley, 2002). An individual could be motivated to contribute by many factors. Identification with a specific cause or nonprofit may motivate a donor to action (Drezner, 2011). Individuals may identify with a cause from their own experience or from the experience of a family member, acquaintance, or maybe an aspirational identification. Participation in philanthropy must always account for a donor’s self-
interest (Drezner, 2011). Self-interest again appears to be important in motivation that will influence individual behavior of potential donors.

**Psychosocial.** In addition to individual factors that influence motivation to participate in volunteerism and philanthropy, psychosocial factors must also be considered. Schervish (1993) elaborated on the social relationship of service and civic engagement by identifying experiences or factors that socialize an individual into a philanthropic identity. First, an individual must be part of a community that expects philanthropic engagement, labeled as community of participation (Schervish, 1993). The socialization of a group of individuals through community is highlighted here. This community must also make philanthropy a priority behavior among group members, known as framework of consciousness (Schervish, 1993). As previously discussed, children with exposure to community service and philanthropic behavior at a young age, known as modeling, are later shown to be involved in similar practices. Schervish (1993) named this third factor early childhood experience. Schervish’s (1993) fourth factor is socializing agent, meaning that an opportunity has been presented for participation. Motivation is only as effective as the action to follow through on the motivation.

The fifth factor Schervish (1993) identified was reinforcing intrinsic rewards, which is the belief that philanthropic participation becomes a perpetual cycle when the individual is motivated for intrinsic reasons and continues to participate. It is important to note that this factor implies the individual has participated in some act of philanthropic behavior to be influenced by this factor. Similarly, the sixth and final factor in the development of philanthropic identity is subjective realization meaning that an individual
determines they have the means to contribute or donate (Schervish, 1993). Schervish’s (1993) model considered philanthropic identity as a developmental process. While potential donors may not be exposed to all of these factors Schervish (1993) identified, the model may prove useful in the intentional development of philanthropic identities.

Pentecost and Andrews (2010) conducted a comparative study of psychosocial factors that influenced donor motivation between students and non-students. When considering the potential to donate money, students were motivated by the importance of charity and their attitude towards charity while non-students were more influenced by importance of need (Pentecost & Andrews, 2010). However, donation of goods was motivating to non-students by importance of need, while students were motivated by importance of need and importance of charity (Pentecost & Andrews, 2010). These findings continue to identify the differences between populations of potential donors and the type of donations needed. When considering motivation to participate in volunteerism or philanthropy, it is important to consider the populations under review. Pentecost and Andrews (2010) found no studies comparing the donation behavior of students and non-students, prior to their own study.

Prosocial behavior. There are many potential motivations an individual may have, including multiple motivations at any given time. Benson et al. (1980) further labeled helping behavior to be either spontaneous or nonspontaneous. Previous models of helping implied belief that prosocial behavior was a spontaneous action by an individual with little to no thought and the result of a natural helping instinct (Benson et al., 1980). While there are instances of spontaneous helping, most helping behavior could be
classified as nonspontaneous, requiring a thoughtful consideration of values, priorities, time, and interest for participation (Benson et al., 1980). This model takes into greater account the specific characteristics of an individual, similar to segmentation as previously discussed, and applies it to prosocial behavior.

Prosocial behavior is voluntary behavior to benefit others, regardless of motivation (Bentley & Nissan, 1996). Helping others, such as volunteering and philanthropy, is an example of prosocial behaviors (Drezner, 2011). Prosocial behaviors can be a natural inclination of an individual, but can also be taught (Drezner, 2011). Social Learning Theory believes that human social behaviors are learned through modeling the behaviors of others (Rushton, 1982). The more someone observes prosocial behaviors, the more likely they are to demonstrate their own prosocial behavior. This aligns with philanthropy education incorporating both cognitive and experiential teaching methods as described by Bjorhovde (2002). Knowing prosocial behaviors can be taught can also influence student experiences outside of the classroom.

Research has discussed how community organizations and extracurricular involvement have influenced philanthropic and civic engagement. These involvements also influence prosocial behaviors. It could be inferred that student philanthropy, both curricular and cocurricular, is beneficial to higher education institutions (Drezner, 2010). As cocurricular philanthropic involvement can influence prosocial behaviors, these behaviors could be demonstrated once students are alumni and potential donors to their alma maters.
It is important to note the context in which a prosocial behavior theory has been crafted. Many prosocial behavior theories do not include diverse populations, specifically related to African Americans, and rarely consider Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Drezner, 2009). While my research does not further investigate this gap in the literature, knowing this limitation will be considered in the application and transferability of the study.

**Economic models and human behavior.** Within the context of philanthropy, prosocial behavior is demonstrated in the contribution of an individual’s resources, money, goods, or time. Fehr and Schmidt (1999) identified almost all economic models assume individuals are driven by personal financial goals, rather than communal social financial outcomes. These economic theories are counter to altruistic and mutual benefit motivations previously discussed. However, research by Fehr and Schmidt (1999) indicated that individuals are not as selfish as economic models assert, showing that cooperation, rather than self-interest, are more important for many individuals. It is important to note that in practice, economic models still assume financial self-interest as a baseline of anticipated behavior.

Frey and Meier (2004) studied public good contributions among anonymous individuals. This context specifically observed the actions of more than 30,000 college students at the University of Zurich (Frey & Meier, 2004). While beliefs of self-interest behavior may be the standard in economic models of behavior and laboratory experiments, the research in practice does not behave that way.
The results of Frey and Meier’s (2004) research determined individuals were prepared to make significant contributions even when their donor behavior would be anonymous. Not only did this research identify the willingness of individuals to contribute, but also the size of their contribution. The results of Frey and Meier’s (2004) research identified “conditional cooperation,” the expectation of others to donate, motivated individuals to donate more. Additionally, the environmental and institutional conditions of the donation behavior were shown to influence the eventual act of donating (Frey & Meier, 2004). This mirrors other research studies that highlight the importance of being asked to donate, how donation messages are communicated, and how individuals connect to the asking organization.

Frey and Meier’s (2004) research is useful because it examined giving behavior toward a public good, specifically funds within a higher education institution. The Frey and Meier (2004) research found individuals are more likely to contribute to a public good if they believe others are also contributing, creating a group mentality that models conditional cooperation. This study can serve as a baseline for future application to higher education, from curricular and cocurricular philanthropy programs and developing through matriculation. An individual’s identification or connection to the beneficiary organization is also perpetuated in these research findings, where students with stronger identification with the institution or the funds in question, were more likely to donate (Frey & Meier, 2004). This aligns with research indicating that donors want to match their interests and values to causes to which they contribute.
**Donor behavior.** By understanding the behavior of donors toward non-profits, a greater understanding of potential contributions can be gleaned. A study by Lee, Piliavin, and Call (1999) examined the relationship between donating blood, volunteering time, and contributing money. Through the study it was determined that altruistic identities were developed through modeling, personal norms, and past experience (Lee et al., 1999). Future behavior is then predicted by past behavior and role-identity (Lee et al., 1999). It is easier to predict the donation behavior of a previous donor than a new donor within this framework. Role-identities are not influenced by external motivations but through an individual developing intrinsic motivation and the opportunity to experience the intrinsic rewards of their contribution (Lee et al., 1999). In this way, the more you donate, the more you want to donate.

M. Martin (1994) provided a distinction between kinds of giving. Different types of giving may be interpreted as being better or more engaging of donors. The difference in donor behavior was not the difference between giving time and giving money. M. Martin (1994) clarified the difference as giving impersonally and giving personally, regardless of the type of contribution. However, my study did not elaborate on the difference of giving impersonally and giving personally when it comes to repeated behavior or developing a donor identity.

In an effort to better understand the behavior of potential donors among young affluent professionals in the United Kingdom, Kottasz (2004) studied this population’s donation motivations and interests in nonprofits. While research on donors in this age bracket had previously reported these individuals as skeptical of non-profit organizations,
Kottasz (2004) found the opposite to be true. These affluent young professionals had high expectations for knowing about the operational efficiencies and descriptions of the specific uses of their donations (Kottasz, 2004). This may align with generational expectations and not be specific to the population studied. Within this group, men preferred to donate to well-known charities free from controversy, while women were more likely to donate to charities that focused on people (Kottasz, 2004). However, when it came to the desired recognition for their contributions, men wanted access to special events and activities while women were more interested in personal recognition (Kottasz, 2004). This research is among the few studies of donor behavior among young professionals, a population that resembles college students in the United States in terms of age. However, affluence and professional experience of the study participants may diminish the transferability of the study.

Schervish and Havens (1997) proposed identity theory rather than altruism as the primary factor compelling donor behavior. While various researchers attempt to explain a service orientation and willingness to help others as rooted in altruism, Schervish and Havens (1997) framed mutual self-interest as the relationship between self and other in making decisions to help or serve. Mutual self-interest aligns with the concept of mutual benefit motivation. As previously discussed, Schervish (1993) believed individuals are influenced in their decisions to engage in giving and helping behaviors through exposure to six factors in developing a philanthropic identity.

**Charity support behavior.** Peloza and Hassay (2007) noted nonprofits have extended their definition of support from traditional charity support behavior (CSB) of
volunteering and monetary contributions to now include charity events, gaming, and cause-related marketing (CRM). The variety of opportunities for support behavior can vary from high involvement such as volunteering and gifts to lack of involvement that would include mandatory community service (Peloza & Hassay, 2007). This aligns with M. Martin’s (1994) model of personal and impersonal giving. According to Peloza and Hassay’s (2007) typology of charity support behavior, charity events may be either high or low involvement, depending on the event. Likewise, participation in CSEs may be low or high depending on the registration costs or fundraising expectations for participants.

**Gender and ethnicity.** An individual’s identity can greatly influence their motivations and actions. Regardless of an individual’s cultural or ethnic identity, helping behaviors have been demonstrated across history and cultural traditions (Drezner, 2011). However, it should not be assumed that all ethnicities and cultures behave in the same way. Within an American context, philanthropy participation by people of color tends to focus on family networks (Drezner, 2011). When calculations of philanthropic contributions rely on tax reporting, other types of contributions can be missed, especially among cultural and ethnic minorities who approach philanthropy differently (Drezner, 2011). By not calculating the contributions of these individuals, national data on philanthropic trends and donor behaviors may be mistaken in providing an accurate picture of the American social philanthropic efforts. Additionally, the needs within these communities may not be appropriately understood if they are supported primarily through the individual efforts of a networked community and not by recognized nonprofit organizations.
In understanding the philanthropic behavior for data that is known about diverse populations of donors, there are significant differences among populations. When compared to all other racial groups, African Americans give a greater percentage of their disposable income to nonprofit efforts (Anft & Lipman, 2003; Drezner, 2009). However, though known as generous contributors to nonprofit efforts, little is known about African American contributions to higher education philanthropy efforts (Drezner, 2009). This aligns with the trend that African Americans and Latinos are not asked to contribute to nonprofits as frequently as whites (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1992). As discussed previously, most prosocial behavior theories are designed using a white majority population as the referent group. Without taking into consideration the ethnic and cultural identities of potential donors, it is difficult to predict their motivations and behaviors.

Gender is also limited in research on philanthropic behavior. Women have participated in higher education philanthropy since its inception; however, limited research exists on their contributions (Walton, 2003). As American society has changed in the last century including dual-income families and increasing education of women, the distribution of financial wealth has changed. Women are identified as 58% of all undergraduates in the United States and account for 50% of all wealth (Strout, 2007). With greater wealth, if not just greater representation, women should become a greater focus of future philanthropic research, especially in high education.

Research on gender related to philanthropy reports contradicting findings (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2007; Cox & Deck, 2006). Sociology and social psychology have found that women approach their motivations, prosocial behaviors, and even altruism
differently than men (Drezner, 2011). Without sufficient research into the philanthropic behavior of women in current societal contexts, understanding about donor segmentation is not fully developed or accurate. Without sufficient information about female donors, male donors are not accurately depicted. Since limited research exists on dance marathon participation, there is limited information about the gender and ethnicity of dance marathon participants. However, the context of gender and ethnicity may impact the understanding and analysis of research participants in this study.

**Volunteer-Functions Inventory (VFI).** In an attempt to understand the motivations of volunteerism, Clary et al. (1998) designed the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) using functionalist theory. This approach implies that volunteer action is the result of motivation and analyzes the motivations behind prosocial behaviors among individuals (Clary et al., 1998; Snyder, 1993). While there are many reasons that volunteering is different than philanthropic participation, if the core motivation is rooted in prosocial behavior, this instrument could be a tool to align the similarities in motivations.

In designing the VFI, Clary et al. (1998) included psychological and social lenses to the major themes motivating volunteerism. By studying a broad spectrum of volunteer activities and a diverse population of participants a more comprehensive model was developed. Clary et al. (1998) identified six primary motivation themes: values, understanding, social, career, protective, enhancement. These six motivations may occur simultaneously or individually based on the participant.
Long-term volunteer action is practiced when motivations match the outcomes of the volunteer service an individual is engaged in (Clary et al., 1998). Social contexts highlight how an individual connects to other people, an experience, or an environment. Similarly, continuous volunteer participation for the same nonprofit or type of service aligns to how an individual connects to the volunteer experience as aligned with their personal motivation. Because of the individual nature of motivation, a volunteer experience may not be a fit for an individual through no fault of the nonprofit. While an individual may only be committed to philanthropic engagement with a nonprofit organization for a short time, nonprofits benefit from regular or habitual donors. If nonprofits can understand fit for volunteer service, so too may they connect motivations for donations to create fit that inspires donors to future participation and engagement.

**Dance Marathons**

The concept of dance marathons has been a part of American culture for almost a century. It is important to note they are exclusively an American phenomenon and were not seen in foreign countries (Calabria, 1993). While some research suggests that endurance events, such as dance marathons, have been around since the 19th century, the primary example of dance marathons focuses on the events of the 1920s and 30s (Calabria, 1993; C. Martin, 1994). C. Martin (1994) explains, “From the first, the word marathon was used to characterize these contests of endurance dancing” (p. xvii). The endurance nature of these events was the crux of their popularity. Dance marathons were the embodiment of the world record competitions of the 1920s and became an entertainment outlet by the mid-1930s (C. Martin, 1994). However, it should be noted
that dance marathons were representative of their time in history, being primarily segregated by race (Calabria, 1993). Though only a fad for a little over 20 years in the beginning of the century, they were pervasive throughout the country.

It is estimated that a marathon was hosted at least once in any city with a population of 50,000 or more (C. Martin, 1994). The events themselves became an industry for both participants and spectators, employing more than 20,000 during the height of the dance marathon phenomenon (C. Martin, 1994). The events themselves were fairly consistent in their execution with promoters and event coordinators traveling town to town (C. Martin, 1994). The events focused on the endurance of the dancing activity with specific rules and judges to enforce the rules consistently among participants, many participating for prize money (C. Martin, 1994). C. Martin (1994) explained, “Generally forty-five minutes of dancing was followed by fifteen minutes of rest, twenty-four hours a day” (p. xviii). Participants formed a family-like relationship which developed counter to their physical challenge (Calabria, 1993). These events used dance halls divided into a dancing area, space for the orchestra, medical assistance, and spectator viewing areas (C. Martin, 1994). Dance marathon events were organized and strategically executed as entertainment activities for participants and spectators.

As a major form of entertainment and cultural phenomenon, dance marathons primarily existed in the 1920s and 30s (C. Martin, 1994). There are records that indicate some marathons existed in the 1940s and beyond, but not to the same extent (C. Martin, 1994). The model of dance marathons of the 20s and 30s has been utilized in other events
since that time. This model is similar to the dance marathons occurring on college and university campuses today.

The dance marathons specifically benefitting Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals have existed as a fundraising model since the creation of the first CMN dance marathon at Indiana University in 1991 (CMN, 2016). Since that time, CMN dance marathons are hosted at more than 450 schools from high school to college (CMN, 2016). Mimicking the historic model of dance marathons, these events consist of events 12 to 40 hours in length that encourage students to remain on their feet as a representation of their support of CMN hospital patients (CMN, 2016). The activities of the dance marathons are not limited to dancing, but remaining standing while playing games, participating in activities, and engaging with hospital patients and their family members that are in attendance (CMN, 2016).

With limited existing research on dance marathons, multiple disciplines and research will inform this preliminary work. Existing research on CSEs will serve as a foundational model of research that may be applicable to dance marathons. The intent of dance marathons as utilized by Children’s Miracle Network fundraising events is for the event to occur over an extended period of time that makes it a physical duration challenge to remain standing. The physical challenge implied by a minimum 12 hour standing event connects dance marathons to the tradition of CSEs.

**Charity Sport Events**

Nonprofit organizations are in competition for a finite amount of donor dollars. Frequently factors beyond the control of a nonprofit organization can impact their
financial position. The economic situation of the early 2000s required many nonprofit organizations to be creative with their fundraising efforts (Hendiks & Peelen, 2012; Woolf, Heere & Walker, 2013). Active sporting events have become a growing fundraising opportunity for nonprofits (Filo et al., 2008; Snelgrove et al., 2013). By hosting fundraising events with a focus on sports, non-profits are able to extend their reach and broaden their donor base.

Commonly referred to as CSEs, individuals pay a registration fee to participate in a particular sport event or activity, with proceeds benefiting a nonprofit organization (Higgins & Lauzon, 2003). Higgins and Lauzon (2003) reported CSE participants are broader than the typical donor population. Participants may also seek sponsorships to raise additional funds for the cause as a participation requirement (Scott & Solomon, 2003). There is a distinction that some events only require a registration fee while others encourage a fundraising element.

Along with raising funds for a nonprofit organization or cause, these events are also raising awareness (Hendriks & Peelen, 2012). CSEs are an increasingly lucrative model of fundraising, though nonprofits have regularly hosted special events to encourage active involvement of donors with their cause. It is estimated 50% of nonprofit organization funds come from special events (Higgins & Lauzon, 2003). Special events can range from concerts to formal dinners and CSEs.

Higgins and Lauzon (2003) noted many nonprofit special events are created for the purpose of publicity and awareness; however, as organizations become better at event planning and sponsorship, these events become focused on their financial potential.
Physical activities are noted for a greater capacity to raise funds than other types of special events, while also building unique opportunities for engagement among volunteers and participants (Higgins & Lauzon, 2003). However, just because these events can be financially beneficial to nonprofits does not mean they are guarantees.

Motivation. To better understand the motivations of participants in CSEs, Filo et al. (2008) studied the participants in two bicycle events for the Lance Armstrong Foundation, LIVESTRONG and identified six primary themes of motivations. The first theme is intellectual focusing on opportunities for participants to learn more about the charity, the cause the event is raising money for, and how a participant can become more involved in the cause (Filo et al., 2008). It should be noted that nonprofits must facilitate this theme intentionally as it may not occur naturally. A motivation for escape allowed participants to pursue an activity outside of their regular routine (Filo et al., 2008). This could include an athletic activity not normally available to the participant or access to a venue not regularly accessible.

The nature of CSEs promotes the theme of competency, also referred to as physical challenge, which highlights the physicality of the event (Filo et al., 2008). Depending on the design of the CSE, participants may be competing or may just be participating to complete the physical activity. Some participants are motivated to attend a CSE specifically because of charity, where their registration fees and fundraising is directed toward a specific cause (Filo et al., 2008). These participants may also engage with the cause or nonprofit organization in other ways outside of the sport event.
A theme of success motivates individuals who want to be associated with an event or cause that is successful and to know they are contributing to that success (Filo et al., 2008). Although the theme of success is not further defined by Filo et al. (2008), depending on the audience it could include nonprofits with a history of accomplishing goals associated with their cause, public recognition due to common awareness of a nonprofit and its cause, or a socially positive association with the purpose of a nonprofit’s cause. The most impactful motivation was the social theme where participation in an event led to a common social opportunity and community development (Filo et al., 2008). A social theme makes sense as special events, specifically CSEs, engages a group of participants in a collective activity.

Through observation and in-depth interviews with participants, Scott and Solomon (2003) identified motivation themes among participants in Komen Race for the Cure. Individuals shared how they were connected to participate in the event, their observations at the event, and the overall feeling they had from the experience (Scott & Solomon, 2003). Whereas contributions to non-profits may provide opportunities for an individual to feel connected to the non-profit or cause, CSEs engage donors in a different way. Scott and Solomon (2003) identified the five most influential factors of participation in order of importance were connection to the cause, the social elements of the event, interest in supporting the specific cause, fitness related to the physical activity, and an interest in fundraising for the cause. These motivations may align with the motivations of dance marathon participants in relating their experience to CSEs.
Motivation was further analyzed by Wood, Snelgrove, and Danylchuk’s (2010) study of participants in bike tours benefitting the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada. By surveying participants, Wood et al. (2010) found four different categories of event participants that may be applicable to other CSE contexts. Wood et al. (2010) identified *cause fundraisers* as the event participants who are specifically connected to the cause rather than the event. This aligns with individuals who are specifically interested in the cause as described by Filo et al. (2008). *Road warriors* are the participants who participate because of a connection to the sport (Wood et al., 2010). These participants will engage in an event regardless of the nonprofit involved. The *event enthusiasts* are passionate for both the cause and the sport (Wood et al., 2010). Wood et al.’s (2010) research showed *event enthusiasts* raise the most money followed by *cause fundraisers*. It makes sense that individuals who have a greater connection to the cause of a CSE are more likely to raise funds. Loyalty to a CSE is also most common among *event enthusiasts* (Wood et al., 2010). As nonprofits consider development of CSEs, the ability to host an event for multiple years can increase opportunities for participant loyalty.

The fourth and final category are labeled *non-identifiers*, who Wood et al. (2010) indicated are participants who report no connection to the sport or the cause. Wood et al. (2010) did not further elaborate on the reasons *non-identifiers* choose to participate in CSEs. The four categories may be oversimplification of the event participants, especially when the fourth category is essentially lacking a description of motivation.

While there are many motivations that can influence the decision to participate in CSEs, social motivations seemed to inspire a majority of participants (Snelgrove et al.,
As previously discussed, Filo et al. (2008) found social motivation the most influential for participation in LIVESTRONG cycling events. Similarly, Scott and Solomon (2003) found social motivations to be the second only to the cause for participants in the Komen Race for the Cure. This social context can also be intentionally created through event planning efforts that can further benefit the nonprofit.

**Attachment and fundraiser identity.** In addition to recognizing motivation and participation segmentation, more understanding can be gained from the ways participants form attachments and fundraiser identities through participation. As individuals form attachment their loyalty and potential for repeat participation and contributions increases (Snelgrove et al., 2013). Just as regular donors are important to the financial stability of a nonprofit organization, loyalty among CSE participants may be just as significant.

Snelgrove et al. (2013) studied participants of walks and runs benefiting Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada. Of specific interest were individuals who had participated in the annual event for at least five years to further examine individuals who were likely to develop attachment to the specific event (Snelgrove et al., 2013). As CSEs at the local and national level continue to grow into annual opportunities for participation, understanding loyalty behaviors will become more important. Snelgrove et al.’s (2013) study identified three primary ways participants developed attachment to the event: developing fundraiser identity, alignment with the cause, and creating social relationships. These three ways of creating attachment may be effective in influencing CSE planning that has the potential to create repeat participants and donors.
It is important to remember that Snelgrove et al. (2013) studied individuals who participated in an annual event for more than five years. Before a participant can become a repeat participant in a CSE, there has to be a motivation to engage in the activity. Snelgrove and Wood (2010) identified CSE participants must be motivated not only by the cause but also the particular sport of the event. When taking the sport into consideration, identity can be developed with the fundraiser identity as well as sport identity (Snelgrove & Wood, 2010). These efforts should be coordinated together.

**Identity.** An individual’s identity plays an important role in their self-perception and interaction with others. Stryker (1968) explained identities exist for individuals to function within social relationships. With this framework it is important to remember the influence of the social context. Stryker (1980) believed individuals manage multiple identities simultaneously with priority given to identities depending on the situation, need for legitimacy, and need for recognition of a particular identity for personal benefit. These contexts can be enhanced and targeted through specific situations. When it comes to charity, if an individual identifies with a cause, or a participant in a cause, they are more likely to support that cause (Hassay & Peloza, 2009). Nonprofits can target specific identities through event marketing and outreach efforts. For example, fundraiser identity is the way others perceive an individual for their participation and fundraising for an organization or cause (Snelgrove et al., 2013). When an individual connects their identity closely with a cause, they will not only participate in an event but also will more closely feel connected to the event’s efforts.
Social identification theory believes that an individual identifies with a group of individuals resulting in individual behavior that aligns with the identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). When an individual’s identity is connected to the group they take greater pride in the successes and efforts of the group’s mission and purpose (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). This aligns with Hassay and Peloza (2009) and Snelgrove et al.’s (2013) research that connects personal identification development with greater connection to a CSE. By understanding how individuals connect with other event participants and develop collective group identity, a better understanding of the behaviors of these groups is gained.

**Community.** As multiple participants develop fundraiser identities the context of the social relationships change. Hoeffler and Keller (2002) defined community as a group of individuals sharing a common identification. When multiple individuals develop the same identity, a community of fundraisers is created around the cause and event. In this model the participants in a CSE can be considered a community of participants and start to behave in specific social ways.

The concept of community can be important in the creation and implementation of CSEs focusing on the geographic community as well as the interpersonal concept of community. Using concepts from sociology and psychology, Hassay and Peloza (2009) believed individuals who are more likely to participate in helping behaviors demonstrate belonging within the communities of their lives, including workplace and neighborhoods. In this way, nonprofits may choose preexisting communities to implement CSEs. Community and personal networks can also be developed through the preparation and
participation in CSEs (Higgins & Lauzon, 2003). Some of these communities may happen naturally and others can be developed intentionally.

The concept of brand community could be applied to the purpose of CSEs and the community that may be created around the experience. Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) defined brand community as a community without geographical basis around common social relationships centered on a good or service of a specific brand. Brand communities are noted for their consciousness of kind, rituals, and sense of moral responsibility (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Consciousness of kind refers to the collective sense of connection to members of the community and difference from those not in the community (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). This aligns with Hoeffler and Keller’s (2002) definition of community through common identity development. Hassay and Peloza (2009) explained consciousness of kind can be facilitated in CSEs by physically joining the participants in one location, typically at the beginning of the event, to create a sense of community. However, depending on the nature of physical activity, CSEs may naturally build community and exclusivity through the nature of the sport.

Rituals, or traditions, are the activities within a community including elements of their shared culture and consciousness (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Some rituals may be identifiable to nonparticipants while some may be exclusive to the experience of participants. Rituals become the demonstrated practice of a community’s culture and perpetuate consistency in the experience of the community across members (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Rituals may develop over time, with some being created intentionally and some developing naturally.
Finally, a sense of moral responsibility is the shared understanding and commitment of individual members to the greater community (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Commitment to the greater community may then influence event loyalty and individual efforts to event fund raising goals. Of these three elements Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) found consciousness of kind to be the most important. Without connection among community members there can be no community.

Not all CSEs will develop brand communities. When a brand community is successfully implemented in charity events the intention is that this will lead to future engagement and loyalty of participants (Hassay & Peloza, 2009). This loyalty may be to the specific charity event on an annual basis or to the charity event in any context the participant could engage with it, including other 5k walks or runs for the same cause in different locations. Additionally, loyal members of a brand community are also likely to recruit others to join in the experience by perpetuating the positivism of the brand community identification (Hassay & Peloza, 2009). This follows with model of Schervish and Havens (1997) that aligns charitable giving and eventual participation. As a CSE participant connects with their experience, they may also gain a greater connection to fundraising for the cause.

A psychological sense of community defines an even deeper sense of the interpersonal relationship between the individuals and can include CSEs (Hassay & Peloza, 2009). An individual’s loyalty, in essence their commitment to an organization or cause, is positively influenced by psychological sense of community (Hassay & Peloza,
Building loyalty among CSE participants is important to develop potential long-term donors connected to the cause or nonprofit.

Hassay and Peloza (2009) proposed active participation in a CSE increases an individual’s commitment to a nonprofit beyond just a financial contribution and engages the individual in a different type of community. However, the level of commitment can vary considerably by individual. While there are parallels between community building through CSEs and brand communities, little research exists illustrating the long-term loyalty to nonprofits that these events may or may not be creating (Woolf et al., 2013). More research is needed to understand how participation in CSEs influences other forms of philanthropic involvement outside of the sport event.

**Sport subculture.** Participation in CSEs may more closely align to the concept of sport subculture than brand community. A subculture can be defined as a population with its own norms, values, and symbols (Green, 2001). In many ways, participants in CSEs do broadly meet this definition. A subculture includes community of social connections, friendships, and similar interests (Donnelly, 1981). The foundation of a CSE is the physical participation in the activity. Members of subcultures learn the norms and values through participation and interaction with other members of the culture, as well as marketing and pervasive communication efforts (Green, 2001). The specific sport involved may contribute to the unique subculture of an event as well.

Subcultures are physically active, as well as social. Just as participation in the subculture is focused on the social aspects of the culture, continued participation of individuals in the subculture is reliant on social contexts (Green, 2001). An individual’s
satisfaction with the social elements of the CSE would then support or discourage continued participation. As an individual is fully immersed in a subculture, they begin to identify with the subculture in their beliefs and perpetuate the subculture in their actions (Green, 2001). This could be demonstrated in continued participation in the CSE as well as encouraging others to join.

**Research on Charity Sport Events.** To better understand the variety of implementations of CSEs, Higgins and Lauzon (2003) researched 50 different CSEs. With such a large scale of events, Higgins and Lauzon (2003) increased the likelihood of their analysis to be applicable in varying contexts. Higgins and Lauzon (2003) noted the community element of CSEs was reinforced in preparation of participation in the events as well as during participation in the specific event. This is important to note as CSEs, especially physically challenging activities, may include training or preparation among groups participating in the same event.

In their analysis, Higgins and Lauzon (2003) defined two categories of CSEs, cause based and physical activity based. While all CSEs are contributing to a cause in some way, the focus of the event implementation and participant experience can be different. Cause based events included a physical activity but participants were more involved in social activities, event speeches about the cause, educational activities, and included a fluid use of time during the event (Higgins & Lauzon, 2003). This kind of event highlights multiple activities occurring with a physical sport event, either simultaneous to the sport or immediately before or after. Whereas the physical activity based events were primarily concerned with the competition, including timeliness of the
event, results, routes, and safety (Higgins & Lauzon, 2003). A physical sport event may include activities of the cause-based events, but they are not the primary focus of participants or event planners. This segmentation of event types may align with varying populations of event participants.

Parris and Peachey (2013) took CSEs a step further by analyzing how participation may influence future service to others. While most studies attempt to understand how CSE participation can build loyalty for their own purposes, this study examined a greater impact of participation, specifically increasing servant leadership among participants. In their research, Parris and Peachey (2013) identified both the social and structural elements of an event that can be used to encourage servant leadership. By identifying methods of building servant leadership through the CSEs, a more intentional model of event planning can be developed.

Specifically, opportunities for event-related social community building, facilitating ceremonies with storytelling, and celebration opportunities were identified as the primary event-related elements to increase servant leadership capacity (Parris & Peachey, 2013). On an individual basis Parris and Peachey (2013) encouraged opportunities for participants to develop identities, see how they can make a difference, and see how service is part of their efforts. This aligns with research on fundraiser identity development, as well as having a strong motivation to make a difference.

**Summary**

The current American higher education context sets the stage for this study into cocurricular philanthropy experiences on college and university campuses. Using the
framework of service learning and the history of citizenship education through higher education, there is a natural fit for philanthropy to serve a potential need in civic engagement for today’s college students. While there is limited existing research on today’s dance marathons and cocurricular philanthropy programs, research on CSEs provides a potential for application to dance marathon events. Motivation, event engagement, and outcomes of CSEs may provide additional opportunities to develop the experience and results of dance marathon participation.
Chapter 3: Research Methods

The purpose of this study was to describe the motivation, experience and outcomes of undergraduate students participating in a dance marathon. Through qualitative inquiry, this research specifically focused on participants of BuckeyeThon at The Ohio State University, a 12 hour student created dance marathon benefitting Nationwide Children’s Hospital, a Children’s Miracle Network Hospital. I explored how participants were motivated to participate in the event, how they experienced the event, and in turn, how their dance marathon participation may have shaped or influenced their behavior and experiences after the event. I was particularly interested in understanding the psychological and educational outcomes of volunteer fundraising participation. This chapter explains the philosophy of the selected research method, how it was appropriate to this research design, along with the implementation of the research.

Qualitative Research Approach

In an effort to understand the experience of dance marathon participants, a qualitative framework was appropriate for this study. Rather than gain insight through quantitative data, this research sought to create a more nuanced understanding of dance marathon participation. This aligns with Pascarella and Terenzini’s (2005) advocacy for qualitative research in the study of higher education practice to provide more detailed and descriptive research.

According to Merriam (2002), qualitative researchers assert that an individual’s reality is a construction of their interaction with the world around them. As this study focused on the psychological and educational outcomes of volunteer fundraising
participation through dance marathon participation, qualitative inquiry lent itself to this research. According to Nastasi and Schensul (2005), “Researchers endeavor to understand psychological constructs, reflected in thoughts, language, and behavior, from the perspective of the participants” (p. 181). A qualitative research method allowed the researcher to become the primary instrument for data collection, giving flexibility for the unique experiences of each research participant through the interview process, allowing for more distinct participant profiles.

In researching the experience of dance marathon participants as the researcher, I did not seek to prove a theory or hypothesis. This followed the inductive form of data analysis found in qualitative research (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). Instead, the study used the context of theories and models discussed in the literature review to better understand the experience of dance marathon participants through individual interviews. This design allowed the topic to be described in a holistic way that was not limited to the singular experience of one individual. The results of the study are the meanings for the individual participants. This intent aligned with the purpose of a basic interpretive qualitative study.

A basic interpretive qualitative study’s purpose, according to Merriam (2002) is “to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences” (p. 38). This purpose aligned with the intent of this research to understand how participants experience a dance marathon and the outcomes of their participation. Interpretive qualitative research is guided by principles of phenomenology and symbolic interactionism (Merriam, 2002). The two principles of phenomenology and symbolic interactionism informed design decisions for the research.
Phenomenology is rooted in the belief that individuals interpret experiences from their own individual meaning making (Merriam, 2002). Because of the limited existing research on the topics of dance marathon volunteer fundraising, focusing on the experience of participants at one dance marathon is sufficient to begin further exploration and research on the topic. While simultaneously, symbolic interaction focuses on how an individual constructs meaning through their interactions with others (Merriam, 2002). Crotty (1998) defined symbolic interaction in practice as the process of putting oneself in another’s place through dialogue of thoughts, attitudes, and feelings. Phenomenology and symbolic interaction created the foundation for exploration in this research.

The blending of phenomenology and symbolic interaction for a basic interpretive study created a robust model for this inquiry. As the most common form of qualitative research in education and other disciplines of applied practice, basic interpretive research allowed the researcher to understand how people make sense of their experiences (Merriam, 2002). In this way the purpose of the study drove the design – including questions, observations, and documents – depending on the research and the theoretical framework of the study. Models and theories as discussed in Chapter 2 helped to frame this study within a basic interpretive qualitative model. Interpretive studies regularly reference educational psychology, developmental psychology, and sociology as frames (Merriam, 2002). Using the framework provided in the literature review, data collection and observation focused on theories of prosocial behavior, motivation, fundraiser identity development, and community development.
Protection of Human Subjects

All research procedures followed the process as submitted and approved by the Ohio University Institutional Review Board (IRB) as the host institution of the research project dissertation and The Ohio State University IRB as the host institution of research study participants. Each participant was given an approved consent form with the opportunity to opt out of participating in the research study. Additionally, all participants had confidentiality protected at all times, with participants selecting their own pseudonym for the purpose of the study, field notes, and recordings, allowing direct quotes to be attributed to the participant without losing anonymity. Participants verified their pseudonyms were not also nicknames that would otherwise be attributed to them. Consent forms were locked and separate from field notes identifying pseudonyms. Audio recordings exclusively used pseudonyms, maintaining anonymity, and participants were reminded of their pseudonyms prior to each interview. I transcribed all recordings verbatim. Full written transcripts were only accessible to me. Emails sent to participants for member checking were deleted once responses were received from the participant.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted prior to data collection. The pilot study was used to clarify interview protocol, clarity of questions, thoroughness of interview responses, and interview length. Pilot study participants included students who were participating in a dance marathon at a private research institution in a large metropolitan area with an enrollment of almost 20,000 students. The pilot study was conducted with an available population, so while the participants had not participated in a dance marathon previously,
their experience at that specific event provided enough context to evaluate the interview protocol. Two individuals were interviewed twice. Each individual completed the Initial Individual Interview Protocol (Appendix A), noted as a *pre-event interview*, and Interview Protocol (Appendix B), noted as a *during event interview*. Though the interview protocols were edited to reflect students participating in their first dance marathon at a different institution, the pilot study provided useful insights as a researcher. Use of the pilot study allowed for practice in use of technology to record interviews and determine the best methods to gather the best audio for future transcription. As the interviewer, I was able to better pace timing of the interview questions for the comfort and comprehension of the participants.

Though the pilot study did not result in significant edits to the interview protocol as originally designed, it allowed me to anticipate clarification participants may need and maintain consistency among the research participants. Sampson (2004) noted pilot studies allow for greater reflection by the researcher in the content of the data. With limited existing research on this topic, a pilot study assisted me in examining the topic thoroughly with a limited number of study participants.

**Research Site Selection and Access**

BuckeyeThon at The Ohio State University is an established dance marathon with a long-standing partnership with Children’s Miracle Network. The event has been occurring at Ohio State since 2001 and is in the top 10 of all annual collegiate dance marathon fundraising events for CMN. This site was selected because the organization has a history of assessment efforts, both for internal improvements and outcome
measurements. These internal research projects have been occurring with BuckeyeThon and the Center for the Study of Student Life at Ohio State since 2012.

These research projects with BuckeyeThon and the Center for the Study of Student Life provide the only data on the sex of BuckeyeThon participants from post-event assessment data efforts. The 2013 BuckeyeThon post-event assessment responders from a random sample of BuckeyeThon registrants reported 25.4% identified as male and 74.6% identified as female (Center for the Study of Student Life, 2013). Data from a random sample of BuckeyeThon 2015 assessment responders reported that 18.7% identified as male, 80.4% identified as female, and 0.9% identified as transgender (Center for the Study of Student Life, 2015). This data reflected the responses to the assessment inquiries from a random sample of BuckeyeThon registrants and not necessarily all participants.

As a former employee of Student Life at The Ohio State University, I have a history of involvement with the BuckeyeThon organization, further discussed in the Role of the Researcher below. In my time at Ohio State, I worked as a co-investigator in these assessment efforts, assisting with designing assessment instruments, implementation, and outcomes of these assessment efforts. Since that time, BuckeyeThon’s organization has developed student leadership roles for assessment focusing on formal and informal assessment efforts throughout the year.

With a history of assessment practices, along with demonstrated interest in assessment for internal improvement and outcomes, this organization was receptive to participation in this study. Additionally, as a CMN dance marathon, BuckeyeThon
utilizes Donor Drive, an online registration and fundraising website. All event participants, even virtual dancers, must register online through Donor Drive, and BuckeyeThon is able to gather registration information for all participants, including demographic information, and collect online donations. BuckeyeThon shared Donor Drive registration information with me at multiple points during the research study for the purpose of sample selection and participant profiles.

BuckeyeThon also shared their comprehensive event schedule, which assisted in designing the study participants’ individual interview schedules during the event. In an effort to assist event attendees in completing the 12 hour event, BuckeyeThon does not share their comprehensive schedule and many event times with dancers so that the concept of time is not a detriment to student participation.

**Sample**

Purposeful, criterion-based selection determined study participants, with a goal of at least five and no more than 10 students. This was in keeping with Dukes (1984) who recommended as few as one but more reasonably three to 10 research subjects with the maximum number dictated by the research procedure. Criterion for selection included having participated in at least one BuckeyeThon dance marathon event previously with at least nine hours of participation. Additionally, participants were not to be previous or current members of the BuckeyeThon organization or its leadership team, as their understanding, involvement, and commitment to the event are more invested than general student participants, and the intent of this study is to understand the experience of a general event participant. All research participants were traditional undergraduate
students as a majority of all event participants are undergraduates and a majority of participants in dance marathons across the country are undergraduates.

All participants were at least 18 years of age and eligible to give their own consent. Research participants who graduated between their participation in the event and the research study completion they were still accessible to the researcher for member check purposes. Ideally, selected participants would represent a variety of experiences such as BuckeyeThon participation teams, years of BuckeyeThon participation, year in school, and major. Gender and ethnicity were not criterion to diversify the research participants because BuckeyeThon does not collect information regarding gender or ethnicity of participants during registration (Appendix C).

To obtain the sample in this research, one month prior to the event, I asked BuckeyeThon for all students who had registered for the Friday shift of 2015 BuckeyeThon dance marathon according to the online registration process managed by the BuckeyeThon organization’s vendor Donor Drive. Registration for BuckeyeThon 2015 ended on November 7, so accessing the list one month prior to the event included everyone who had registered for the event. However, BuckeyeThon attendance is contingent on participants raising $100 minimum in donations, so research participants must have reached the fundraising minimum to be eligible to participate in the dance marathon.

In accessing the list of attendees for the Friday shift, named Scarlet Half, a total of 2,246 participants were identified. The BuckeyeThon registration information contained in Donor Drive (see Appendix C) assisted with the criterion evaluation of participants.
After cross-referencing these students as undergraduates, answering registration question 6, “What year are you in school?” and answering “1st year,” “2nd year,” “3rd year,” or “4/4+ year,” a total of 2,236 participants remained. All registrants who answered yes to registration question 10, “Have you previously attended BT?” totaled 841 individuals.

These 841 individuals received an e-mail letter of invitation (Appendix D), explaining the research study purpose, risk, and benefits and other introductory information as required by the IRB. The invitation was sent from my personal email account with my personal contact information included, along with contact information for my dissertation advisor. From the invitation email, a potential participant could agree to participate in the study, by selecting the hyperlink in the email stating, “To participate in this research and complete the Demographic and Biographic Questionnaire click here.”

This questionnaire assessed demographic information and BuckeyeThon participation information to verify the candidate met requirements for the study and that all final research participants represented the undergraduate student population of event participants appropriately.

A total of 28 participants completed the electronic consent and Demographic and Biographic Questionnaire (Appendix E). Seven of the respondents incorrectly completed the consent agreement and were excluded from participation. Six of the respondents had not yet raised the minimum $100 in donations two-weeks prior to the study and were excluded from the study in case they were not eligible to participate by the time of the event. Four remaining respondents were removed from consideration because of answers to the Demographic and Biographic Questionnaire: one respondent previously served on
the BuckeyeThon leadership team, one respondent no longer planned to attend the event
during the Scarlet Half, one respondent had only attended for 6 – 9 hours previously, and
one respondent did not complete the questionnaire in its entirety.

This left 11 possible participants, exceeding the goal of five to 10. To make final
participant selections, respondents were considered in the order they responded to the
survey invitation. Participants were then selected based on the diversity of experiences,
including year in school, number of years participating in BuckeyeThon, major, and
assigned color team. Registered BuckeyeThon participants typically participate in a
“team” they choose to join based on an affinity group, such as a residence hall or student
organization. Teams are then assigned one of eight color teams and the individuals do not
have any control over their assigned color team, so limiting research participants on color
team criteria was random. Color teams influenced participant selection because various
events, including meals, are scheduled based on color teams. Having too many
participants in the same color team would affect their availability for scheduling
interviews during the event.

Eight students were identified as a research participants, and were notified via
email (see Appendix F) of the following: that they had been selected for the research
study; that the interview process was to take place during their respective dance marathon
shift; and they were asked to confirm their participation by providing their availability for
an initial individual interview the day of the dance marathon within a given timeframe.
Two of the selected interview participants did not respond to the selection email, even
after a reminder of the response deadline, so only the six respondents were selected for
the research study. Those who were not selected as final participants, specifically the individuals who were not included due to their fundraising total prior to the event, were retained as alternates in the event that one of the primary participants was no longer able to participate and pending verification that the alternate had met their fundraising requirement.

Each of the interview participants confirmed a time they were available for the 30 minute pre-event interview on the day of the dance marathon. I scheduled their interviews to be fairly consecutive in the late morning and early afternoon on the day the dance marathon was scheduled to begin at 8pm.

BuckeyeThon assisted with the interview process by reserving a room for both the pre-event interviews and during event interviews, inside the Multicultural Center on the first floor of the Ohio Union. The Ohio Union served as the event venue for the BuckeyeThon dance marathon, using the entirety of the building for dance marathon activities. The pre-event interviews were conducted in the same area as the during event interviews to allow the participants to become familiar with the space and comfortable with the interview environment. The interviews were conducted at a convenient location at the dance marathon, taking into consideration the physical requirements of the event, including allowing the participants to remain standing for the duration of the event. This kept the participants within the same facility as the dance marathon.

Each participant was scheduled for three 15 minute interviews during the dance marathon. The interview schedules took into account the color teams’ schedule of events, major events all participants should attend either in part or in whole, and distributing the
interviews as equally as possible throughout the duration of the 12 hours. The individual schedules were informed by the Scarlet Half schedule that was provided by BuckeyeThon (Appendix G), identifying events that were central to the dance marathon experience so that event attendees could participate without conflicts. Following the initial individual interview, each participant received their respective interview schedules and my contact information. One research participant participated in the pre-event interview but did not participate in any of the during event interviews, resulting in a total of five research participants.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews. As is common in qualitative inquiry, the primary means of collecting data was semi-structured interview (Patton, 2002). The semi-structured model allowed for the interview to follow the conversation of the interviewees, gaining greater understanding as needed, while providing an overall objective of each interview. Literature on service learning, learning philanthropy, motivation, community development, and CSEs informed the development of the interview protocol. The primary focus of the interview questions was the motivation to participate in the dance marathon and their experiences during the event. The initial individual interview sought to provide context to each participant’s personal biography, history of dance marathon participation, and motivation to participate for multiple years. Each during event interview sought to understand the experiences of the event and individual motivations. These protocols allowed for further exploration and follow-up throughout the interview process.
Each interview was recorded using two devices to ensure a back-up recording and the interviews were then personally transcribed verbatim. I took field notes throughout the process, reflecting on each individual interview and the participant’s behavior, responses, and engagement. The participants were asked for permission to record the interviews and the audio recording began immediately. In the event that the participant did not want the session recorded, they would have been excluded from the study for lack of ability to fully transcribe the interview for the purpose of the research.

The first interview was conducted on the day of the dance marathon, but prior to the event starting. There were multiple purposes of the initial interview: review of the IRB protocol and rights of participants; review their Demographic and Biographic Questionnaire (Appendix E); gain a greater understanding of each individual’s previous dance marathon experience, their motivations; and to get the participants comfortable with the interview experience, building rapport between researcher and participant. Prior to the official interview protocol beginning, but with the audio recording already started, the participants were informed of their rights and given a printed consent form to sign. They were also asked to provide verbal consent. During the pre-event interviews I shared a printed copy of each participant’s responses to the Demographic and Biographic Questionnaire (Appendix E) with the participant to be sure their demographic information, and BuckeyeThon dance marathon information, was correct and up to date. I then proceeded to ask the Initial Individual Interview protocol (Appendix A) to further develop participant profiles and elaborated on their previous BuckeyeThon experiences and motivations.
During the event, each participant was invited to participate in three individual interviews at semi-regular intervals during the event and followed a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix B). Each interview built upon the experience of the participant throughout the event and recorded their development and experience over time. I followed the interview protocol, added clarifying questions as needed, and made notes on the participant’s comments during the interview. Following each interview, I wrote a reaction to the interview as a whole, as well as added to the field notes for clarity when transcribing.

During the event, the interview consisted of each participant being asked questions in sequence following the During Event Interview protocol (Appendix B). The interview protocol was informed by the two general questions Moustakas (1994) identified as critical phenomenology, as explained by Creswell (2013): “What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situations have typically influenced your experiences of the phenomenon?” (p. 81).

Multiple interactions with the participants before and during the dance marathon allowed the researcher to establish a rapport with the participants, encouraging openness and allowing the researcher to seek further clarifications within the interview protocol in a way that was comfortable to participants. Having multiple contacts not only allowed for a greater understanding of the participant’s experience during different points in the dance marathon, but also allowed for more accurate data collection as a whole, including the post-event reflection responses.
Each participant was asked to complete a post-event reflection (Appendix H). Three days following the dance marathon’s conclusion, I emailed the interview participants to write a brief, no more than 500-word description of how BuckeyeThon impacted them, along with an optional opportunity to provide no more than three photographs that represented the most impactful moments in their BuckeyeThon participation (Appendix I). Giving the participants a 500-word limit was intended to give them an accomplishable goal to encourage them to complete the reflection after having a full weekend schedule with the dance marathon and recovery. All participants completed the post-event reflection and two participants took advantage of the optional photo submission.

**Data Analysis**

Interview audio recordings were transcribed verbatim using a computer and analyzed using a combination of transcription and field notes. The individual transcriptions were read and coded utilizing frameworks as described by Saldana (2013). The primary coding followed Saldana’s (2013) model of first cycle, lending itself to specific processes in each round of analysis. This first cycle review analyzed the interviews of each individual participant separately and focused on Structural and Descriptive Coding. Descriptive coding analyzed interview data for short phrases or nouns to code the topic while Structural coding used codes and themes to outline the data (Saldana, 2013). The second coding followed Saldana’s (2013) model of second cycle and coded each interview by chronological grouping, focusing on all pre-interviews, then all 1st event interviews, and so on. The second cycle analysis focused on Pattern Coding.
Pattern coding evaluated the codes of the interview content to identify the natural organization of the codes and their meaning (Saldana, 2013). The final round of coding served as an understanding of each participant by Subcoding each participant interviews separately, further drilling down the previous codes to be sure codes are specific and consistent.

These codes created the outline of the structure to develop the themes among the interviews. These themes across all transcriptions were analyzed and compared for commonalities and unique outliers. These common themes were then used to describe the essence of the experience as well as how the experience influenced future behavior.

The analysis of each participant’s experience was accompanied by a profile that described each individual based on the collected demographic and biographic information. The goal in these profiles was to provide enough information so readers could determine whether or not these experiences matched the types of participants in other events or situations. This attempt at transferability intended to enable readers to fully understand the research and recognize the context of each particular participant.

**Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness was considered in the development of the method, the implementation of the process, and the analysis of the data. Qualitative research with the researcher as an instrument demanded intentional efforts to safeguard trustworthiness of the data (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). Nastasi and Schensul (2005) recommended multiple methods to increase trustworthiness, which were utilized in this research including prolonged engagement, reflexive journaling, member checking, and thick description.
Nastasi and Schensul (2005) described prolonged engagement as the “investment of sufficient time to ensure accurate understanding of the scope of the target phenomenon” (p. 185). In addition to time spent professionally working with the dance marathon, as an advisor and event planner, I have spent multiple years working on assessment efforts to further research this phenomenon. For this particular research, time was spent understanding the Scarlet Half event schedule, the activities dance marathon participants could engage in, and the intentionality behind the event planning. As a researcher I also had prolonged engagement with the research participants. Prior to the member checking process as the researcher I had at least six interactions with each participant, either in person or electronically.

Member checking, which “refers to procedures for confirming the veracity of data and interpretations with representatives of the target population” (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005, p. 185), was incorporated to increase the trustworthiness of the data. Each participant was contacted by email to review the summary analysis of their experience to be sure I had accurately described their experiences. Participants received a description of the theme or themes that emerged from the analysis of their interviews, as well as excerpts from the transcripts that supported this theme. They were also given the chance to revise or clarify any statements. The responses from the participants indicated whether or not the themes developed by the researcher’s interpretation of the data were accurate to the participant’s experiences of the dance marathon.

Nastasi and Schensul (2005) recommended reflexive journaling for researcher notes to document impressions and biases during the research process. During the
interviews I memoed to note specific important phrases of the research participant’s answers to the questions. Immediately following each interview I completed a post-interview reflection following the template for Post-Interview Reflection by Researcher (Appendix J). While the primary method focused on the interview process, the findings from interview data also relied on memoing and post-event reflection from the participants. Memoing during the interview highlighted words or phrases of particular emphasis or interest during the interview protocol that were referred to during coding to note importance.

A thick description of the research process and description of the final analysis of the data is provided to further elaborate on the experience and content of this specific research. Thick description is the intentional detailed description of the study, its context and participants, to enhance transferability to others (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). A descriptive profile of each research participant is used to provide context for analysis across participants. Further, specific description of the process, procedures, and situations of the research should guide the reader to understand the execution of the study and the experience of the participants. The data analysis also intentionally included the participants’ own words in the descriptions of the themes and data. With consideration of the limited existing research on student participation in volunteer fundraising through dance marathon, the research design, participants, and research analysis is thoroughly documented to allow for future research.
Role of the Researcher

**Personal biography.** I am a Student Affairs professional with nine years of professional experience at The Ohio State University before moving to a different local institution in fall of 2014. During my time at Ohio State, I spent eight years working in the Ohio Union and Student Activities. BuckeyeThon as an organization was advised and managed out of the Student Activities office throughout the duration of my tenure at Ohio State.

I attended my first BuckeyeThon dance marathon event in 2010 when my close colleague advised the organization and I was present for the final reveal of the total amount raised, which was the first year the organization exceeded $100,000. I participated in BuckeyeThon in 2011 as a “virtual dancer,” passively raising money for the event but was at a conference and did not attend the dance marathon. BuckeyeThon raised $222,000 in 2011, becoming the first CMN dance marathon to double its total fundraising amount after reaching six-digits.

In 2012 I became the co-advisor to the organization one month before the event, though I was the Ohio Union event planner responsible for managing the event logistics as planned by the student organization throughout the academic year leading up to the event. I was a dancer for the first time in 2012, personally raising $2,630. BuckeyeThon 2012 raised more than $454,000, becoming the only CMN dance marathon to twice increase their total fundraising by more than 100% after reaching six-digits fundraising totals. In 2013 my only professional role with the organization was as the Ohio Union event planner for BuckeyeThon. As a dancer that year, I raised $3,630 and BuckeyeThon
raised more than $608,000. In 2014 I was only associated with the event as a dancer, no longer working in Student Affairs at Ohio State, I raised $4,472 and BuckeyeThon raised more than $767,000.

I worked at Ohio State for five years before I attended the dance marathon, and even then I was not a registered participant. After the 2010 dance marathon, various logistical elements of the event were changed, including a mandatory fundraising minimum and online fundraising resource for dancers. Since then, event participation has greatly increased and the organization has doubled their fundraising total twice, now exceeding one million dollars in annual fundraising. However, there is no specific explanation for why. Students who love dance marathon, just love dance marathon. Sometimes these students are not the best at describing the what and why of the event. Even as a dancer myself, working to raise money for the cause, I have to take a step back and consider why I participate. My goal in this research study was to explain the why of participating in the event, along with the what that students get from participation.

I no longer work in Student Life or at The Ohio State University. I have no direct professional connection to the success or implementation of BuckeyeThon as a dance marathon. I am a member of the BuckeyeThon Alumni Society at Ohio State and work with the current BuckeyeThon advisor to assist in assessment efforts of the organization. Since 2012 I have worked with BuckeyeThon and the Center for the Study of Student Life at The Ohio State University on an annual assessment project of BuckeyeThon student participant motivation and learning through a quantitative data instrument that also includes open ended questions for programmatic self-improvement purposes. This
assessment project began my interest in exploring this topic further for my dissertation research.

While my personal and professional experience with dance marathon influences my perspective on the experience, I have done everything I can to ensure it did not drive my interpretation of the experience of others. As a qualitative researcher I allowed the findings to present their own representation of the participant’s voice rather than my own preconceived notions.

**Ethical Considerations**

There are a few situations where I have directly interacted with students who participate in BuckeyeThon. As a dance marathon participant myself, I attended both event shifts in 2014 and was recognized on as a top fundraiser. However, this is within the context of 2,500 maximum dancers participating in each respective shift. Should a research participant learn that I am an event participant and have been a top fundraiser, they may be intimidated. During BuckeyeThon 2015, I did not participate in any event activity that directly identifies or recognizes my fundraising efforts to all participants. The only limitation to this is the donation website for BuckeyeThon, Donor Drive, lists all participants or fundraisers. Research participants could search for me and find my donations if they thought I was also a registered participant and fundraiser.

I intentionally did not include students in my study with which I had pre-existing relationships. To have a pre-existing relationship with a student would include having had or currently having a direct, on-going reason for interacting with the student outside of the research study, including other organizations I advise or have advised at OSU.
Confidentiality between the student participants’ actual name and pseudonym are of importance in maintaining the ethical practice of the study. I was the only person who can connect these two pieces, with the consent forms locked during the study and destroyed following completion of the dissertation.

Although I have had considerable engagement with the dance marathon at The Ohio State University, at the time of the data collection, I had not worked in Student Life at Ohio State for more than 18 months. All selected participants were individuals with whom I had no known direct contact or relationship prior to the research study. My relationship to the topic being studied allowed for the access to the study participants and resources that would otherwise not have been available. It is my hope that this study provides groundwork for future exploration in other contexts and among researchers with varying personal and professional experiences with dance marathons.
Chapter 4: Findings: Individual Cases

This Chapter provides a broader understanding of the BuckeyeThon dance marathon and the experience of the research participants. In the first section, BuckeyeThon context reviews historical information, creation, and development. The second section addresses the experiences of the individual research participants. A brief description of the research participants is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

*Research Participants Demographic and Biographic Overview*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Dancer Year</th>
<th>Year in School</th>
<th>Major</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Senior</td>
<td>World Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Military Science and History</td>
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<tr>
<td>John</td>
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<td>Senior</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Neuroscience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heidi</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Accounting and German</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The biographic and demographic information of participants is described in further detail to provide greater understanding of their perspective. Each participant’s interviews are shared in chronological order, followed by major themes of common questions throughout the interview protocol. The research participants’ interviews will set the tone for the cross-case analysis.
BuckeyeThon Context

To provide more history and context of BuckeyeThon 2015, I interviewed Will, a former President of the student organization and Rachael, a former staff Advisor. Will was involved with BuckeyeThon since the spring of 2012 through the spring of 2015. His experiences as a member of the organization began with the Corporate Relations committee prior to becoming President. Rachael began her BuckeyeThon participation as a graduate student dancing for the entirety of the event in 2009 before advising the organization from 2010 to 2012. She currently works as a hospital representative of Children’s Miracle Network partnering with high school and college dance marathons in another state. With their different roles and variance in years of involvement, Will and Rachael’s insights varied.

BuckeyeThon history overview. Will explained that the idea for BuckeyeThon came out of a LeaderShape experience where students wanted to impact the local community. From this idea, Rosa Ailabouni, a former student who is attributed as being the founder of BuckeyeThon, helped to make that idea a reality. Rachael verified that the first BuckeyeThon event was held in spring of 2001 and raised $30k.

Dance marathon is focused on peer-to-peer fundraising, and is not designed to charge students out of their own pocket to participate; it is about fundraising in collaboration with other people to accomplish a goal. As a former advisor, Rachael was able to provide context for fundraising and event attendance over the last six years. When Rachael participated as a dancer in 2009, dancers signed up, paid $10, and the event had a “suggested” $200 fundraising goal. However, dancers were still able to participate in
the dance marathon without having raised any money. The dance marathon was held in the Recreation and Physical Activity Center (RPAC), a big open space in a large multipurpose gym. For the number of people who participated in the event, it appeared full and dancers could see multiple activities happening simultaneously in the space. In 2009, the event was 14 hours long and BuckeyeThon raised just over $80k.

In 2010 dancers had to raise a minimum of $100 or they could not attend the dance marathon. In the weeks leading up to the event there were few people who had reached the $100 minimum and BuckeyeThon considered removing the minimum fundraising requirement. However, by the date of the event more dancers reached their $100 minimum and that was the turning point in realizing the fundraising minimum was key. Still 14 hours in length, BuckeyeThon first reached a six-digit total when it raised just over $100k in 2010 with between 600 – 700 dancers.

BuckeyeThon moved the dance marathon to the new Ohio Union in 2011. Additionally, 2011 was the first year BuckeyeThon utilized the online fundraising tool available through CMN, Donor Drive. Through this system each event registrant is able to create their own fundraising page through the website, allowing them to send emails and connect other social media communication. Rachael explained that with the push to use the online fundraising, along with the $100 minimum requirement, dancers knew when they signed up that fundraising was mandatory. She also noted that in 2011, the BuckeyeThon students created a focus group of large student organization Presidents. This focus group discussed creating a vision for dance marathon and how dance marathon could become big on campus with their buy-in. She explained how creating
buy-in was key to develop the event externally in that year. Internally the organization committed to dance marathon as a philanthropy event. Once BuckeyeThon organizers felt that students would still attend the dance marathon with a fundraising minimum requirement, the organization’s focus changed to “how many dancers can we get there?” Though the event length extended to 17 hours in 2011, over 800 participants helped BuckeyeThon reach more than $222,000.

The following year, 2012, BuckeyeThon adjusted its event length down to 12 hours and reached more than $454,000 with 1,500 registered participants. Will mentioned that 2012 was the final year BuckeyeThon was a one-shift dance marathon. According to Will, BuckeyeThon was one of the first dance marathons to create a two-shift model with the 2013 dance marathon. A one-shift dance marathon means that all the dancers participate at the same time. BuckeyeThon moved to a two-shift model due to fire capacity limitations of the Ohio Union. Students who sign up for the dance marathon choose between two different shifts of 12 hours each, either Friday 8:00 p.m. – Saturday 8:00 a.m. or Saturday 11:00 a.m. – Saturday 11:00 p.m. This allowed BuckeyeThon to increase capacity and fundraising while also addressing the fire code. All students who participate in the first shift can attend The Closing Ceremony and The Reveal at the conclusion of the second shift to create a holistic culmination to the experience.

**Relationship between BuckeyeThon and Children’s Miracle Network.** In explaining the relationship between BuckeyeThon and Children’s Miracle Network hospitals, Will noted that CMN was not always a partner in BuckeyeThon’s efforts. BuckeyeThon has always benefitted Columbus Children’s Hospital, now Nationwide
Children’s Hospital (NCH). He understood that specific hospital departments that benefited from the dance marathon changed from year-to-year as the BuckeyeThon steering committee would make this decision annually. Recently Nationwide Children’s Hospital became affiliated with Children’s Miracle Network, and BuckeyeThon then also became affiliated with CMN and its resources.

Rachael explained that CMN is a national non-profit consisting of 170 Children’s Hospitals. CMN operates where every penny raised locally goes to that local hospital. In Ohio there are quite a few CMN hospitals, but the local hospital for Ohio State is NCH. CMN has full-time staff to support its Dance Marathon programs, connecting them nationally with schools doing similar work, supporting them via phone conference, in addition to many other different ways. When Indiana University created its dance marathon 25-years ago which benefitted a CMN hospital, it began CMN’s national Dance Marathon initiative.

**Relationship between BuckeyeThon and Nationwide Children’s Hospital.** In explaining the relationship between BuckeyeThon and Nationwide Children’s Hospital, Will believed that they had been working together since BuckeyeThon’s inception. Will acknowledged that BuckeyeThon’s association with NCH and CMN as beneficial to fundraising. NCH also provides support including networking opportunities and access to their donors. Additionally, NCH shares fundraising and development resources with BuckeyeThon, like mailings and professional staff. NCH also provides multimedia support, such as kid videos during the event and promotional videos, for various elements of BuckeyeThon’s efforts.
Rachael concurred that BuckeyeThon has always supported Nationwide Children’s Hospital with 100% of the funds raised by BuckeyeThon. She explained that it is the hospital’s responsibility to connect the dance marathon with the cause it benefits. The main job of the hospital is to help the dancers understand who and what they are supporting. Ideally the hospital is connecting the dancers to the cause and patient families. Specifically, Will also noted the patient connection since NCH coordinates permission from patient families to participate in the event.

**Patient and family connection.** The patient family relationship has changed over the years. In her first year, Rachael noted there were few returning families at the dance marathon and they were not a main focus of the event. However, now, videos BuckeyeThon produces primarily focuses on the Miracle Kids, who may be recognizable to dancers who have previously participated. Because the Miracle Kids now return each year, participants are able to see how kids grow-up and feel like they become a part of the family.

In her first year as a dancer, in 2009, Rachael did not remember any family connection or reflection. The cause connection was lacking. And now the event has a “Why I Dance” wall, a room where dancers can write to the kids, and a room where dancers can connect with the hospital.

**BuckeyeThon as a yearlong effort.** Will explained that BuckeyeThon had originally been a steering committee responsible for hosting the dance marathon in the spring and has become a continuous yearlong effort to raise money by the organization and dancers. Rachael noted that BuckeyeThon has not always been a yearlong effort. She
explained that a yearlong effort is meant to demonstrate to students that fundraising and efforts for a cause they are committed to should be a life-long commitment, giving back to your community. She elaborated, “Fundraising is not about writing a $100 check to participate in the dance marathon. Dance marathon fundraising is an effort to get 30 people to give dancers $10 each to raise $300 over the entire year.” In this way, volunteer fundraising is the process in which dancers have engaged with donors in communicating their passion for a cause.

**Summary.** Understanding the context of the BuckeyeThon organization and its dance marathon helps to understand the experience of the individual research participants. The history of BuckeyeThon helps to illustrate how the event has developed over time including use of technology, changes in facilities, and fundraising requirements. Additionally, the relationship between BuckeyeThon, Children’s Miracle Network, and Nationwide Children’s Hospital influences various experiences of dancers during the event. This understanding helps to further clarify the research participants’ experiences within the context of this specific event.

**Beyoncé**

**Demographic and biographic profile.** Beyoncé is a fourth-year student who has participated in BuckeyeThon since her first year on campus. She is majoring in World Literature with a minor in Jewish Oral History. Beyoncé identifies as female, white/European American, and heterosexual. She lives off-campus and is financially dependent on her parents or guardian. She also works.
On campus Beyoncé is not a member of a social Greek organization. She does hold a leadership position in a student organization on campus and is active in community service events. She also has participated in other volunteer fundraising events, specifically Relay for Life. However she indicates that BuckeyeThon is one of the few service or philanthropy events she participates in as an OSU student.

As a BuckeyeThon dancer, her fundraising goal for 2015 was $1,000. By the end of the fundraising timeline, Beyoncé raised a total of $1,085, exceeding her goal. Her approach was to raise as much as possible and used email to solicit donations from friends, family and friends of family. Other than the registration fee, Beyoncé did not pay any of her own money out of pocket to reach her goal. She was a member of the Kids for the Kids team that was part of the green color team. As a former BuckeyeThon dancer she has previously attended at least 9 – 12 hours of the event.

**Pre-event interview.** I met Beyoncé for her initial interview at 1:00 p.m. on the day of the dance marathon and she was using crutches. She notified me that she broke her toe earlier in the week and was concerned how it may influence her ability to participate in the dance marathon. However, she was still passionate about participating as much as she could.

As a senior, Beyoncé had participated in BuckeyeThon for the past three years, making this her fourth experience. A Resident Assistant originally recruited her to participate in BuckeyeThon when her residence hall created a team during her first-year. When asked what led her to participate she said, “It sounded like something that I wanted to be a part of.” In describing her BuckeyeThon experience she confidently replied, “I
would say that every BuckeyeThon I have participated in has been the best day of that school year.” When asked to explain further she elaborated,

I think it’s kind of a jumble of emotions. You know. You’re so excited to be there. So exhausted in the middle . . . and they just keep hitting you with these things where it's like you can't get that tired because you see how much harder life is for other people and it's such an inspiring thing to be at.

Beyoncé’s connection to the event is highlighted by her annual participation. When asked what led her to participate in BuckeyeThon a second year, Beyoncé noted, “I loved it so much that there was no question . . . I made sure that I wouldn’t miss it.” Throughout her time participating in BuckeyeThon, Beyoncé’s fundraising goals have been lofty. During her first year she raised over $400, around $800 her second and third years and the goal for her final year was $1,000, which she exceeded.

Considering her previous dance marathon experience, I asked Beyoncé what she took away from the experience. She replied,

I guess The Reveal. Like the emotion of being there, being exhausted with all of these people that you spent the last 12 hours with, you know, and you're not on your phones, you're not doing homework, you're just like participating in something and then being able to see the difference that you made.

Throughout Beyoncé’s participation in BuckeyeThon she has always been present for The Reveal. With BuckeyeThon’s two-shift event model, The Reveal occurs during the Closing Ceremony at the conclusion of the second 12 hour shift. Participants in the Friday night shift must return on Saturday night to experience The Reveal. Beyoncé
participated in the Friday night shift during every year except for last year when she was part of the Saturday shift. She said she prefers the Friday night shift because it is more difficult than remaining standing during the day when you would already be awake anyway.

When asked how participating in BuckeyeThon had influenced her, Beyoncé focused on how she felt she was making a difference by participating,

I've done a ton of really amazing things but like it always come back to this, like this act of like you're having a fantastic time, you're dancing with all of your friends, the energy is super high, but you know that you are also making a huge difference just in those, you know, small things you can do.

Both the energy and the composite contribution of making a difference influenced Beyoncé’s experience. "And it kind of pushes you to want to do more things, you know?"

As we concluded the pre-event interview, Beyoncé’s excitement for that year’s event was evident.

During event interview 1. When I sent a text reminder to Beyoncé for her first during event interview scheduled at 11:15 p.m. she replied that she was at the Miracle Makers event and wished to postpone. I adjusted her schedule to the next available interview time and we met for the first time at 1:04 a.m. When Beyoncé arrived she was positive and in good spirits. She was wearing a green shirt for her color team, with leggings, gym shorts, and wore a boot for her broken toe, without using crutches.

The first question of the during event interview asked about the most meaningful experience of the event so far and the Miracle Makers event was Beyoncé’s response.
The Miracle Makers event was for all participants who had raised at least $1,000 to participate in a special activity facilitated by Rachel, mom of a Miracle Child. When asked to describe the event Beyoncé stated, “Rachel . . . had some activities for us and it was very powerful, and moving.”

The Miracle Makers event provided Beyoncé with a learning opportunity during the event. She shared that through the activities Rachel facilitated for the participants she learned, "Just that the concept of seeing cancer through so many different lenses." However, Beyoncé noted that she just happened upon the Miracle Makers event and she almost missed it, even though she had met the fundraising qualifications.

At this point in the event Beyoncé’s biggest challenge was her pre-existing foot injury, not being tired. When asked what is motivating her to continue, even with her physical challenge, she shared, "I made a commitment and I want to stick to it. So a lot of it is out of a sense of commitment." She further elaborated, “And the fact that I asked these people who were incredibly generous with their money and I think that that requires me to be generous with my time.” Beyoncé identified both internal and external motivations to continue her participation over the duration of the event. She also identified ability as a perspective for her participation,

But a lot of it is also out of the fact that there are just so many people that can't do this and it just, I am mostly physically able to do it so it seems wrong not to take advantage of that.

**During event interview 2.** Beyoncé’s adjusted schedule had her second during* event interview* at 4:43 a.m. She appeared to be physically wearing down, though she was
working to stay positive and optimistic at the late hour. At this point she was beyond halfway through with the event. During this interview I realized Beyoncé did not have as much BuckeyeThon flair as other dance marathon participants. Her shirt was in her team color but was not a team shirt, though she did wear a fanny pack which many dance marathon participants wear to carry items during the event.

When asked what she had participated in since our last interview, Beyoncé indicated a variety of activities, first of all dancing, though she corrected herself and indicated that she went to First Aid before she started dancing. Other activities included the photo booth, Rave Hour, and socializing with people she knew. Rave Hour is a high-energy electronic music activity in the Grand Ballroom held from 3:30 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. With guest DJs, glow sticks, and strobe lighting, Rave Hour is meant to give dancers the energy to complete the 12 hour event. She noted the most challenging aspect of the event at that point was keeping a positive attitude while being physically tired. Her tiredness was demonstrated in visibly yawning during the interview.

Beyoncé was able to recite a specific cancer fact when asked what she had learned at the event. She replied, "I guess just in terms of facts that 20% of kids who had cancer get cancer in their adult lives from the treatments. I didn’t know that." This was among the things she learned at the Miracle Makers event. Again, Beyoncé stated this specific activity was significant to her experience. She stated, "I think that was definitely probably the best experience I've had. Just learned a lot of really fascinating things."

During event interview 3. Beyoncé’s final during event interview was the final research participant interview at 7:00 a.m. She arrived earlier than scheduled and already
had collected her personal items from the bag check area. When asked what activities she had participated in from the previous interview, she mentioned Rave Hour, breakfast, dancing, as well as passive spectator activities.

The most challenging aspect of the event was associated with other people. Beyoncé stated, "Watching other people sit. It's driving me nuts." Asked what was challenging about that, she elaborated, “I think just feeling like they don’t have respect for what we’re doing.” At this point in the event Beyoncé connected the event participation to the physical challenge of remaining standing. She stated, "Like I think some people just don’t necessarily do it for the same reasons that I do."

When asked what participation in the event had taught her, this time Beyoncé’s response was more holistic, rather than factual. She started by answering with not injuring herself prior to the event in a lighthearted way. However, her true response was, "Um, I don't know just, to have a deeper appreciation for how uncertain life can be and how important it is to not sweat the small stuff, I guess."

**Team influence.** In the first *during event interview* I asked Beyoncé about her dance marathon team, Kids for the Kids. She identified that they were a group of former RAs and she joined because her roommate was on the team. However, as a whole she did not know a lot of people on the team.

In the second *during event interview* we discussed how color teams influenced her participation in the event. She talked about color team spirit through dressing and accessorizing in the team color and she stated, “I feel like I did not spirit myself enough as usual.” And while she recognized there is a competitive nature of some of the activities
based on color teams, it was not the most important part of her experience anymore. She clarified, "It doesn't make a huge impact on my experience. Because I mean, we're one team, one dream." The concept of “one team, one dream” is among the marketing taglines used by BuckeyeThon during their 2014-2015 year as they attempted to raise $1 million for the first time.

For the final during event interview Beyoncé indicated that she did not think being a member of a team had influenced her participation at that point in the event.

**Most meaningful experience.** In her first during event interview, Beyoncé indicated that the Miracle Makers event was the most meaningful experience of the event to that point. At the second and third during event interviews, Beyoncé indicated no change in the most meaningful experience over the 12 hours of the event.

**Physical challenge.** The second during event interview is the first time I asked participants about taking breaks from the physical challenge by sitting or lying down. Beyoncé indicated that she sat during the Miracle Makers event. Beyoncé explained, “Rachel said that we could. She said ‘I’m a cancer mom, I have permission to tell you whatever I want so I want you guys to sit during this activity.’” Other than that Beyoncé had not taken a break from standing. In fact, she added, “Other than that, no, I wish.” However, she clarified she had taken breaks from dancing but remained standing the whole time. At the final during event interview, Beyoncé indicated she sat down in First Aid when dealing with her prior personal injury.

**Post-event reflection.** When Beyoncé did not submit her reflection by the requested deadline, she received a reminder and extension, eventually completing the
reflection. Beyoncé’s response was the shortest of the research participants at 144 of the suggested maximum of 500 words.

In describing in the most meaningful experience of the dance marathon, in the post-event reflection, Beyoncé identified the Friday night shift’s Interim Closing. She explained,

The most meaningful experience that I had at the event was listening to Avalon speak at the closing ceremonies for the night shift. After watching her amazing mom speak about her for the last three years it was a truly emotional experience to see her speak for herself. This moment brought me to tears and is one that I will always remember.

Through the *during event interviews*, the Miracle Makers event had been the most meaningful to Beyoncé’s experience. However, after our interviews she participated in the Friday shift Closing Ceremony that featured Avalon.

Beyoncé did attend The Reveal at the Closing Ceremony of the Saturday shift and noted that The Reveal was important to her experience. She stated, “The final reveal was one of the biggest moments of my year. To be able to see the difference we made in those numbers was insane.”

In concluding her post-event reflection, Beyoncé identified the common goal of BuckeyeThon’s cause as an important takeaway. She shared, “Finally, being able to spend this time with friends and strangers alike who are all there for the common goal of ending childhood cancer was just incredible. It was a time that I will never forget.”
Each research participant was optionally able to provide up to three photos from the event that represented the most important moments from their experience. Beyoncé did not share photos from her experience.

**Preston**

**Demographic and biographic profile.** Preston is a fourth-year student studying Economics and Political Science with minors in Military Science and History. Actively serving in the military, Preston lives off-campus. He identifies as male, white/European American, and heterosexual. Preston is not financially dependent on his parents or guardians, and works to support himself.

On campus Preston is involved in a social Greek organization and holds leadership roles in multiple student organizations. As an OSU student he frequently participates in community service events. He also participates in other volunteer fundraising events but clarifies these events include organizational fundraisers that may not necessarily go to charity, in addition to his fraternity’s charity functions. Preston’s fraternity’s philanthropy is Children’s Miracle Network. This identified a connection between Preston’s participation in BuckeyeThon and his fraternity’s philanthropy efforts, which both benefit Children’s Miracle Network efforts at Nationwide Children’s Hospital.

BuckeyeThon 2015 was Preston’s third time participating, having previously attended for at least 9 – 12 hours. When it came to fundraising, he expressed interest in wanting to exceed the minimum $100 goal but that it was not a large priority. Preston’s fundraising goal was $250 and by the end of the fundraising deadline he had raised $210.
He used Facebook messages as his primary method of fundraising, following up with individual phone calls when Facebook messages were unread. He did not pay any of his own money out of pocket towards meeting his goal in 2015. He participated in BuckeyeThon as a member of his fraternity’s team that was on the blue color team.

**Pre-event interview.** When I met Preston for his *pre-event interview*, he was open and eager to participate in the event. He was immediately willing to share with me – both interview protocol question responses as well as other topics that came to mind throughout the interview. He seemed to be in general good health with little stress or concerns about the time commitment of the upcoming event.

Our first interview took place at 2:00 p.m., and the BuckeyeThon event was doing a sound check in the Great Hall outside of our interview space so there was some anticipation for the imminence of the event. The noise from the sound check resulted in some additional conversation about how Preston manages the event. He noted that sometimes the event volume can cause ringing in his ears and to balance that volume he goes to his student organization office located within the Ohio Union. Because the organization office is in a 24-hour area in the building, Preston is able to access the space with his student identification card, even though the event is going on.

When talking about accessing space in the building that is not directly associated with the event, he noted that he did not use this resource as a reprieve from the physical challenge of the event. Preston noted, “As long as I don’t sit down, I’m good. If you sit down, you’re cheating.” He discussed how he would use these short periods of time, approximately 30 minutes, to do homework on his laptop or a reading for class. All of
this conversation occurred after discussing research consent but prior to facilitating actual interview protocol.

Once into the interview protocol, we discussed what led Preston to participate in BuckeyeThon the first time. He explained, “The very first year, it was um just the fraternity does it.” Additionally Preston elaborated, “It’s not a mandatory event, but it knocks out service hours and I thought it might be fun.” This student organization social connection to participation in the event is discussed further throughout his interviews.

When asked what he thought of the experience participating in his first BuckeyeThon, Preston’s first response discussed the challenge of time, having a late night and early morning on the Friday night shift. He elaborated, “But um, I thought it was positive.” Preston discussed looking forward to the event and the opportunity to be with his fraternity brothers. However, he also noted the attrition of members throughout the event,

Our fraternity we ended up, we originally was going to be like three guys, and I think we got about 24 to go I think it was. In all varying levels of just energy, and I think actually only two of us made it.

Even though such a large number of his friends did not complete the event, Preston was not deterred in his first year or in subsequent years.

When asked what led him to participate a second time, he immediately responded, “Uh, it opened up again, um the fraternity as doing it. The same crew was going.” He then elaborated, “I had done this once before, I had no problem doing it again.” His description of returning to the event then included social context of his girlfriend
participating and knowing that he would be able to socialize with many different people over the course of the 12 hour event.

When asked about the most important part of the event his response was quickly about the kids. He noted, “. . . For me it’s just keeping [the kids] energized and excited.” Preston discussed spending time with the Miracle Kids while they are at the event, playing with them, and running around. However, he also elaborated on the physical challenge, “I mean I get the whole standing on your feet thing for 12 hours is like a symbolic gesture.” Preston was among the only research participants who specifically noted the symbolism of standing for the duration of the event. He was frustrated by other people, “I think after the kids leave some people kind of lose sight of that and that’s a little frustrating at times.” His frustration mirrored the challenges noted by Beyoncé during her final interview.

**During event interview 1.** Preston’s first *during event interview* was at 11:45 p.m. He came into the interview space energetic and in good spirits. He arrived early and was prepared to engage in the interview protocol. He was dress in blue team apparel including an American bandana skullcap, blue t-shirt with military patches on the sleeves with black “FTK” lettering on the front. The first meal of the event was in progress during the interview and there had been few Miracle Moments for the participants to experience at this point.

When asked about the most meaningful experience of the event so far, he mentioned sharing parent stories during the Opening Ceremony. He explained, “It’s getting those people thinking that . . . you know, that these kids are like anywhere
between 2 and 7 and 10, and they have a lot more to worry about than we do.” Preston sees the stories connecting dancers to the cause and the purpose of the event. Preston emphasized, “The pure goal of tonight, at least while they were here was making sure they’re [Miracle Kids] having a good time.” This is a continuation of his thoughts on the most important part of the event – which was the experience of the kids and playing with them – as discussed in his pre-event interview.

When asked the most challenging aspect of the event so far, he reported his personal physical injury. Preston mentioned, “For me personally, is my knee, I’m having knee problems.” This was a pre-existing condition and Preston later explained he had left his knee brace at home, not anticipating it being an issue during the event. Only three hours into the event, when asked what was motivating him to continue and complete the event he replied, “I mean it's only 12 hours. Um, for a lot of people that seems like a lot, um, but for the scope of what the purpose of this is, it's such a small request.” Like Beyoncé, he noted the scale and perspective of the physical challenge to the cause. However, he noted his own physical limitations because of his knee, “I will probably sit down, maybe once or twice, later on, cause just cause of the knee, otherwise I don't ever sit down.” Again, the physical challenge of standing resonated in Preston’s responses and experience. His experience is then in relation to the Miracle Children. Preston concluded his interview with the statement, “I mean they [the kids] have to go through this and then some every single day, so it’s like 12 hours is nothing.”

**During event interview 2.** Preston’s second during event interview was at 3:07 a.m. and he came to the interview energetic and in a lighthearted mood. He was still
dressed in blue with a blue bow tie. His interview was scheduled towards the end of the Tug of War competition that he was not able to participate in this year because of his knee injury. As a popular color team event in the Great Hall outside of the interview space, lots of cheering from participants and teams could be heard in the interview room.

During the interview Preston was more communicative with a good conversation style, including information outside of direct interview protocol. When asked what Preston had participated in since the last interview he reported he had been participating in various activities held throughout the event including board games, video games, but had not participated in the color team competitions on behalf of his team. He stated, “I have never been really into the events [color team competition activities] parts of it because I feel like there are more people who are more motivated than I am that should be doing them.” He also did not directly mention dancing. He then talked about the meals for dancers; when he was not satisfied with the dinner offering, he had Jimmy John’s delivered to the Ohio Union.

When asked the most challenging aspect of the event so far, he replied, “For me, it’s just still the knee, but that’s more of a personal thing.” He was quick to note that his knee injury was not a result of the dance marathon directly. Preston mentioned going to First Aid between interviews and he explained, “I did sit down for the first time between the last section and got some ice on it which wasn’t fun.” When asked what was keeping him motivated at this point in the event, he explained, “But, I mean yea, it’s almost done. We’re over halfway.” In the conclusion of the interview he mentioned that he drove to the event and parked nearby so he could go home and come back if he needed to, again
referencing his 24-hour access to the building. However, he stated that if he left he did not think he would come back because it was cold outside.

**During event interview 3.** Preston’s final *during event interview* occurred at 5:42 a.m. When I sent him his reminder text for the 5:45am scheduled interview, he was already waiting outside. He wanted to wait to eat breakfast until after the interview. At this point in the morning Preston was visibly exhausted with blood shot eyes and a pink blotchy face. Breakfast being served is typically a sign for remaining dancers that they are very close to the end of the event and are likely to complete the full 12 hours.

When Preston was asked what he had participated in since the last interview, he mentioned the board games but made no direct statement of participating in dancing during the event. When asked if he had visited the Inspiration Rooms during the event, he said he had not; he reported wanting to stay on the first two floors, less stairs for him to navigate with his bad knee.

Preston’s personal physical limitations remained his most challenging aspect of the event. He explained, “I’ve been really restricted this year with the movement which is just really depressing, like ahhh I can’t do as much.” Throughout the interview process Preston struggled with answers to the questions about learning through his event participation. When asked what participating in the event had taught him, Preston replied, “I don’t know if it’s really taught me anything massively different than stuff I already knew.” This is consistent with his reply from the second *during event interview* when asked if he had learned anything new since the first *during event interview*, Preston
answered, “Nah, not really.” With just a few hours remaining, when asked what his primary motivation for completing the dance marathon was, he replied,

It’s just 12 hours . . . It’s not hard to ask that of us because it should be easy for us to do it, whereas someone else is going to have trouble doing it for 12 hours unless we do it for them while they can’t.

**Team influence.** When asked about his fraternity’s dance marathon team, Preston explained, “I want to say we had like 33ish that were on the donation page, and I think just a little over 20 actually got the funds raised to participate.” Of that group, he talked about how individuals typically stay for varying lengths of time. He elaborated,

I already know a couple went home because they have stuff to do in the morning, but at least they came out for a little bit, that’s really a big part of it is if you can come out for just a little bit. I mean some people don’t even come out.

Preston emphasized the importance of participating in the event. When asked how being part of his fraternity team influenced his participation, he quickly noted, “I mean it got me started in my first year. Um, I wouldn’t have done it if it wasn’t for the fraternity.” This peer interaction is also integral to Preston’s event experience. He noted, “I always find someone to keep conversation with” because he is part of a team.

During his second *during event interview*, Preston talked about how color teams influenced his participation. He explained, “Whatever the event is, I’m just rooting for my team, that’s pretty much it.” It should be noted that color teams consist of multiple teams combined into larger teams, so team members may not always be members of their own organization team. Preston elaborated, “It gives you something to focus on, like even
if it doesn’t really mean anything at the end of the day.” Preston noted that he thought his
team had won during his first year but in other years it was unclear what team “won” the
color team competition. He discussed how color team competition activities give
participants something to look forward to throughout the dance marathon and these
activities helped him stay awake during the event.

At the third during event interview, when asked how being part of a team had
influenced his participation, Preston’s first statement was, “We’ve had about half the
guys leave already.” Even with the team attrition, his statement of the situation was more
factual than frustrated. He elaborated on the benefit of having teams, “I think that just
adds to sort of the team dynamic because the more resilient, I like that word I used . . . the
easier it is to do things.”

**Most meaningful experience.** During the pre-event interview, when asked about
the most meaningful experience during the event, he replied, “Definitely when they
reveal how much money was raised.” He explained his response to The Reveal, “For me I
don’t get an emotional reaction from it, like I definitely feel, you know, proud that they
did it.” He also shared how he has observed the emotional responses the The Reveal
elicits from other people. Specifically he noted, “But for me it’s watching the parents of
the kids that are down there.” Again, Preston makes a connection between the event and
the Miracle Children.

When asked about the most meaningful experience during the event at the first
during event interview, he noted a segment of the Opening Ceremony. Preston replied, “I
keep forgetting his name, I think it was Luke, but when his mom talks.” He noted that
even though he had heard the story multiple times he enjoyed watching the impact of the story on those around him. At the second and third during event interviews when asked what the most meaningful experience of the event had been, Preston stated, “Uh, no changes, no.” Throughout the dance marathon Preston maintained the parent speech during the Opening Ceremony as the most meaningful experience.

Physical challenge. During his second during event interview, Preston noted he had taken a break from the physical challenge by sitting. He explained that he went to First Aid, “Just the icing the knee. And that was for about 15 to 20 minutes.” This aligned with his greatest challenge of the event being his knee injury. At the final during event interview, Preston indicated he had one final visit to First Aid to ice his knee.

Post-event reflection. When he did not submit his reflection within the requested deadline, Preston received a reminder and extension and then did complete the reflection. Preston’s response was more robust than Beyoncé’s, submitting a reflection of 442 words out of 500 suggested maximum.

Preston began his post-event reflection on his BuckeyeThon experience as a whole. He explained, “BuckeyeThon has become a very meaningful experience for me over the years. I always look forward to it with great anticipation and excitement.” As stated in his pre-event interview, The Reveal was a consistent response for important experiences for Preston. He elaborated,

The most impactful event is The Reveal after both marathons have concluded.

Seeing the amount of money raised is always rewarding because not only do I get
to see the accomplishments of my friends and my contributions, but I also get to see the emotional reaction from the BuckeyeThon staff.

While The Reveal was impactful to his experience, Preston further identified additional elements of the Closing Ceremony as being meaningful. He stated, “Another meaningful event for me is the Closing Ceremony in general. The speeches given by doctors and parents give most dancers their first exposure to the front lines of battles with cancer.” This is similar to Preston’s first during event interview when he discussed the parent stories in the Opening Ceremony as most meaningful throughout his event participation.

Though there was limited learning in his experience when asked in the during event interviews, his reflection response on learning was more substantial. Preston stated, “I learned that the feeling of community at Ohio State is very powerful, and perfect strangers are willing to sacrifice 12 hours [sic] of their lives for a cause greater than themselves.” Preston also referenced the significance of the dance marathon. He explained, “Raising money for and participating in BuckeyeThon is a such a small contribution on the scale of a person’s life, but it is potentially the most impactful thing they may due [sic] in their college careers.”

Preston returned to the concept from his during event interviews, gaining perspective from the Miracle Children. He stated, “Children should be spending their early lives playing, learning, and growing. Instead they are forced to fight for their lives, and they go through more pain and misfortune than most of us on the outside will ever know.”
In concluding his reflection, Preston shared his final thoughts on his connection to the event. In explaining what he was taking with him, Preston stated,

Having seen this, I have become a life-long supporter of BuckeyeThon and the battle to defeat cancer. My only regret is that I will only be able to participate and dance for four years. I will continue to contribute in any way I can to the cause, and I hope one day to see Ohio State overtake Penn State and raise multi-millions of dollars. It is our duty and our responsibility to do this, both for the growth of our own character, and of course, For The Kids.

Preston reflected on not only the cause and his individual work with BuckeyeThon, but also his interest in continuing to support these efforts into the future even when he is no longer an Ohio State student. BuckeyeThon 2015 was the first time that BuckeyeThon attempted to raise more than $1 million in a year, which was noted in Preston’s reflection on the hope to overtake Penn State’s 40-year old dance marathon, THON, which raises more than 10 million annually. However, his takeaway further elaborated on the responsibility to raise money for nonprofits, both on a personal character level as well as for the cause.

Preston did not share photos from his experience.

**John**

**Demographic and biographic profile.** John is a fourth-year Accounting major with a minor in Economics. He identifies as male, white/European American, heterosexual and lives off-campus. John works and is financially dependent on his parents or guardians.
On campus John is involved with a social Greek organization but does not currently hold a leadership position in a student organization. He previously served as the Director of Finance for the Residence Hall Advisory Council and Recording Secretary for his fraternity. John participates in community service programs including service hours for his fraternity and campus-wide events like MLK Day of Service and Community Commitment. He also participates in other volunteer fundraising events, specifically his fraternity’s annual philanthropy event. This annual event raises money for the Columbus Cancer Society by running the football game ball between OSU and Michigan, with each mile run as a fundraising goal. However, John would say that BuckeyeThon is one of the few service and philanthropy events he participates in.

This was John’s third BuckeyeThon event, and he previously attended between 9 – 12 hours. John’s BuckeyeThon fundraising goal was $250 and he exceeded his goal, raising a total of $295. He wanted to exceed the minimum goal of $100 but also expressed that it was not a large priority. Sending personal emails to family members was his primary method of fundraising and he did not pay any money out of pocket to meet his fundraising goal. John participated in BuckeyeThon as a member of his fraternity’s team and was part of the pink color team.

**Pre-event interview.** I met John for his *pre-event interview* at 10:30 a.m. on the day of the dance marathon. The interview room was quite warm and there were construction noises and music coming from a nearby room. However, John was not distracted by these interruptions. John appeared in good spirits and talked about having to
work leading up to the dance marathon starting. He also mentioned that he was taking medicine for a cough he had during the week.

When asked what led him to participate in his first BuckeyeThon, he reported that his student involvement instigated his participation. John stated,

My first year I was a member of Block O, and so a lot of um my good friends, and sort of first friends at Ohio State were in that organization and they had a team um and they were like, ‘hey you should participate.’

He further elaborated, “But they just really encouraged me to participate. Um, it was sort of a social activity as much as it was philanthropic, I think for me my first year.” This was not John’s first experience with a dance marathon, having mentioned that he participated in a “pseudo dance marathon” in high school.

When asked about his experience at his first BuckeyeThon and what he thought of if it, he replied, “At my first BuckeyeThon, oh gosh, it was shocking to me, cause my high school never allowed the dance marathon to go longer than 6 hours.” He noted that he was not prepared to pace his participation over the whole 12 hours. John admitted, "I don't think I ended up staying the entire time, I think I left after about 7 or 8 hours. Um, just kind of for that reason." However, this did not deter John from participating again.

Participating in BuckeyeThon a second time was again inspired by his student involvement, but in a different way. John explained, "I participated my second year as a member of my fraternity's team." He noted that his second year changed from a primarily social activity to more cause-based, "Um, so it was again a lot of good peer pressure to sort of participate in it from more of a philanthropic and like service-based exercise."
Like Preston, John could complete service hours for his fraternity by participating. John explained,

So there was kind of like the side benefit of, you get 12 service hours for doing it which is part of our requirements, it was also just time to again to hang out with people and sort of socially interact.

In concluding his explanation of what led him to participate in BuckeyeThon a second time, John stated, “I think I was determined to prove to myself that I could last the whole 12 hours as well. Um, and luckily that year I did, I had a really good group of people.”

John’s repeat participation was motivated by multiple factors, personal and social.

When asked about the most important part and most meaningful experiences of the event, John highlighted the two bookends of the dance marathon experience. John stated the most important part of the event was one of the first activities, meeting in color teams prior to the Opening Ceremony. He explained,

Where you first meet like your Miracle Children if you like hadn’t been like hadn’t met them before so it’s that whole kind of connecting to the cause, being really engaged in that, and connecting to the cause, or like to the specific person that you’re sort of supporting then I think is really important because if you don’t focus on it then you kind of can loose sight of it if you kind of um, sort of take a different approach to it, so I think that um, I don’t know, getting excited for the cause at that point is probably really important.

John noted that the color team meeting creates a connection to the Miracle Children assigned to that color team and builds a connection to the purpose of the event. He
highlighted the importance of starting with the cause to influence dancers’ perspective prior to the 12 hour event starting.

On the other end, when asked about the most meaningful experience during the event, John stated,

I think the like, the final hours where you’re like completing like the entire morale dance is pretty meaningful, just sort of like as the crowd has like dwindled a bit and the everybody is still kind of there that sort of community that develops and then also seeing um like The Reveal part.

While John noted that the most important part of the event is connecting the dancers to the cause, he explained that the most meaningful is the conclusion where the remaining dancers create a community and that community culminates in The Reveal. John explained, “The community that develops at the end and everyone kind of being there for The Reveal I think really is meaningful.” However, John did not elaborate on the meaning of The Reveal itself.

When asked about his previous experiences at BuckeyeThon and what he takes with him, John noted a service outcome. He replied,

. . . if you think of service as like spending your time you know doing something sort of unselfish or something other than just for yourself, there’s sort of obviously that warm fuzzy feeling you get from that but there can also be social benefits.

He went on to explain the social benefits when he stated, “There can be like, you know conversations can be started based around you know ‘oh, did you do BuckeyeThon this
weekend?’ or ‘are you doing BuckeyeThon this weekend?’” These social benefits create a community outside of the context of the event itself, creating a common experience among peers.

In conclusion, when asked how participating in BuckeyeThon had influenced him, John’s response was rooted in philanthropy. John stated, “I think it’s raised my awareness about um, sort of maybe cancer philanthropy in general.” He then elaborated, “Like, my philanthropy, or my fraternity’s philanthropy is more based on research, this one’s more based on patient support, and I think understanding those sort of, I think both of those are important.”

**During event interview 1.** The first *during event interview* with John was scheduled for 12:30 a.m. and he was just a few minutes late for the start of our interview. He appeared in good spirits, dressed in pink pants and a white or light pastel shirt with a pink pocket design. His face appeared a bit flushed as we began the interview. At this point in the event participants had one meal and had the opportunity to experience several Miracle Moments.

When asked what had been the most meaningful experience of the event so far, he focused on the Miracle Kids and the experience in his color team room prior to the Opening Ceremony. He explained,

I think more specifically was hearing the story from one of the mom’s and kind of, it was everything from like how she was feeling to like what was happening and sort of, I don’t know, you can kind of understand the whole gravity like of her story.
When asked what had been the most challenging aspect of the event so far, John responded, “Deciding what is like a productive use of time.”

   When I asked John what he had learned during the event he replied,
   I was like yawning in like the team meeting like eventually, um like once we got into the like the, like the parade of kids or whatever, like, all of that yawning went away, so I don’t know if that’s like, learning about resiliency of human spirit or something, but I just thought it was something that was unexpected.

He had previously noted he was concerned how his sickness and cough were going to influence his participation in the event. Having noted his own physical response to the event at that point and the concept of resilience is similar to Preston’s perspective on resilience in the ability to complete the 12-hour event with his own physical challenges.

   At just a little over four hours into the event, when asked what was motivating John to continue to complete the event, he stated, “Um, uh to prove to myself that I can do it.”

   During event interview 2. John’s second during event interview was at 4:00 a.m., more than halfway through the event. He appeared in good spirits and appeared to be getting a bit more tired, but did not specifically say so. The Rave Hour was in progress during our interview time. When asked what he had participated in since our last interview John mentioned dancing, watching Tug of War, eating, and the photo booth. He stated, “I kind of have saved a lot of things to like do those experiences when I was more tired, to do the more passive things later on.”

   When asked what had been the most challenging aspect of the event so far, John stated, “I think dealing with the team attrition.” This was similar to Preston’s experience
with his own fraternity team. John elaborated, “I mean for everybody that like I thought I was going to be hanging out with, like most of them have left.” In total he estimated his team was down to one-third from the size from which it had started. He noted “Um, so everybody’s just kind of leaving for their own different reasons at this point.” When asked what he had learned, John stated, “I can’t think of anything.”

When I asked John what was motivating him to continue at that point in the night he answered, “Um I think sort of accomplishing the task. That’s sort of like part of my personality.” This is similar to his personal motivation mentioned in the previous interview. He also added, “And then also sort of like the experience, seeing the Closing Ceremony um kind of and all of that has to offer hopefully.” Even with anticipation of the Closing Ceremony, John clarified, “Mostly it’s like completing the task.”

**During event interview 3.** John’s final *during event interview* was completed at 6:18 a.m. He seemed more tired than previous interviews and indicated that his feet were finally hurting. He appeared physically fatigued with heavy eyelids and a flushed face. During the interview he rocked back and forth on his feet from side to side and did not stand still. He had already had breakfast and was less than an hour from the start of the closing ceremonies for the Friday shift.

John had participated in multiple activities since the last interview, including visiting the Inspiration Rooms. He stated, “That was different. It was the first time I'd ever done that actually at the dance marathon . . .” He elaborated further, “It was different to kind of like see, like hear the stories and like see it.” The connection between the stories and the physical items in the Inspiration Rooms were highlighted in John’s
comment. He stated, “I don't know, like seeing like the toys I think is like what got me like most up there.”

So close to the end of the event, when I asked John what had been the most challenging aspect of the event so far, he immediately replied, “Um, I think sometimes just, I don’t know, like staying engaged sort of.” He elaborated,

The group I was with kind of isolated ourselves like off in a corner and just kind of like stood around and like talked which is fine. Like a normal way to spend, or not a bad way to spend maybe the dance marathon, but like not exactly fully engaged in the cause I guess.

John again connected his previous comment of the importance of connecting with the cause at the beginning of the event with his challenge of remaining engaged with the cause near the conclusion of the event. However, he did say they were still standing.

While John had not indicated he had learned much during the previous during event interviews, this concluding interview yielded a more thorough response. John stated,

I think um sort of personalizing, like ‘cause for me, like I know like I have like family members, like all older who have like suffered with cancers, so like I think I’ve gathered a better understanding of like pediatric cancer like through the event.

John connected his personal familial experience with cancer and was able to view that experience from the lens of pediatric cancer. He elaborated, “Thinking about that in general how it’s like you know, I don’t know, there’s no real way to like prevent pediatric...
cancer, just ‘cause, . . . that’s sort of tragic to think about.” From this perspective he also learned facts through the Inspiration Rooms to reiterate what he had learned. John concluded,

And it was like one of the facts in like one of the rooms was like, cancer kills more kids than like three or four other sort of like common diseases like, I can’t remember what they were, . . . so like kind of learning that sort of stuff. Like, perspective also set in, like a reality.

Personal motivation remained a consistent response when John was asked what was motivating him to complete the dance marathon. In the final during event interview he defined what he meant by personal motivation, “I think it’s like sort of personal motivation to like prove to my like self that I can like do it, that I can complete it.” However, he also noted a peer motivation as well. John concluded, “Um like the other side sort of motivation is just sort of be there with everyone else who like helped put on the event at the end.” This connected to an earlier response where he had mentioned members of his fraternity were in the BuckeyeThon organization responsible for the event.

Team influence. In the first during event interview when asked how being a member of his fraternity team had influenced his participation, John replied, “Uh, it’s been the primary people that I’ve been sort of hanging out with. Um, so it’s definitely had a social influence.” He discussed how the group would collectively decide to participate in different activities in the dance marathon and move as a group. He concluded with,
“Um, so I think, I think without being on a team of people that I know I would have a very different experience. So like, in a more negative way.”

In the second **during event interview** I asked John how color teams had influenced his participation in the event. He stated, “I think that, I mean there’s like a little bit more camaraderie coming, just like you see somebody in pink um you like give them a hey, what’s up sort of thing.” When discussing activities like the Tug of War John elaborated, “It’s like sort of a big battle, cause you have a lot of team loyalty, um, I think.”

At the final **during event interview** when I asked John how being a part of a team had influenced his experience at that point in the event, his response was positive. He shared,

> It’s been as much like for myself as it’s been like kind of like a team effort now, it’s sort of like there’s the whole like camaraderie less of the like, I’m going to make it and more of the like we’re going to make it sort of speak. Um, so that’s kind of helped and been like motivating.

The camaraderie he mentioned during the second **during event interview** had created a motivation to complete the event as a team, rather than as an individual.

**Most meaningful experience.** In John’s **pre-event interview** he indicated that the most meaningful experience was The Reveal, focusing on the community built among the remaining dancers at the end of the event. However, once the event began, when John was asked about the most meaningful experience of the event at that point he mentioned the kids. John stated, “I think so far, um, was just meeting the Miracle Kids.”
In John’s second *during event interview* he indicated there was no change in the most meaningful experience so far. John stated, “I think so far it’s still been um the like the mom talking.”

John’s experience in the Inspiration Rooms, the first in his years participating in the dance marathon, was identified as the most meaningful experience at the event during his final *during event interview*. He highlighted the connection between the stories he mentioned earlier and the Inspiration Rooms. John replied,

I don’t know it’s kind of like a weird mix like you go into like one room and its like how hard it is to like struggle with cancer then you go into the next room and its sort of like, but they’re still kids, like they still do some of the same things um or they still like kind of want to, or like strive to, just be normal kids too, so that was kind of an interesting to see too.

John connected hearing the introduction of kids during the Opening Ceremony and saying that a kid liked Legos and then seeing the Legos in the Inspiration Rooms.

**Physical challenge.** In the second *during event interview* I asked John if he had taken a break from the physical challenge, and he replied, “No. I’ve leaned. Leaned on a table.” Dancers frequently will lean against the railings, wall, furniture, or each other during the event. When asked if he had taken a break from the physical challenge during his final *during event interview* he answered that he had not and did not mention any other physical challenges to complete the event.

**Post-event reflection.** John submitted his reflection without needing an additional reminder or extension and submitted approximately half of the suggested 500-word
maximum. In submitting his reflection as an attachment via email, he stated, “I wanted to let you know I really enjoyed participating in your research- the moments of introspection really improved my experience at the event!” John did not attend The Reveal on Saturday night so the context of his reflection was the Friday night shift.

Like Beyoncé, John also identified the conclusion of the Friday night shift as the most meaningful. He stated,

The Closing Ceremony for the night shift was really meaningful to me. Not only for reaching that point, being very tired and feeling very accomplished, but also hearing Avalon tell her story for the first time and hearing how closely her family identifies with BuckeyeThon.

The connection between the personal accomplishment of completing the event, along with the personal stories, impacted John’s experience. He further elaborated, “I internalized and was really inspired by Avalon’s message when she said, ‘Don’t feel sorry for me – I’m a survivor!’” By internalizing Avalon’s message, John identified a personal connection to the ceremony and event as a whole.

John also indicated that the color team meeting prior to the Opening Ceremony was meaningful as well. This is consistent with his during event interviews. John stated, The other meaningful experience for me was during the team meeting before the Opening Ceremony when Kinley’s mom shared her story. It was meaningful for me because I made the conscious decision to engage in someone’s personal story at BuckeyeThon, and I realized I had not done that when I had danced previously.
John noted the impact of this engagement when he shared, “Being engaged in Kinley’s story definitely gave me additional motivation throughout the night, to keep standing and to keep dancing.”

In reflecting on his takeaways from participating in BuckeyeThon, John’s response was on the impact of team participation. He explained,

I think one of my strongest takeaways from the event is how important being committed to a team can be in completing a ‘mission.’ A lot of my motivation to complete all twelve hours of dancing came from the internal desire to accomplish a goal, and from the desire to be there and support my teammates.

He further explained the importance of his particular team. John elaborated, “My team was made up of my fraternity brothers, which is a group I identify very closely with, so being able to have this shared experience with people that are important in my life made the event more fulfilling.”

Each person was optionally encouraged to provide up to three photos from the event that represent the most important moments from their experience. John did participate in the optional photo submission opportunity. He shared a photo of himself with a group of 18 of his fraternity brothers and dance marathon team members from the photo booth with a BuckeyeThon background. All participants were in a variety of spirit gear in their respective team color.

**Jacob**

**Demographic and biographic profile.** Jacob is a second-year student who lives on-campus, majoring in Neuroscience with minors in Research Psychology and
Disability Studies. He identifies as male, white/European American, and gay. Of all research participants, Jacob was the only one to indicate he is a first-generation college student, explaining that his mom has just finished her bachelor’s degree online so Jacob is the first person in his family to go to a University full-time. Jacob is financially dependent on his parent or guardian and is searching for a job though not currently employed.

On campus Jacob is a member of a service Greek organization, rather than a traditional social Greek organization. His fraternity is recognized at the university as a community service organization even though they are identified by a Greek letter name. Through his service fraternity Jacob participates in community service and other volunteer fundraising events. Specifically, Jacob has participated in March of Dimes, Race for a Cure, and Feeding Children Everywhere, multiple volunteer fundraising efforts organized by his service fraternity at OSU. Jacob holds a leadership position as an officer in his student organization.

This was Jacob’s second year participating in BuckeyeThon, having stayed 9 – 12 hours his first year. Jacob’s original fundraising goal was $1,000 and he raised a total of $275 by the end of the fundraising window. Initially his approach to fundraising was between wanting to raise as much as possible and wanting to raise more than the minimum goal but it was not a large priority; when forced to choose one approach to fundraising, Jacob indicated he wanted to exceed the minimum but it was not a large priority. He talked through the fact that his original goal had been $1000 but he was unable to reach the goal because of school and time commitments so he dropped his goal
down to $250 that he did exceed. To fundraise Jacob sent out emails to his family, went
canning with his fraternity, and posted information on Facebook. He did not spend any of
his own money toward meeting his goal. Jacob was a member of his service fraternity’s
team and the green color team.

Pre-event interview. Jacob had his pre-event interview at 1:33 p.m. on the day of
the event. Immediately upon entering the interview room, Jacob had questions about who
I was, my connection to Ohio State and Ohio University. Through this first interaction it
seemed that Jacob was an external processor. He shared that BuckeyeThon had a
significant influence on his college experience to date, though he had only attended his
first dance marathon last year. When reviewing his eligibility in the consent process,
Jacob noted he had applied to become a member of the BuckeyeThon organization but
had not been selected. In completing the consent authorization Jacob shared, that he had
taken a psychology class and was familiar with the consent process because psychology
students are required to participate in a number of research studies for course credit.
Jacob regularly made connections between the interview protocol and his own
experience.

To begin the official interview protocol, when I asked what led Jacob to
participate in his first year, he stated, “I signed up right away . . . I heard when I was
registering everybody like, ‘BuckeyeThon is awesome.’” He elaborated that as a
prospective student he took a campus tour soon after BuckeyeThon had occurred on
campus. He explained, “Um, so everybody was still really excited about it, and it just
sounded so much fun. And, how much I wanted to come back and do that.” He also
shared that his friends were also participating. Jacob stated, “One of my friends was our team captain last year for my team last year and so ok I did it and I had a blast, it was so much fun.”

When asked what he thought about the experience, he replied, “I think it was really awe inspiring even to see everybody coming together to give back and also and to help further the research in the oncology and hematology field.” Jacob was the only participant to specifically note oncology and hematology, the specific area of Nationwide Children’s Hospital that BuckeyeThon’s fundraising efforts benefit. He talked about how BuckeyeThon uses the funds for resources and support at Nationwide, including hiring staff members, not just for research. He concluded, “... it really makes me happy that we’re helping so many people by doing this.” When asked what led him to participate a second time he replied concisely, “Well, it was awesome last year. (laugh) Um, I just, I like giving back. I plan on participating all four years.”

Based on only one year of prior experience, I asked Jacob about the most important part of the event. He indirectly responded to the question. He replied, “Um, the most important part to me was not The Reveal. The Reveal was awesome.” He countered, “But when the President and CEO of Nationwide [Children’s Hospital] and our, and everything they were talking to us and they were telling us how much of a difference that was and what they’re going to do with the money and what they plan that was the best part. Then and to see the kids and dance with the kids was awesome that the kids are there.
During the prior year the CEO of Nationwide Children’s Hospital was a speaker at either the Opening or Closing Ceremonies with the dancers. When asked about the most meaningful experience during the event, his response returned to the kids. Jacob described, “Um, seeing the kids. Um, and just being with the Miracle Children. And dancing with them.” This aligns with Preston’s interest in playing with the Miracle Children and focusing on their experience during the event.

I asked Jacob what he took with him from his previous experience participating in BuckeyeThon. He immediately replied, “Giving back. I have always given back to my community. I’m an Eagle Scout. So I’ve always been so much about that.” He further elaborated on the topic, “It really brings our campus together as a community. We’re already a pretty tight knit campus community and it’s really, a lot of people.” He discussed the portion of campus that participates in the event, along with the number of members of his organization who participate. He concluded with the thought, BuckeyeThon just brings everything together and it just not only do you get to hang out with your friends, you haven’t seen for a long time, but you’re giving you’re having fun and you’re just standing up for a cause.

When I asked how participating in BuckeyeThon influenced him, Jacob shared his own personal academic and career exploration from coming to campus wanting to be a neurosurgeon to participating in BuckeyeThon and changing his career aspirations. He noted that his current interest in doing neuroscience research and being a professor was influenced by his BuckeyeThon experience.
During event interview 1. Jacob’s second interview was scheduled for 12:45 a.m. but began at 12:50 a.m. When I sent a reminder a few minutes prior to the scheduled interview time, Jacob indicated he was learning the morale dance and did not want to miss it so we delayed the interview a few minutes so he could participate. He was still energetic but was aware of his own limitations. Jacob was dressed in his team colors, including a shirt depicting his student organization’s BuckeyeThon team and a black bow tie, an item dancers can purchase in their team colors for flair during the event. At this point in the event, the first meal had taken place and the activities in the ballroom appeared to be behind schedule, impacting Jacob’s interview time.

To begin the interview, I asked Jacob what had been the most meaningful event so far. Again he noted the children, “I really like when um the kids are either on stage dancing in front of us or like high fiving us, dancing with us.” When asked what was the most challenging aspect so far he anticipated future challenges. He replied, “It’s going to be staying awake because I can feel it, and it’s too early to feel it.” He further elaborated, “I’m just tired. Just kind of tired. My feet hurt.”

When asked what was motivating him to continue at this point in the event, Jacob still referred to his personal motivation. He stated, “Just because I set my mind to it, I’m going to do it.” However, he went on to elaborate on BuckeyeThon’s cause and purpose. Jacob explained, “I mean, in the neuroscience perspective of oncology, there’s not a cure for cancer, there’s not one, but what we can do find better ways to treat it and find better ways um to cope with it.” He then shared his own personal connection to the cause of childhood illness. He reflected,
I’m just here because I know my brother, I know how these families are, um with having a childhood illness, my brother uh was paralyzed when he was one . . . It wasn’t cancer, hematology or oncology, but it’s still childhood illness and that’s just something that needs to have special care, anywhere.

Jacob’s focus was not on a cure, knowing the medical realities of childhood cancers, however, his personal experience as a patient family concluded his thoughts on motivation.

**During event interview 2.** Jacob’s second during event interview was scheduled for 4:15 a.m. but he arrived a few minutes late after missing my first reminder text. He quickly responded to my second text and the interview began at 4:22 a.m. During the interview he appeared antsy and remained moving for the duration of the interview. The Rave Hour was in progress and there appeared to be a large line of students waiting for their personal items to leave the event.

Since the last interview, Jacob stated he had been dancing the whole time and had not participated in any other activities. When asked what had been the most challenging aspect of the event at this point, he quickly replied, “Not sitting down. They were tempting us with the chairs.” In further clarification, he indicated there were various chairs around the Ohio Union that had not been removed and they were tempting, but he did not sit.

In the previous interview, Jacob explained that he had learned about aspects of the BuckeyeThon event logistics, specifically the corporate sponsorships that were more
prevalent for this year’s event. However, during this interview his learning related to the purpose of the event. He clarified,

I think I’ve started to figure out that we, we’re all standing this whole entire time and yea that’s hard but . . . you like just like figure out some motivation to keep going, that’s hard but what these kids and family are going through are 10 times harder and that’s just kind of inspiring inspiration to keep going.

This is similar to responses by other research participants who reference the perspective of their event experience with the challenges of the Miracle Kids and their families.

When asked what was motivating him to complete the event at this point in the night, the same perspective resonated with Jacob. He replied, “All these kids have to go through, and families have to go through something so much harder than just standing for 12 hours and having dancing and having a blast really.”

**During event interview 3.** Jacob’s final *during event interview* was scheduled for 6:30 a.m. but he was delayed and we began the interview at 6:38 a.m. He appeared more disheveled than in previous interviews; his hair was askew and sweating had made it curlier. Throughout the interview he continued to move his feet and touch things in the space. Breakfast was being served during the interview, and the Closing Ceremony was scheduled to begin in the next 15 minutes.

When asked what he had participated in since the last interview, Jacob indicated he was late to the interview because he was at the morale dance review boot camp. He did not indicate many other activities but he did mention that he had been leaning on the railings around the 2nd and 3rd floors of the Ohio Union. He noted that he had not been to
the Inspiration Rooms during this year’s event but had been to them previously and had read all of the information available on the website.

The most challenging aspect of the event changed for Jacob between these two interviews. At this point in the event, he noted, “I know if I keep busy that I won’t think about how tired my feet are.” He further clarified, “How tired I am. So I’m just trying to keep busy, and which there’s plenty of activities.” When asked what participating in this event taught him, he explained, “It just like lets you reflect on yourself and like ‘yea, I can do this.’ And I did. I’ve done more strenuous things than dancing for 12 hours. This is nothing (laughs).” However, he elaborated further on his learning. Jacob explained,

[It] teaches you that yeah you can do really anything, and really puts into perspective like seeing these families and talking to these kids and being like yea, we do this, but they have to go through all of that.

Jacob again connected the physical experience of the event to the patient experience. He also noted how that realization impacted his conversations with other dancers. Jacob stated,

Like I was talking to people and like our motivation and somebody was like ‘Next time I’m just going to leave halfway through’ and I’m like ‘yea but think about it this way they’re going to have a lifetime of this and you have 12 hours.’

When asked what his primary motivation to complete the event was at this point, he answered, “Well, I mean I’m already this far. Um, I just don’t like to give up I guess.”

**Team influence.** At the first *during event interview* I asked Jacob more about his team. He stated, “We have, um combined in both shifts we have about 93 dancers.” He
also noted, “We are 5th or 6th in fundraising for the whole thing. Um we started, we didn’t start pushing fundraising until probably late November.” His student organization team designed shirts in their team color, similar to efforts by other large organization teams. Like Preston and John, Jacob’s participation in BuckeyeThon also met service hour requirements for his organization. Jacob explained, “We’re all really energetic and we’re all here to for a cause and its nice, we get, ‘cause for our for our service hours requirement, this does a lot of them, cause our requirement per semester is 15.” When asked how being part of a team influenced his participation, Jacob proposed,

I would participate regardless of whether I’m on a team or not. Um, I have friends on other teams that are here so I have been hanging out and dancing with my team and I’ve also been hanging out and dancing with my friends on other teams so I don’t know.

Color team influence was also discussed in Jacob’s second during event interview. He started by discussing the logistics of color teams and how that is convenient for BuckeyeThon’s planning, as well as finding other members of your team who are wearing the same color. However, he also noted that the large size of his student organization team seemed to dilute his color team connection. Jacob explained, “It’s nicer for us, I mean yea we’re not really hanging out with um the other people in our team, I guess cause we have, we have such a presence that we can find us anywhere.” However, he noted, “It’s nice that everything is color oriented and like if you were looking for somebody on your team you’re all wearing the same color.”
At the conclusion of the event during the final *during event interview*, when asked how a team influenced his participation, Jacob replied, “It just gives you something to do, someone to talk to. I mean what a team should do.”

**Most meaningful experience.** At his *pre-event interview*, when asked about the most meaningful experience of the dance marathon, Jacob focused on interacting with the Miracle Kids. He replied, “Seeing them have a good time.” At the first *during event interview*, the children were still the focus of Jacob’s most meaningful experience of BuckeyeThon. He explained, “When they parade them in at the beginning and everyone’s getting a high five, when they’re just running it’s really awesome.”

In the second *during event interview* when asked what was the most meaningful experience of the event so far, if there had been any changes, he replied, “Um, not really.” However, he went on to elaborate on social experience of the event. He explained,

... is really a good event to get to bond with all my brothers in [my service fraternity] and more people on the University and see all my friends who I haven’t seen in a while and um all come together for a single cause.

At his final *during event interview*, Jacob indicated there was no change to the most meaningful experience of the event.

**Physical challenge.** When asked if he had taken a break from the physical challenge by sitting or lying down, Jacob indicated he remained standing the entire event. However, he did mention being tempted by chairs that were around the event and shared that he did lean against the railing during the event.
**Post-event reflection.** Jacob needed an additional reminder and extension to complete his reflection. He replied indicating that he had gotten behind in schoolwork but was working to complete it. Jacob submitted his reflection at a little under 200 words of the 500 suggested maximum. In member check Jacob confirmed that he did attend The Reveal on Saturday night.

Like Beyoncé and John, Jacob reflected on the Interim Closing of the Friday night shift. He shared,

The most meaningful experience I have had at the Dance Marathon (DM) was seeing Avalon share her story at interim closing. This was very motivational because we got to hear first hand about her experience. While it is inspirational to hear from the parents, the Miracle Children have a whole new way to touch your heart.

This connected Jacob’s previous comments about the importance of the Miracle Kids in his BuckeyeThon experience.

In considering what he had learned from the experience, Jacob shared his thoughts on the University community. He explained,

I learned that our university as a community will come together for one cause, that cause is not only to help sick kids with cancer but to benefit humanity. It is inspirational to see us as a campus and a university come together as one.

Jacob concluded his reflection in the context of a bigger picture. He stated,

In general the DM has taught me that we are one team, but more than just the one dance marathon team but we are part of a bigger team across the nation who is
leading the fight against cancer. Our generation is the generation that will change the world.

Jacob did participate in the optional photo submission opportunity and provided three of three possible photos. One photo was a large color team photo from the color team room prior to the Opening Ceremony. This included members of his color team that were not members of his organization team. Jacob also provided two photo booth photos of a group of 16 of his student organization team members and another group of 10 student organization team members, all dressed in their respective team color and flair items.

Heidi

**Demographic and biographic profile.** Heidi is a fourth-year student majoring in Accounting and German. She identifies as female, white/European American, and heterosexual. Heidi lives off-campus, is financially dependent on her parents or guardians and does not work.

Heidi is not a member of a social Greek organization and does not hold a leadership position in a student organization. As a student at Ohio State she does not take part in any community service events or other volunteer fundraising events. She indicates that BuckeyeThon is one of the few service or philanthropy events she participates in.

This was Heidi’s fourth year participating in BuckeyeThon, having participated throughout her undergraduate experience and staying for at least 9 – 12 hours. Her BuckeyeThon goal was to raise $250 and ended with $175 by the end of the fundraising. When it comes to fundraising, she would like to exceed the minimum requirement but it
is not a large priority. When fundraising Heidi emailed friends and family, as well as posted the donation link on Facebook. Other than the registration fee she paid $25 out of pocket towards her fundraising goal. Heidi participated in BuckeyeThon as a member of the CHAARG team and was on the yellow color team.

**Pre-event interview.** I first met Heidi at 11:00 a.m. on the day of the dance marathon. She seemed interested in participating in the event and had multiple years experience participating in BuckeyeThon. She noted she was not very involved on campus but BuckeyeThon was one of the few events she regularly participated in. At the interview she was wearing a BuckeyeThon shirt from a previous year. She had an exam later in the day but did not seem concerned with time constraints of participating in the dance marathon that night.

To start I asked Heidi what led her to participate in her first year. She mentioned, “I just heard about it from like a bunch of people that I knew that I was in an organization that was participating in it.” She further elaborated, “And it sounded like a really inspirational event and that you got to see all these kids and feel like you were really like important.” However, she also mentioned learning that her first dance marathon event length had shortened from the previous year. She explained, I think the year before I started they did it for even longer than 12 hours, so everyone, you know, was talking about how it was going to be better because it was less time but you still really felt like you were making a difference.

While the length of the event was definitely an interesting perspective to bring into her answer, she concluded with her general expectation of the event. She stated, “And overall
it was just a way that you as a college student could make an impact on someone else’s life.”

When I asked Heidi what she thought of the experience in her first year, she was eager to respond. She immediately answered, “I loved it. I really enjoyed it and it was cool to see how so many college students on a Friday night instead of going out were all dancing at the [Ohio] Union for 12 hours.” She also talked about the process of volunteer fundraising. Heidi noted, “Um, trying to raise money for these kids, it really felt like I was making a difference.” She connected her fundraising work to her experience at the event. She explained, “It was really inspirational to hear all of the stories of the different kids and their parents and how the funds they received from events such as BuckeyeThon had made an impact in their lives.” I asked Heidi what led her to participate in her second BuckeyeThon, and she replied, “I think it was the experience from before and I just really enjoyed being at BuckeyeThon.” In clarification of her biographic information she recognized, “It’s one of the few events I actually participate in, so it was a way for me to easily you know go back and feel like I was making a difference in fundraising and participating in a philanthropy.” Heidi is one of the few research participants who included the term philanthropy in the interview process.

Heidi’s experience at her first BuckeyeThon anchored her response to the most important part of the event. She responded, “I think for me the most important part of the event is hearing the kids’ stories and like the stories from their parents about what they’ve gone through because it makes you feel like you’re actually connected to
something.” She explained, “It’s not just a dance party with a bunch of people, it makes you feel like I’m actually making a difference.”

When I asked Heidi what she took with her from her multiple BuckeyeThon experiences, she stated, “I think it’s that you can make a difference in people’s lives, even if it’s just a small amount.” She also connected to her fundraising experience. Heidi explained, “Um, and even just like learning about ways to fundraising and learning about different ways that you can help other people is important.” However, her takeaways were also greater than these specific items. She highlighted, “And at the same time, realizing that there’s so much more out there in the world other than just social events all the time.” To conclude, I asked Heidi how participating in BuckeyeThon had influenced her. She replied,

I think it’s made me realize that I need to be more selfless and concentrate not only on myself but on other people as well because other people are going through things that are, could be way different than what I’m going through. She reflected, “And it’s helped me realize that my struggles aren’t the only thing that matter in the world and there’s a lot of other things going on that are important and that deserve awareness and time.”

During event interview 1. Heidi’s first during event interview was held at 1:30 a.m. She was energetic and appeared excited to participate in the interview. Heidi was decked out in her team colors, wearing a lot of neon and wearing flair items sold by BuckeyeThon, including branded sunglasses. She continued to be forthcoming in answers and clarified her responses when asked. Heidi seemed to be doing well overall and was
not yet feeling tired. Dancers had just concluded a snack break at the time of the interview.

When asked what had been the most meaningful experience of the event so far, she shared,

So far, definitely like the Opening Ceremony and seeing all the kids come down like seeing the connection to the cause is really um, the best part of it, and then hearing like the parents’ stories like is always touching ...

Because parent stories are shared in multiple ways at the event, I asked her to clarify whether these were stories from the Opening Ceremony or from the color team room meeting with families. Heidi identified both, she explained, “Definitely the Great Hall, like seeing everyone there but also in the rooms because then you kind of hear the individual stories of the kids too.” At this point, just under halfway through the event, I asked what was most challenging. Heidi immediately replied, “Um, my legs are sore already so.” However, she also shared nonphysical challenges as well. She stated, “(laughter) Definitely just like keeping motivation to keep going has been the hardest part.”

She also reported learning more about the cause during the event. When asked what she had learned, Heidi explained, “Children’s Miracle Network supports not only kids with cancer but also kids with other issues as well and its not all cancer kids that they support.” This highlights a distinction in BuckeyeThon’s efforts that are focused on children with cancer in the hematology and oncology units at Nationwide Children’s Hospital, whereas Children’s Miracle Network focuses on all families of a hospital,
regardless of their ability to pay. When I asked what was motivating Heidi to continue, she shared a list of things. She responded,

   Um, definitely like everyone else that I’m around with at the event and they always have all the videos of the kids around throughout the event and that’s really motivating and just like the atmosphere of everything, the fact that I’m not doing this by myself, there’s hundreds of other people that are doing it with me.

From her peers to videos shown to dancers of the kids throughout the event, Heidi highlighted many of her experiences in a quick top-of-the-mind response.

During event interview 2. The second during event interview with Heidi was three hours later at 4:30 a.m. She arrived on time and though she appeared to be slowing down, she was ready to complete the interview. She had glow stick necklaces from the Rave Hour in process. When meeting Heidi for her interview a long line of students could be seen as they waited to retrieve their personal belongings in order to leave the event. Heidi indicated that since the last interview she had been dancing, played a sports ball activity, had played cards in the lower level of the Ohio Union, and had also just been at Rave Hour.

When asked what had been the most challenging aspect of the event since the last time, Heidi’s response was honest. She replied, “Um, just like, tired. (laughter) And a little sore, but not too bad.” She further elaborated, “I definitely don’t have as much energy as I did before but trying to bring it back with the rave [hour].” With almost three-fourths of the event complete, I asked Heidi what was motivating her to continue and complete the event. She answered,
Um just the fact like I want to finish the whole dance marathon with everyone else and at the same time like whatever tiredness and soreness I’m going through now is nothing compared to what other people’s struggles are so it it’s kind of like to prove a point.

Her concluding thought summarized her perspective: she stated, “And everyone else is doing it, so it’s kind of like a community thing as well.”

**During event interview 3.** Heidi’s final *during event interview* was at 6:45 a.m. Breakfast had already been served and the participants were 10 minutes away from the start of Interim Closing. Heidi appeared more subdued but was still engaged in the interview experience. Since the last interview, Heidi noted that she had eaten, looked at the “journey of all the kids” [Inspiration Rooms], taken a group picture and watched people play human foosball. When asked what was the most challenging aspect of the event so far, she replied, “Just getting really tired.”

While Heidi indicated no new learning in the second *during event interview*, this time she reflected further on what the event had taught her. Heidi shared,

I think it’s taught me that in a way that like you can make a difference in someone else’s life and what I’m going through right now was meaningless, well, not meaningless but it’s just nowhere near what other people are going through right now.

This is similar to statements made by other participants about the perspective of others’ experience in contrast to their own. When asked what was her primary motivation to complete the event, Heidi concluded,
The one thing I would say, I think it’s just to show people that I’m doing this for a reason and that I’m not just like raising money and not doing anything on my end, that I’m making a sacrifice as well by participating in the dance marathon.

**Team influence.** At the first *during event interview*, I asked Heidi more about her dance marathon team. She noted that she was a member of the student organization she was dancing with. When asked how being a member of the team had influenced her participation in the event, her response was a matter of fact. She explained,

I’d have to say like the spirit wasn’t really that influential for me, I just really wanted to be a part of BuckeyeThon again and that was like the one team that I saw like with an organization that I was already in that was starting a team and I wanted to make sure that I got in to BuckeyeThon before I was shut out so that’s the main reason why I joined the team.

BuckeyeThon has an event capacity for each shift of the event due to fire code capacity so individuals must register early to be guaranteed the opportunity to participate if they reach their fundraising minimum. For the 2015 dance marathon in February, registration closed in November.

For the second *during event interview*, I asked Heidi how color teams had influenced her experience at the event. She replied, “I think the color teams like get you more active in the smaller events, especially in like the sports ball which was really fun to like be with other people from my team.” With color team activities that are both active and passive, individuals can engage with other team members. She explained, “I think it’s a good way to connect with other people like even that you don’t know that well.”
To conclude Heidi’s interview experience, for her final *during event interview*, I asked how being part of a team had influenced her participation. Heidi answered,

I think it’s gotten me to like cheer people on like especially for the games and stuff like I feel like you feel more a part of a team during the like, smaller games and in the smaller setting than in like the giant ballroom.

She surmised, “That’s gotten me more involved I guess.”

**Most meaningful experience.** During the *pre-event interview* when I asked Heidi what was the most meaningful experience during the event, her response was similar to what she identified as the most important part of the event. She replied, “At least from what I can remember, probably the same thing like just hearing the parents’ stories. And kind of connecting, like feeling a connection to the cause that you’re supporting.” At her first *during event interview*, Heidi continued to highlight the connection with the cause through stories. She noted the Opening Ceremony, seeing the kids and hearing parents’ stories. During both the second and third *during event interviews*, Heidi indicated she had no change in the most meaningful experience of the event.

**Physical challenge.** Throughout the interview Heidi confirmed she did not take a break from the physical challenge by sitting or lying down.

**Post-event reflection.** Heidi needed an additional reminder and extension to complete her reflection. Her final reflection was just more than 450 words of the 500 suggested maximum. She did not attend The Reveal at the conclusion of the Saturday shift so the extent of her reflection is her participation in the Friday shift.
Heidi’s reflection was thoughtful in answering all elements of the suggested reflection topics. She stated,

Overall the most meaningful experience for me during BuckeyeThon 2015 was hearing the families speak before the opening ceremonies in our individual color rooms. Being in a much more personal and intimate setting with the families and the kids and hearing about their stories really brought the BuckeyeThon cause to home.

This was consistent with both her pre-event interview and first during event interview where she highlighted the family stories as meaningful in her experience. She further elaborated, “I wasn’t just dancing for the fun of it, I was dancing to raise awareness and funds for an organization that makes a genuine impact on the lives of children.”

Heidi also highlighted another meaningful aspect of the event. She noted,

The second most meaningful experience for me was the videos played throughout the Dance Marathon that showed the kids’ stories and once again reminded [sic] why I was truly dancing. Having these reminders of the cause I was dancing for throughout the night was inspirational and motivating and is what kept me on my feet.

Heidi had also mentioned the kid videos during one of her during event interviews. These are pre-recorded videos of the kids that are scheduled to play in the ballroom throughout the event. These videos include the Miracle Children, their families, and their specific medical story. Depending on the age of the child, the Miracle Child may also record a message for the dancers to keep them motivated to continue throughout the event. These
videos allow the dancers to have more “time” with the Miracle Children since the Friday shift event hours of 8pm – 8am do not allow many children to participate too long into the event.

When considering what she had learned, Heidi focused on making a difference. She shared, “Through my experiences I learned that I can make a difference in these children’s lives by raising funds and awareness for organizations such as Children’s Miracle Network.” This concept of making a difference was not limited to just Heidi. She explained, “Seeing that so many college students chose to spend their Friday night dancing at BuckeyeThon was inspirational because it goes to show that our young generation can make an impact on these children’s lives.” Through event participation, Heidi gained a greater understanding of her own ability, and that of her peers, to make a difference.

Heidi also noted that she learned more within the context of childhood diseases. She stated, “One of the most important things I have learned from my experience doing BuckeyeThon is how childhood diseases not only affected the children, but their families as well.” She elaborated,

However, after hearing the families’ stories at BuckeyeThon I learned that the parents and families of these children must make immense sacrifices as well to support and care for their kids. My small sacrifice to spend on [sic] Friday night dancing for these kids and families felt like nothing compared to the hardships that the kids and families may be going through.
Learning about childhood illness and the experience of family members helped Heidi to put her dance marathon participation into perspective.

As a senior, Heidi’s reflection was also a reflection on her final opportunity to participate in BuckeyeThon. Her reflection conclusion provided insight into her takeaways from participating in BuckeyeThon for four years. Heidi concluded,

My experience at BuckeyeThon has changed the way that I view sensitive issues such as childhood cancer and disease, and it has allowed me to feel more compassionate for the children and families that are going through such circumstances. I will always look back on my small sacrifice made one night during BuckeyeThon, and think about how I truly did make an impact on the lives of these children and their families.

Heidi did not provide any photos with her reflection.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I have set the historical context of BuckeyeThon and presented in depth profiles of the research participants. This provides an important background for the cross-case analysis presented in Chapter 5. Additionally, each profile honors each participant’s story through the use of direct quotes and research participants have verified their individual profiles through member checking. The in-depth profiles in this Chapter increase the trustworthiness of the thematic analysis in Chapter 5, as readers are able to compare themes among the participants.
Chapter 5: Findings: Cross-Case Analysis

This chapter will highlight the experience of dancers at BuckeyeThon 2015 and share the cross-case analysis of the research participants. The overview of the dance marathon experience will allow readers to understand the elements of the event and the dancers’ experiences. The individual interviews provided greater insight into the overall experience of the research participants throughout the dance marathon. Common themes focused on the dancers’ connection to the cause, the event community, and fundraising. Connection to the cause centered on the topics of understanding cancer and childhood diseases, the kids, and storytelling at the event. The theme of event community addressed the social context of the dance marathon and the perspective of the research participants from their dance marathon participation. Finally, participants shared their fundraising experience for the philanthropic event.

The 2015 BuckeyeThon Dancer Experience

Will, the former President of BuckeyeThon was involved in 2015 and provided an overview of a dance marathon participant’s experience. Dancers arrive at the Ohio Union and are checked-in where they receive their schedule for the event and their identification wristband, modeled after a hospital wristband, as a way to keep track of their meals and other important information. They then meet in a color team room (there are eight color teams in total). Color teams are a way to organize the participants into larger groups. Color team meetings take place all throughout the Ohio Union as a starting point for the dancers. In the color team rooms they meet their color team captains and are introduced to the event they are about to experience. Rachael, the former advisor, elaborated that
when color teams meet the dancers hear a patient family story before they do anything else. The dancers learn that the family and Miracle Kid are why they are at the event. Having the families speak first is key to the experience and understanding. Will noted that dancers connect and interact with that specific child throughout the dance marathon, where the child serves as motivation to keep dancers dancing with the cause at the forefront of their minds.

Then color teams are dismissed to the Great Hall for the Opening Ceremony. This is a large influx of people into the central area of the Ohio Union, where energy is high. Rachael noted that during the Opening Ceremony the dancers are hit with tradition, which is key, similar to Ohio State sports moments. It connects the tradition and put it into a community-changing event too. They see how Ohio State is a part of all these things.

Will explained that the Opening Ceremony includes speeches from dignitaries; these speeches center dancers on the idea of the whole event. Rachael noted that there is also a speaker from the hospital. Sometimes dancers do not understand why that is important but hopefully throughout the event or at the end they reflect on an interaction with somebody at the hospital—for example, someone came to say “thank you” to them. The dancers get to experience someone from the community sharing how what they are doing is benefiting Columbus as a whole. Finally, the Miracle Kids are paraded through the crowd, making them the emphasis of the event both physically and mentally. Including the Miracle Children in the Opening Ceremony demonstrates that the event is
not just about the money, since the Miracle Children are active participants in the event increasing the connection to the cause.

Following the Opening Ceremony all participants are rushed into the Archie Griffin Grand Ballroom for a high-energy dance kick-off so they can keep the energy going. Throughout the night there are multiple activities, from board games with the kids and face painting with the kids, country line dancing, different musical acts, other activities to keep everyone engaged and interested for 12 hours. At that point the dancers are free to roam around the building. Different areas are high activity and low activity to keep participants on an ebb and flow of emotions. There are also videos that are shown throughout the dance marathon to touch different points BuckeyeThon wants to make. Rachael elaborated that these videos share patient family stories, the same kids they played with during the Opening Ceremony. The dancers get to see into the lives of the Miracle Children and learn why throwing a party for these kids is the best thing. The dancers see a snippet of their hospital life.

BuckeyeThon also focuses on the wellbeing of dancers making sure they are fed and staying hydrated throughout the event. Color team captains are there to encourage people to stay on their feet the whole time, to continue participating, realize what they are there for, and understand how much it means to the kids and the families. Nearing the Closing Ceremony, all dancers are gathered together again for another higher energy session. Then the Friday shift’s Interim Closing Ceremony shares additional messages BuckeyeThon wants to portray, focusing on kids and their families, and tying it back to
the cause (Friday shift participants are then invited out for the Closing Ceremony and The Reveal on Saturday night).

One of the highlights of the Closing Ceremony is the announcement of the total amount raised, referred to as The Reveal. For The Reveal there is a lot of tension and anticipation in seeing the total amount raised. Rachael elaborated that The Reveal is the moment that everyone has been working toward all year. It is important for dancers to see how their fundraising contributed to the total. When it comes to the final amount, the total revealed does not round up; dancers know the total down to the penny because everyone made an impact. The dancers get to see their fundraising collectively make a difference.

Messaging at the Closing Ceremony focuses on what this money can do and what the dancers have already done. The Closing Ceremony also reflects on the experience for the kids and families during the dance marathon, the emotional support provided through their participation in the event. Many elements of the Closing Ceremony are Ohio State themed, bringing back the community centered focus. The highlight is ultimately The Reveal of the total. Afterwards there is a short address to the dancers that they “did it” and highlights everything they worked for this year led up to this. The event ends with Carmen Ohio, Ohio State’s alma mater, and dancers are dismissed.

Rachel also noted other aspects of the event that are integral to the dancers’ experience. She highlighted that the dancers participate in this fun event and there is no alcohol. 5,000 college students are spending their Friday and Saturday nights dancing For
The Kids. There are not many events where that many students are together outside of sporting events.

Fundraising is a significant aspect of the dancers’ experience before they get to the dance marathon. The students must express why giving money to this cause is important. Through their efforts to fundraise, dancers are making meaning of why they are even asking for money.

**Connection to the Cause**

**Understanding cancer and childhood diseases.** All of the research participants responses included a statement of their understanding of cancer and childhood diseases. This is an interesting consistency because the interview protocol did not specifically address this topic. In planning the dance marathon, there are specific ways the event is designed to educate participants about the cause and incidence of pediatric cancer. Some of these learning opportunities are facilitated through speeches in the color team rooms, messaging at the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, and the Inspiration Rooms. All of the participants acknowledged having learned or the opportunity to learn more about cancer and childhood diseases through their BuckeyeThon experience.

Preston explained that BuckeyeThon directly addressed the topic of cancer with dancers. He stated, “The speeches given by doctors and parents gives most dancers their first exposure to the front lines of the battle with cancer.” Preston is the only participant that identified cancer as a “battle,” relying on warlike imagery such as “front lines.” As an active ROTC member, use of this language may give more credibility to his own understanding of the significance of such language.
While Preston’s reflection was vague about specific cancer knowledge, some participants retained facts about cancer. In the Miracle Makers activity, Beyoncé experienced more learning opportunities through the event than other BuckeyeThon participants. Afterwards, when asked what she had learned at the dance marathon, Beyoncé stated, “I guess just in terms of facts that 20% of kids who had cancer get cancer in their adult lives from the treatments. I did not know that.” Along with the ability to recall a specific statistic, Beyoncé also recognized this was new knowledge. Similarly, from his experience in the Inspiration Rooms, John recalled a fact at his third during event interview. The Inspiration Rooms consist of displays of information about the kids, the hospital, and various childhood cancers, where dancers can quietly walk through and learn more about the cause. When asked what the event taught him, John shared, “One of the facts in like one of the rooms was like, cancer kills more kids than like three or four other sort of like common diseases.”

In addition to statistics about cancer and childhood diseases, participants learned medical realities of pediatric cancer. Again John recalled, “There’s no real way to prevent pediatric cancer . . . that’s sort of tragic to think about.” Jacob also shared an understanding of the medical limitations of prevention. In recalling his interest in the neuroscience field, Jacob stated, “I mean, in the neuroscience perspective of oncology, there’s not a cure for cancer, there’s not one, but what we can do find better ways to treat it and find better ways um to cope with it.” John’s understanding of prevention was a result of his experience in the Inspiration Rooms, whereas Jacob’s was pre-existing knowledge. However, Jacob’s response was unsolicited from the interview protocol
directly, and counted prevention with the importance of treatment and care. As noted by Will, the former BuckeyeThon President, in the long run BuckeyeThon promotes a research and cure goal, while in the short term BuckeyeThon addresses patient care during treatment.

At his first during event interview, John indicated he had limited knowledge of cancers, though he had participated in two dance marathons previously. During the interview process, John also indicated this was the first year he visited the Inspiration Rooms during the dance marathon. By his final during event interview, John’s understanding had changed. When asked what the event had taught him, John shared,

I think um sort of personalizing, like ‘cause for me, like I know like I have like family members, like all older who have like suffered with cancers, so like I think I’ve gathered a better understanding of like pediatric cancer like through the event.

While John does not elaborate on this personalization, he is acknowledging an understanding of the difference between his known experience with cancer among family members and the pediatric cancers he was exposed to at BuckeyeThon. This is an important distinction in BuckeyeThon’s efforts. By directing their fundraising and philanthropy at Nationwide Children’s Hospital’s oncology and hematology unit, BuckeyeThon addresses pediatric cancers intentionally throughout the event. As noted by Rachael, as recently as 2009 the connection between the hospital and the cause were not strong, which may have impacted the relationship between the dancers’ understandings of their contribution to the cause at that time.
**For The Kids.** The slogan of CMN dance marathons is “For The Kids” or “FTK.” The connection between the research participants’ event experience and the kids resonated throughout the interviews. In the pre-event interview when asked about the most important aspect of the event, John had a similar response. He shared,

I think one of the most important parts of the event is actually the meet up in the room before you head out to the Opening Ceremony . . . Connecting to the cause, or like to the specific person that you’re sort of supporting then I think is really important because if you don’t focus on it then you kind of loose sight of it.

John explained how meeting a Miracle Child at the very first activity of the dance marathon, the color team meeting, created a connection for him as a participant. This aligns with Rachael’s comments on the importance of connecting the dancers to the Miracle Children through the first event of the night, the color team meeting.

Similarly, Will reiterated that the dancer connection to their Miracle Children can serve as motivation for continuing participation throughout the event. In her first during event interview, Heidi mentioned interacting with the kids during her color team room and receiving bracelets from them. Meeting the Miracle Children in person, the dancers can better connect to the purpose of the event. Receiving a physical item from their Miracle Children may increase the dancers’ connection to the Miracle Child throughout the event.

The Friday night shift begins with the Opening Ceremony at 8 p.m. However, the amount of time kids are present is limited. When the kids are present, the participants mentioned how impactful they were to their experience. In the first during event
When asked about the most meaningful aspect of the event to that point, Jacob mentioned, “When they parade [the Miracle Children] in at the beginning and everyone’s getting a high five, when they’re just running it’s really awesome.” During the Opening Ceremony all of the Miracle Children are introduced and paraded down a red carpet with their families. The children become the focal point of the Opening Ceremony. Similarly, Preston shared how he focused his dance marathon experience on the kids. Preston explained, “I mean the night shift is hard because the kids aren’t there that long. I mean I don’t know how long they’re there for the day shift. But for me it’s just keeping them energized and excited.”

However, Heidi discussed how the kids were incorporated into the event even when they were no longer present. At the first event interview, Heidi talked about her motivation to continue. She said, “They always have all the videos of the kids around throughout the event and that’s really motivating.” Even without their physical presence, Heidi noted the reminders of the kids in intentional ways throughout the event impacted her experience. During the post-event reflection, Heidi again mentioned the videos. She shared,

The second most meaningful experience for me were the videos played throughout the Dance Marathon that showed the kids’ stories and once again reminded why I was truly dancing. Having these reminders of the cause I was dancing for throughout the night was inspirational and motivating and is what kept me on my feet.
The videos served as visual reminders of the kids who were the embodiment of the cause to the dancers, along with their stories. Additionally, Heidi identifies that this reminder served as inspiration and motivation for her continued participation throughout the event.

Videos are shown in the ballroom so a dancer is only exposed to the videos if they happen to be in the ballroom during these “Miracle Moments.” Depending on how a dancer is engaging in the event, they may not be exposed to any Miracle Moments. However, dancers can choose to engage in the self-guided tour of the Inspiration Rooms.

At the third *during event interview*, John explained how the Inspiration Rooms’ focus on the kids provided the most meaning to his experience. John shared,

I don’t know, it’s kind of like a weird mix like you go into like one room and it’s like how hard it is to like struggle with cancer. Then you go into the next room and it’s sort of like, but they’re still kids. Like, they still do some of the same things up and they still kind of want to, or like strive to, just be normal kids too.

By choosing to participate in the Inspiration Rooms, the first time during his years of BuckeyeThon participation, John was able to see photos, read information, and see physical items that represented the life of the Miracle Children. He noted the juxtaposition of cancer treatment to childhood and how these were a “weird mix.”

Understanding the childhood of these Miracle Children within the context of pediatric cancer framed the experience for John’s connection to the kids in his experience at the dance marathon.

**Hearing the stories.** In addition to connecting to the kids through interactions and their presence at the event, dancers connected to the cause through stories shared at
the event. All participants referenced the children’s stories being central to their event experience and their motivation to continue participating. At the pre-event interview, Heidi noted stories as being most important to her experience. She shared, “It makes you feel like you’re actually connected to something and it’s not just a dance party with a bunch of people, it makes you feel like I’m actually making a difference.” The stories connected Heidi not only to the experiences of specific Miracle Children, but also gave greater significance to why she was participating in the event. Hearing stories at the event helped Heidi to create meaning in how a “fun” event was also creating an impact for a Miracle Child.

Color team room meetings were noted for their stories, just as they were significant to dancers when they met their Miracle Children. During his first during event interview, the first interview after the Opening Ceremony, John shared how the color team meeting was impactful. In sharing his thoughts he stated, “I don’t know, it was just very real, her story was just very real.” During his post-event reflection, John again returned to the color team meeting as most meaningful in his BuckeyeThon experience. He wrote, “It was meaningful for me because I made the conscious decision to engage in someone else’s personal story at BuckeyeThon, and I realized I had not done that when I had danced previously.” John makes the distinction that exposure to the stories throughout the event was not enough to have an impact. Though he had participated in BuckeyeThon twice previously, by his own account he had not engaged in the stories. However, when John made the decision to be engaged, he retained the connection to the
story and it was among the most meaningful aspects of his experience throughout his
interviews and his post-event reflection.

In her pre-event interview, Beyoncé noted a similar experience in connecting to
stories told by parents. When asked about the most meaningful aspect of the event,
Beyoncé stated,

Um, I would say listening to the parents speak. Um, there’s this one woman
[Avalon’s mom] who always quotes the Lorax . . . I have my Lorax necklace.

[gestures to necklace] It’s something that has always been super important to me.

Avalon is the longest recurring Miracle Child in BuckeyeThon’s history and her family
has been quite involved in the event. When her mom speaks to BuckeyeThon she
frequently references The Lorax by Dr. Seuss and the quote, “Unless someone like you
cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.” During the Closing
Ceremony in 2014, Avalon’s mom dressed up in a Lorax costume to share Avalon’s story
with the dancers. Though Beyoncé did not elaborate if her Lorax necklace was in direct
reference to the previous year’s Closing Ceremony, she made the point to connect it to
the story during her interview.

Though not all of the research participants attended the Closing Ceremony at the
day of the Saturday shift, they all attended the Interim Closing at the conclusion of the
Friday shift. From this experience, multiple participants noted the impact of a story
shared at the Interim Closing in their post-event reflection. Beyoncé’s post-event
reflection stated,
The most meaningful experience that I had at the event was listening to Avalon speak at the closing ceremonies for the night shift. After watching her amazing mom speak about her for the last 3 years it was a truly emotional experience to see her speak for herself. This moment brought me to tears and is one I will always remember.

Beyoncé begins with her own historical context of Avalon, seeing her participate in the event throughout Beyoncé’s years of participation. After hearing Avalon’s mom speak previously, Beyoncé noted her emotional response to hearing Avalon speak for herself. This emotional response was also tied to the memorable moment.

Jacob had a similar response in his post-event reflection when considering Avalon’s point of view. He shared, “While it is inspirational to hear from the parents, the miracle children have a whole new way to touch your heart.” Jacob shares the value of hearing Avalon’s first-hand account of her experience with childhood illnesses and their ongoing affects. Additionally, he notes the emotional imagery of “touch your heart” to express the impact of the story on his experience.

John also included Avalon’s story in his post-event reflection, but his reflection did not cite the emotions of Jacob or Beyoncé. John wrote, “I internalized and was really inspired by Avalon’s message when she said, ‘Don’t feel sorry for me – I’m a survivor!’” Though John does not elaborate on internalizing the message, it may align with his previous comments about “personalizing” the stories of the kids’ experiences in the Inspiration Rooms. As the participants shared such strong responses to Avalon’s speech
at their Interim Closing, it aligns with BuckeyeThon’s efforts to create messaging that is intentional and impactful to the participants, as noted by Will.

**Event Community**

**Social context.** Interactions with peers, both known and unknown also affected research participants’ experience at the event. Dancers described how their dance marathon experience was a social activity. In the *pre-event interview*, John explained how his peers encouraged his participation in his first dance marathon. John shared, “Um, it was sort of a social activity as much as it was philanthropic, I think for me my first year. Um, it was more to just hang out with my friends.” John identified that his student organization, his primary peer group at the time, was his motivation to participate in BuckeyeThon. Spending time with his friends was what he expected out of his BuckeyeThon experience. When asked about participating in BuckeyeThon his second time, John again noted the importance of his friends. He replied, “I think it as [sic] peer pressure, and additionally a lot of member [sic] in my fraternity were on BuckeyeThon, were on BuckeyeThon’s executive board and so um kind of doing it to support them as well.”

In her first *during event interview*, conversationally Beyoncé noted, “You know. It’s nice to catch up with people you haven’t seen and then it’s like fun to be around people you know when you’re dancing.” She elaborated that dancing can be embarrassing so she prefers to dance with people she knows. However, Heidi’s social experience at the event extended beyond her friend group. She stated, “I think it’s a good way to connect with other people like even that you don’t know that well.” The
participants identified multiple ways social activities with peers during the dance marathon influenced their experience.

Team membership also contributed to the social context of the dance marathon. In his first during event interview, when asked about the influence of his team, John shared, “Uh, it’s been the primary people that I’ve been sort of hanging out with. Um, so it’s definitely had a social influence.” Similarly, Preston, who was also a member of a fraternity team, also noted the influence of his team on his experience. At his first during event interview, he stated, “I always find someone to keep conversation with.” However, the influence of team membership can vary by nature of the dance marathon team. Beyoncé explained, “I don’t actually know everyone on my team. My roommate is on my team and that was kind of why I joined that team.” While the social context of having at least one friend on her team is the reason Beyoncé joined the team, she later explained that her team did not have a huge influence on her event participation.

Participants also reflected on the larger social experience of the dance marathon. In her post-event reflection, Heidi shared,

It was really powerful to see a lot of other people I knew dancing during BuckeyeThon as well. Seeing that so many college students chose to spend their Friday night dancing at BuckeyeThon was inspirational because it goes to show that our young generation can make an impact on these children’s lives.

She continues the sentiments from her pre-event interview of how participating in BuckeyeThon and seeing her peers choose to participate in this event rather than traditional college “social” events was impactful. In his post-event reflection, Jacob also
shared a positive statement regarding his peers. He wrote, “Our generation is the generation that will change the world.”

In her post-event reflection, Beyoncé talked about the importance of social connections among peers, both known and unknown. She wrote, “Finally, being able to spend time with friends and strangers alike who are all there for the common goal of ending childhood cancer was just incredible. It was a time I will never forget.” The common goal among peers, as well as the focus on the cause, created a connection for Beyoncé in the event, as well as a memorable takeaway from her experience. The communal experience of the dance marathon

Both John and Preston shared the communal experience at the conclusion of the event. Throughout the interviews, Preston discussed attrition of event participants over time. In the third during event interview, he noted, “You know one of my biggest things is looking around and seeing who’s still here um cause I already notice a big bulk of people have left, I’m just like, well, alright, bye.” While he noticed the attrition of participants, it did not compel Preston to leave the event himself. This may be attributed to John’s explanation of community at the conclusion of the event. When I asked John about the most meaningful experience in his pre-event interview, he highlighted the end of the 12 hour event. He explained,

I think the like, the final hours where you’re like completing like the entire morale dance is pretty meaningful, just sort of like as the crowd has like dwindled a bit and the everybody is still kind of there that sort of community that develops . . .
The bond among dancers who remained as the event concluded created another element to the social context of event participation.

**Perspective.** In their own unique ways, each of the research participants made statements of perspective that compared themselves to others, including Miracle Children. John specifically used the term perspective in his third *during event interview* when asked what was motivating him to continue. After discussing the Inspiration Rooms and their affect on him, he stated simply, “Like, perspective set in, like a reality.”

Perspective was referenced as influencing participants’ motivation. In the first *during event interview*, Preston was asked what was motivating him to continue. He responded, “It’s not that big of deal compared to . . . what the kids have to go through, I mean they have to go through this and then some every single day, so it’s like 12 hours is nothing.” Preston specifically connected the physical challenge of standing for 12 hours with the physical experience of the kids. Jacob made a similar comparison when asked what he had learned during the event. In his second *during event interview*, Jacob shared, I think I’ve started to figure out that we, we’re all standing this whole entire time and yea that’s hard but . . . what these kids and family are going through are 10 times harder and that’s just kind of inspiring inspiration to keep going.

These two male research participants connected the Miracle Children’s challenges, physical and non-physical, as the motivation and inspiration to complete the dancer’s physical challenge of standing for 12 hours.
Heidi shared a broader perspective in comparing her experience with that of the kids. In her third *during event interview*, when asked what the event had taught her, Heidi shared,

I think it’s taught me that in a way that like you can make a difference in someone else’s life and what I’m going through right now was meaningless, well, not meaningless, but it’s just nowhere near what other people are going through right now.

In her post-event reflection, Heidi reiterated this thought. She wrote, “My small sacrifice to spend on Friday night dancing for these kids and families felt like nothing compared to the hardships that these kids and families may be going through.” Heidi shared a comparison of the physical challenge of standing to the experience of others; however, she also attributed that challenge to making a difference. It should be noted that only Heidi and Beyoncé specifically referenced “making a difference” in their interviews in context of their BuckeyeThon experience. Jacob referenced “giving back” but not “making a difference.” Heidi and Beyoncé, as the only female research participants, may be framing their experience differently than the other research participants.

**Fundraising and Philanthropy**

In solicited and unsolicited ways, the research participants referenced their fundraising efforts during their interviews. Preston referenced fundraising in his post-event reflection. He wrote, “Raising money for and participating in BuckeyeThon is such a small contribution on the scale of a person’s life, but it is potentially the most impactful thing they may due [sic] in their college careers.” Similar to Jacob and Heidi’s reference
to generational impact, Preston notes the college student context of BuckeyeThon’s participants. Similarly, in her post-event reflection Heidi shared,

Through my experience I have learned that I can make a difference in these children’s lives by raising funds and awareness for organizations such as Children’s Miracle Network. This event also showed me that no matter how small my donations may have seemed, together with the donations of hundreds of other dancers we can all make a large impact on organizations through events like BuckeyeThon.

Heidi mentioned awareness, along with fundraising, as ways participants can impact a cause or beneficiary, such as Children’s Miracle Network. She also mentioned the impact of donations, regardless of size. These statements of learning align with engagement opportunities with non-profit organizations, including donations and awareness.

The concept of philanthropy resonated in John’s experience. In his pre-event interview, when asked how BuckeyeThon influenced him, John stated,

I think it’s raised my awareness about . . . cancer philanthropy in general. Like, my philanthropy, or my fraternity’s philanthropy is more based on research, this one’s more based on patient support . . . I think both of those are important.

John was exposed to a greater understanding of philanthropy through his Greek Life experience and specific fraternity philanthropic efforts. However, he identified how BuckeyeThon still informed his understanding of philanthropy beneficiaries, as he distinguished between research and patient support.
Participants also discussed the connection between their donors and their participation. In her third during event interview, when asked about her primary motivation to participate and complete BuckeyeThon, Heidi stated,

It think it’s just to show people that I’m doing this for a reason and that I’m not just raising money and not doing anything on my end, and I’m making a sacrifice as well by participating in the dance marathon.

Beyoncé shared a similar reference in her first during event interview, when asked what was motivating her to continue. She shared, “... And the fact that I asked these people who were incredibly generous with their money and I think that that requires me to be generous with my time.” As the highest fundraiser of the research participants, Beyoncé’s references to her fundraising efforts were limited. However, this reference mirrors Heidi’s in connecting the contribution of their donors to their responsibility to participate and complete the dance marathon. Again, only the female research participants stated this connection through the interview process.

Summary

The research participants experienced the event in their own ways; however, through the interview process they shared common themes focused on their connection to the cause, event community, and fundraising. Connection to the cause was illustrated through participants’ understanding of cancer and childhood illness. This understanding was gleaned in various ways throughout the event experience, including ceremonies, Inspiration Rooms, and color team meetings. Research participants highlighted their interactions with the Miracle Children through the event activities and the importance of
the event being “For The Kids.” Finally, participants experienced connection to the cause as they heard stories throughout the event that focused on the kids’ and families’ experiences with cancer and childhood diseases.

Event community themes included the social context of the event and the dancers’ statements of perspective gained through event participation. The research participants were encouraged to participate in the event through their social networks, including their organizations and residence hall floors. These social groups became significant to the participants’ experience at the event. Additionally, the team nature of the event facilitated social connections with friends and peers throughout the dance marathon. These social contexts built community among dance marathon participants and highlighted the value of the collective efforts of their generation to make a difference. Finally research participants shared statements of perspective comparing their physical challenges during the event to the experiences of Miracle Children.

The theme of fundraising highlighted both the learning of the fundraising process and the way the participants were able to make a difference through their efforts. Participants highlighted the impact of raising money for a cause, as well as raising awareness. Understanding the differences between philanthropy benefitting research compared to benefitting patien e support was an additional learning outcome of participants. Finally, participants identified a relationship between the donors’ commitment and the dancer’s responsibility to complete the dance marathon in exchange for their contribution.
Chapter 6: Discussion

This dissertation topic was the perfect storm of various elements of my professional and academic experience in higher education. My first exposure to higher education and student affairs as an undergraduate was being gifted a book about my own generation, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* written by Neil Howe and William Strauss. My professional roles led to my involvement in event planning and advising BuckeyeThon. And my doctoral program exposed me to the concept of positive psychology. Rather than focus on a negative, I was given the opportunity to explore a perceived good from a critical and unexamined perspective. This Chapter will address how the themes drawn from the participants’ experience address the research questions, their implication for practice, and future research.

Summary of the Study

The focus of this study was the experience of students who participate in volunteer fundraising, specifically dance marathons. The research participants were five traditional-aged undergraduate students participating in BuckeyeThon 2015 at The Ohio State University. Having participated in at least one dance marathon previously, all research participants had an understanding of the event experience prior to the interview process. Data collection occurred in three phases. The first phase was the recruitment process, which included a Demographic and Biographic Questionnaire (Appendix E). This information narrowed down the potential research participants to the selected participants.
The selected participants participated in the second phase, consisting of four in-person interviews: one 30 minute interview on the day of the dance marathon but prior to the start and three 15 minute interviews throughout the 12 hour event. The *pre-event interview* focused on learning more about the specific participant. The interview gained the consent of the participants, reviewed their previously submitted demographic and biographic information, and discussed their previous dance marathon experience. The three *during event interviews* were conducted throughout the dance marathon, taking into consideration the dancers’ participation in activities at the event. The *during event interviews* gathered information about the participants’ experience at the dance marathon, including activities they participated in and experiences they found significant. By conducting these interviews throughout the dance marathon, the experience of the dancers over the 12 hour event experience was gathered, including self-reported changes during the event.

The final phase of data collection was a post-event reflection writing submitted by the participants three days after the event. The reflection addressed their most meaningful experiences at the event, their learning through participation, as well as their personal takeaways from participating in the event. The participants could also optionally provide photographic images to represent the most important moments of their experience.

These three phases allowed me to learn about the participants’ experiences in three distinctive contexts. The *pre-event interview* provided context to the individual dancer, including their dance marathon history, motivations, and previous experiences. The *during event interviews* allowed for a greater understanding of the dancer’s event
experience over the 12 hour event, including physical demands, participation in event activities, and interactions with others throughout the event. The post-event writing facilitated participants’ reflections about the experience and their takeaways from participating. Additionally, by interacting with the dancers over time, I was able to build rapport throughout their interview experience.

**Restatement of the Problem and the Research Question**

News media and public perception perpetuate the belief that Millennials are lazy, selfish and narcissistic (Roth, 2015). The Millennial generation is not known for being altruistic and is less engaged in volunteer work and charity (Roth, 2015). Their lack of civic engagement is also demonstrated in lower political participation than previous generations (Stein, 2013). There are many concerns about a large upcoming generation that lacks an altruistic approach to the world.

However, cocurricular student philanthropy efforts are growing. In 2015, Penn State’s dance marathon, planned by millennials for millennials, raised more than $13 million (Thon, 2016). The more than 300 colleges and universities that plan dance marathons benefitting Children’s Miracle Network (CMN) hospitals raised more than $20 million during the 2014-2015 school year (CMN, 2015). The CMN dance marathons report a 33% annual growth rate (CMN, 2015). However, there is still no longitudinal, let alone anecdotal research, on the student event participants. The purpose of this study is to describe the motivation, experience and outcomes of undergraduate students participating in a dance marathon.
I explored how participants were motivated to participate in the event, how they participated in the event, and in turn, how their experience may have shaped or influenced their behavior and experiences after the event. The findings derived from this research may help to influence best practices in cocurricular philanthropy programs. Additionally, nonprofits, including higher education institutions, may learn how to harness past experience in volunteer fundraising into future philanthropic behavior.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What motivates students to participate in dance marathons?
2. How do dance marathon participants experience the event?
3. What are the outcomes of dance marathon participation?

The answers to these questions can help us to better understand how to engage more college students in prosocial, philanthropic behavior. These answers also reveal some of the benefits of their participation.

**Summary of the Methods**

The study used a basic interpretive qualitative methods approach to understand the experience of dance marathon participants. Based in both phenomenology and symbolic interaction, a basic interpretive study is a common method in education and applied practice (Merriam, 2002). By exploring these two concepts, the personal and psychological impacts of an experience can be better understood. As this study focuses on the psychological and educational outcomes of volunteer fundraising participation through dance marathon participation, qualitative inquiry lent itself to this research. According to Nastasi and Schensul (2005), “Researchers endeavor to understand
psychological constructs, reflected in thoughts, language, and behavior, from the perspective of the participants" (p. 181). In researching the experience of dance marathon participants, the researcher is not seeking to prove a theory or hypothesis. This follows the inductive form of data analysis found in qualitative research (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). Instead, the study attempts to use the context of theories and models discussed in the literature review to better understand the experience of dance marathon participants through individual interviews.

Purposeful, criterion-based selection sample resulted in five research participants, within the desired range of a minimum of five and no more than 10 participants. All research participants had participated in at least one BuckeyeThon prior to the research year, though their participation did not have to have occurred in consecutive years. Ideally selected participants represented a variety of experiences such as BuckeyeThon participation teams, years of BuckeyeThon participation, year in school, and major. Gender and ethnicity were not criterion to diversify the research participants because BuckeyeThon does not collect information regarding gender or ethnicity of participants during registration (Appendix C).

In order to discover the meanings of the experience, I used a semi-structured interview approach (Patton, 2002) both before and during the event. A qualitative research method allowed me, as the researcher, to become the primary instrument for data collection, giving flexibility for the unique experiences of each research participant through the interview process, allowing for more distinct participant profiles. Literature
on service learning, learning philanthropy, motivation, community development, and CSEs informed the development of the interview protocol.

Interview transcripts were read and coded utilizing frameworks as described by Saldana (2013). Following Saldana’s (2013) model of coding cycles, first cycle coding focused on each individual participant, identifying nouns and phrases to code the data. Second cycle coding reviewed each interview by chronological grouping, focusing on all pre-interviews, then all 1st event interviews, and so on. The final round of coding focused on subcoding for specific and consistent themes among participants. These codes created the outline of the themes among the interviews. These common themes were then be used to describe the essence of the experience as well as how the experience might influenced future behavior.

Findings

**Fundraising and philanthropy.** All dancers referenced some aspects of fundraising and philanthropy throughout their interviews, even though the interview protocol did not address the topic specifically. Research participants discussed the importance of raising money, even small contributions made by college students. Additionally, participants highlighted the importance of both awareness and fundraising for causes such as CMN. Research participants discussed learning about the difference between research and patient care philanthropies. Finally, participants noted their responsibility to participate in the dance marathon in exchange for the contribution by their donors.
Connection to the cause. Dancers connected to the cause in many different ways through their participation in the event. The research participants identified three primary modes of connecting with the cause because of their BuckeyeThon experience: understanding cancer and childhood diseases, “For The Kids,” and stories. The connection to the cause was primarily experienced during the dance marathon itself, while participants were provided with additional information about the Miracle Children and their cancer experiences online prior to event participation.

Research participants indicated they learned more about cancer and childhood diseases through their event participation. They specifically noted that activities of the dance marathon exposed them to new knowledge associated with cancer and childhood diseases, including the challenges of prevention for pediatric cancer, facts associated with the diagnosis of pediatric cancer, and the long-term effects of treatment. Further, dancers connected with the dance marathon slogan, “For The Kids.” Research participants referenced their purpose for participation and engagement in the dance marathon was based on their interaction with Miracle Children. This interaction included in-person activities, as well as videos shown to dancers throughout the event, called “Miracle Moments.” Additional connections to the cause were facilitated through stories shared with dancers by parents and Avalon, a Miracle Child. Stories were also facilitated through passive activities and information shared through the Inspiration Rooms.

Event social context. Event participation was influenced by the research participants’ interactions with peers. Themes of event social context permeated the interview of the research participants’ experience at the event. Throughout the event,
from recruitment to participate to the activities held during the dance marathon, dancers indicated that their peers were influential to their experience. Participants discussed how the dance marathon itself is a social activity where they can spend time with peers, both known and unknown. Team membership provided social interaction and motivation throughout the dance marathon. Research participants discussed the importance of their peer group supporting their experience at the dance marathon and referenced feeling positive about the potential impact of their generation on causes moving forward. Finally, a sense of community was shared as the experience in the final hours of the event, as event participant attrition takes place.

**Perspective.** Research participants also made statements of perspective through the interview process. These statements of perspective, where participants shared perspectives on their own lives in comparison with the experience of the Miracle Children, influenced their continued motivation to participate in the event. Additionally, the physical challenge of standing for 12 hours was referenced by all participants. However, male research participants noted the physical challenge in perspective to the physical challenges of the Miracle Children. The female research participants referenced the physical challenge in perspective of making a difference through their participation.

**Discussion**

**Motivation.** The first research question asked what motivated individuals to participate in the dance marathon. The overwhelming response was a peer-to-peer invitation to participate, either through membership in a student organization or a residence hall floor connection. This question broadened through the interview process to
address what motivated individuals to continue their participation throughout the 12 hours of the event.

In seeking to understand the motivation of dance marathon participants, this research specifically examined those individuals who put their motivation into action. To participate in the dance marathon in February, dancers had to register for the event by November. This required a dancer to register for the event online, fundraise to reach the minimum requirement to participate in the dance marathon, and then attend the event for any duration. It should be noted that some individuals fundraise and do not attend the event, including individuals who reach the minimum fundraising requirement.

All of the research participants indicated they participated in the event for 12 hours. The nature of the research may have influenced the research participants’ partaking in the entire 12 hour event as their *during event interviews* were scheduled throughout the event, with some immediately prior to the Interim Closing for the Friday shift. However, all of these research participants had a history of completing the event for at least 9 – 12 hours in their selection criteria to participate in the research.

When asked what motivated the participants to attend the dance marathon in their first year, all made reference to being asked by a peer from a student organization or residence hall floor. This aligns with Schervish’s (1993) philanthropic identity development model that states an individual must be given the opportunity to participate in philanthropy, or be exposed to a *socializing agent*. This also supports the findings by Clary et al. (1998) in the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI). The VFI illustrated that social motivations based on relationships with others influence volunteer participation,
which could be expanded to volunteer fundraising. In this way, the research participants identified their peers as their primary motivation to participate in the event their first year.

Research on CSE motivation cites social influence as important to the motivation of participants. Snelgrove et al. (2013) identified social motivations as the primary influence of CSE participants. Filo et al. (2008) found the same to be true among LIVESTRONG cycling participants, while Scott and Solomon (2003) indicated social motivations were second only to the cause for participants in the Komen Race for the Cure. However, Schervish’s (1993) model of philanthropy identity development may be more representative of the experience of the dance marathon participants.

Schervish (1993) indicated that individuals must be part of a community that expects philanthropic engagement, a community of participation. The research participants’ involvement in student organizations and residence halls that participated in BuckeyeThon may be a representation of this community of participation. Additionally, Schervish (1993) identified a framework of consciousness, meaning the community makes philanthropic behavior a priority among group members. Not only are these existing peer groups registering as teams at BuckeyeThon, they are asking their members to join their team and participate in BuckeyeThon. Framework of consciousness may be a broader influence for participants who identify with the larger campus community’s involvement in BuckeyeThon events throughout the school year, not just the dance marathon. Framework of consciousness may also be reflected broadly in participant
Scott and Solomon (2003) identified the social elements of CSEs as being powerful for participation. Some elements of the dance marathon are intentionally social, while others are not. Most participants register as a member of a team. This team is frequently comprised of student organizations, residence hall floors, and other peer groups. This creates a natural social element to the event. All participants are then assigned to color teams. These color teams add an additional level of social engagement to the dance marathon, as the peer group at the event extends beyond their known group, or registered team, to everyone of the same color. It is important to note that even though the team aspect of the event may align with social elements of the event as highlighted by Scott and Solomon (2013), not all research participants identified the team participation influenced their experience. This may be due to the type of team involved, the participants’ connection to the peer group prior to participation, or the way the participants engaged with the team throughout the event.

Research participants indicated that as the event participants started to leave, a social connection was developed among the individuals who remained. The same is true of research participants’ explanation of the community of dancers at the final hours of the event. These statements may be descriptions of Filo et al.’s (2008) social theme of motivation that indicates an event leads to a common social opportunity and community development. In multiple instances, research participants indicated their motivation to continue participating in the event, was their interaction with peers, participating in the
event with others, and their desire to remain at the event for the conclusion with the other remaining participants. By participating in an event with others, participation is not experienced in isolation and a sense of community may develop. This community context may influence participants’ motivation to continue their participation or return for the future.

However, when asked what motivated the research participants to participate in their second dance marathon the responses varied, and were sometimes different than motivations in their first year. This aligns with France et al.’s (2007) findings that note the difference between first-time donors and repeat donors. In this instance, the same could be true of first-time volunteer fundraisers compared to repeat volunteer fundraisers. Some research participants indicated they returned a second year because of their experience at the event, corroborating France et al.’s (2007) description of donor experience impacting future motivation to participate. Other research participants referenced their social groups and student organizations continued participating in the event, which resulted in their participation in subsequent years.

When asked what motivated research participants to return for a second year, they also noted giving back and making a difference. These research participants may be demonstrating a more altruistic motivation in their continued participation. However, it is unclear if these motivations to return to the event align with the reinforcing intrinsic rewards factor identified for continued participation in Schervish’s (1993) philanthropic identity development model. With this factor, Schervish (1993) anticipated that philanthropic participation becomes a perpetual cycle as an individual becomes motivated
to continue for intrinsic reasons. However, none of the research participants made statements about their second year of participation being intrinsically motivated. It is possible their motivations were not apparent in their responses to the interview questions. Additionally, the research protocol only asked participants what influenced their motivation to participate in their second dance marathon. Four of the five research participants were in their third or fourth year of participation, so it is possible that intrinsic motivation became more significant in their return in subsequent years.

Altruism may be attributed to secondary motivations of research participants during their dance marathon experience. While Drezner (2011) indicated that altruism is frequently cited as motivation for individuals to participate in volunteerism and philanthropy, this did not seem to be an instigating factor for participants. However, during the event, the female research participants referenced their desire to make a difference, and a male participant referenced giving back. These statements may be representative of Duncan’s (2004) explanation that an individual’s desire to make a difference is a representative of altruistic intent.

As repeat participants in BuckeyeThon, these research participants may be examples of Lee et al.’s (1999) model of altruistic identities that are developed through modeling, personal norms, and past behavior. Research participants exhibit all of these experiences through past and continued participation. However, future behavior may not be predicted by past experience as expected by Lee et al. (1999) as more than half of the BuckeyeThon registrants were first time participants. The differences in return rates may identify a difference in volunteer fundraising compared to donating blood, volunteering
time, and contributing money as researched by Lee et al. (1999). If participants are fundraising from soliciting others and participating in the dance marathon, but are not directly contributing financially to the cause, their altruistic identity may not fit Lee et al.’s (1999) model.

Bauer (1998) proposed that donors contribute to organizations whose causes or efforts align with their personal values. While research participants did identify connections to the cause as a major theme in their experience, rarely was this cited as an original motivation to participate in the event. Videos of the children shown over the 12 hours were among the cause-based motivation for research participants to continue their participation throughout the event. Drezner (2011) stated that identification with a cause may motivate a donor to action, in this case, standing for the duration of the event. The participants did not elaborate on how the cause influenced their motivation to fundraise prior to the event.

Youth participation in philanthropy had conflicting influences on event participation for research participants. Kirlin (2002) proposed that youth participation positively influences civic engagement of adults. Only one participant referenced previous involvement in community service prior to college. Another research participant noted previous participation in a “psuedo” dance marathon in high school; however, the research participant did not register for the event until encouraged by a peer group. This is counter to Schervish’s (1993) motivational factor of early childhood experience as motivating community service and philanthropic behavior. Even with a previous
historical experience with dance marathon, this past participation alone was not enough to result in participation in a dance marathon in college.

Physical challenge, described by Filo et al. (2008) as competency, was a significant factor to the experience of the research participants. The influence of the physical challenge as motivation was unclear, but statements of perspective that connected with the physical challenge may be related to Filo et al.’s (2008) intent. Where Filo el al.’s (2008) research participants were engaged in a CSE, the physical challenge of the dance marathon duration of 12 hours may be comparable. Multiple research participants referenced wanting to complete the event, proving to themselves they could finish, as motivation to continue. Research participants also discussed their own violations of the physical challenge of standing, specifically visits to First Aid, pre-existing injuries, and being permitted to sit during the Miracle Makers activity during the dance marathon.

While BuckeyeThon had a goal to reach $1 million for the first time in 2015, none of the research participants addressed this goal within their interviews. However, BuckeyeThon’s slogan for the year, “one team, one dream,” was stated in one research participant interview, alluding to the organization’s financial goal for the year. Dancers did reference The Reveal, seeing the amount of money raised and how meaningful that was to their experience. However, never did a dancer state concrete numbers from years’ past. The event participants did not demonstrate Filo et al.’s (2008) theme of success as a motivating factor for participation. Success is explained that individuals want to be
associated with an event or cause that is successful and to know they are contributing to that success (Filo et al., 2008).

**Event experience.** The second research question examined how dance marathon participants experience the event. In some ways, the dance marathon replicates the experience of service learning courses. White, Parker, and Disco-Schearer (2008) highlight hands-on activities and reflection as primary experience of a service learning course. Reflection and hands-on activities that address the cause of pediatric cancer are incorporated in active and passive ways throughout the dance marathon. However, reflection may not be a direct experience of many dance marathon participants. One research participant noted the opportunity to reflect on the dance marathon experience through research participation was influential. Cause-connection reflection was described through the “Why I Dance” wall, where dancers can list an individual they dance for with the color ribbon to correspond to their disease. However, not all dancers participate in this activity among the many activities available through the 12 hours. This may indicate that dancers do not have enough structured methods to facilitate reflection through the dance marathon.

The hands-on activities of service learning lens may be best demonstrated in the physical challenge of standing. Research participants addressed their responsibility to stand at the event in exchange for the contributions of their donors. Participants also discussed the physical challenge when sharing their motivation to continue standing and how standing made a difference for the cause. The interview protocol did not provide enough content to connect service learning to the dance marathon participant experience
in terms of traditional service learning outcomes of academic success, life skills, and civic engagement (Astin & Sax, 1998). However, skills of personal and emotional development may be represented in statements of perspective shared by participants (Dicke, Dowden, & Torres, 2004; Eyler & Giles, 1999).

The event experience of volunteer fundraising may be more directly related to research on CSE fundraiser attachment to events. Snelgrove et al. (2013) noted the potential for repeat participation and increased contributions through event attachment. Having researched participants of walks and runs with a minimum of five years of experience, Snelgrove et al.’s (2013) research may align with the experiences of dance marathon participants with three or four years of experience. Research participants’ connection to the event through the Lorax, noted by multiple participants could be interpreted as attachment. The connection between the dance marathon and the participants being students at the same institution may also impact attachment. As many elements of the event ceremonies are connected to institutional experiences, including singing the alma mater, dancers may connect their participation in the dance marathon to institutional loyalty.

Additionally, Snelgrove et al.’s (2013) study identified three primary ways participants developed attachment to events: developing fundraiser identity, alignment with the cause, and creating social relationships. These three factors can be identified in multiple ways through participation in the event. Alignment with the cause was demonstrated in the research participants’ responses related to the theme of connection to the cause. Participants created social connections through pre-existing peer groups
participating in the event through teams, as well as the community built among participants at the conclusion of the event. Development of fundraiser identity was more difficult to examine through the research participants’ interviews.

In contrast, Snelgrove and Wood (2010) noted that CSE participants might be motivated by the particular sport involved. However, a dance marathon consists of much more than dancing. Rarely did the participants identify dancing as a motivating factor. Dancing was referenced within the physical challenge of remaining standing, or how a dancer was trying to conserve their energy to continue participating throughout the entire event.

Ashford and Mael’s (1989) social identification theory believes that an individual identifies with a group of individuals resulting in individual behavior that aligns with the identity. This could be another way to consider the promotion of prosocial behavior among millennials through groups of peers behaving in prosocial ways. As student organizations and residence halls participate in BuckeyeThon and encourage participation among their members, research participants shared the concept of positive peer pressure. This aligns with the research by Hassay and Peloza (2009) that believed individuals are more likely to participate in helping behaviors when they belong to communities. The same may be true of students participating in dance marathon as part of a team that a student identifies with. It is important to note that more than 200 of teams registered for BuckeyeThon 2015 and the composition of teams ranged from two to more than 100. There is no definition of team for the purpose of BuckeyeThon’s registration, anyone can create a team through the registration process and encourage friends to join them. Teams
do not have to be groups that are otherwise recognized as student organizations or residence halls.

Further, individuals take greater pride in the success and efforts of the group’s mission and purpose when their identity is connected to the group (Ashforth & Male, 1989). All dancers noted how important and meaningful The Reveal was in their dance marathon event experience. Participants noted their emotional responses to The Reveal including a sense of pride and community among the remaining group of peers. However, not all research participants returned for The Reveal on Saturday night after their Friday night dance marathon shift. This is a distinction in the two-shift dance marathon model that may influence the impact The Reveal experience has on dancers.

Multiple participants addressed the concept of community among dancers who remain until the end of the event. This aligns with Hoeffler and Keller (2002)’s defined community as a group of individuals sharing a common identification. However, the concept of brand community may resonate more specifically to the experience of the dance marathon event. “Like other communities, [brand communities are] marked by a shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility” (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001, p. 412). Of these three elements Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) found consciousness of kind to be the most important.

When BuckeyeThon dancers are brought together for common experiences, including the color team meeting, Opening Ceremony, and Closing Ceremony, the event is creating a sense of community among participants. This demonstrates Muniz and O’Guinn’s (2001) concept of consciousness of kind, which Hassay and Peloza (2009)
explained could be facilitated through CSE efforts to physically bring participants together in one location, typically at the beginning of an event. The messaging shared at the color team meetings and Opening Ceremony are intentionally designed to connect the dancers to the cause and the experience of the dance marathon. However, because of the event venue and number of event participants, there are few opportunities to bring all of BuckeyeThon’s event participants together. Still, research participants noted that throughout the 12 hour event, these large group gatherings were among the most meaningful and important in their experience, both in the during event interview and in their post-event reflections.

Rituals are the demonstrated practice of a community’s culture and perpetuate consistency in the experience of the community across members (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Some rituals of the dance marathon experience are noted in the Shift Schedule (Appendix G) including the color team meeting, Opening Ceremony, Closing Ceremonies, Miracle Moments, Rave Hour, and The Reveal. Research participant interviews were not scheduled in conflict with these events because they were deemed integral to the dancer experience.

Guests at a dance marathon may also observe rituals. Dance marathon participants’ attire is color coordinated to match their team, consisting of playful apparel, puns, references to “FTK” and athletic gear with tennis shoes. It is not unusual to observe dancers in tutus or suspenders. While not every dancer’s apparel is the same, the unique and playful elements of the dancer outfits are typical among returning dancers who embrace the unique apparel and flair they have observed in previous years. Members of
the BuckeyeThon organization perpetuate the apparel creativity from year-to-year, demonstrating the ritual to new dancers and encouraging dancers to dress accordingly in pre-event communication.

Finally, a sense of moral responsibility is the shared understanding and commitment of individual members to the greater community (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Multiple research participants discussed the larger idea of the generational impact that is possible among young people dedicated to a cause. Additionally, a participant mentioned the responsibility to participate in the cause for the growth of character which could be attributed to moral responsibility. While messaging at the event may have discussed moral responsibility, it did not specifically resonate in the interview and reflections of the research participants.

Various elements of a brand community as explained by Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) were noted in the experience of the research participants, yet not all CSEs develop brand communities. Given the years of existence, the number of participants, and overall fundraising success of BuckeyeThon, the elements of brand community may be represented in alignment with CSE brand community. Hassay and Peloza (2009) explained that when a CSE has developed a successful brand community, it should lead to future engagement and loyalty of participants. However, this research study does not determine the loyalty and future engagement of participants outside of the context of BuckeyeThon. The participants indicated a loyalty and commitment to participating in BuckeyeThon multiple times, however, other factors appeared to be motivating participation. Additionally, as many research participants were in their final year of
participation because of graduation, there were few references to future participation in volunteer fundraising or philanthropy. However, multiple research participants mentioned their recruitment of others to participate in BuckeyeThon, sharing the event experience and peer-to-peer marketing. This aligns with Hassay and Peloza’s (2009) explanation that loyal members of a brand community are likely to recruit others.

Other research on CSEs addressed concepts illustrated through the research participants event experience in BuckeyeThon which shows consistency in comparing the dance marathon with a CSE. Higgins and Lauzon (2003) noted the community element of CSEs was reinforced in preparation of participation in the events as well as during participation in the specific event. While the context of Higgins and Lauzon’s (2003) preparation was addressing training for a sporting event, BuckeyeThon participants’ event preparation is the efforts they extend in the fundraising process. Higgins and Lauzon (2003) additionally defined two categories of CSEs, cause based and physical activity based. Cause based events included a physical activity but participants were more involved in social activities, event speeches about the cause, educational activities, and included a fluid use of time during the event (Higgins & Lauzon, 2003). In this way, BuckeyeThon meets the definition of a cause-based CSE.

**Outcomes.** The final research question asked about the outcomes of dance marathon participation. These outcomes were assessed by asking research participants about their takeaways from participation, the most meaningful and important aspects of the event, and their learning. These self-reported takeaways were used to identify the outcomes of research participants’ dance marathon participation.
Research participant outcomes are central to the study in addressing questions about prosocial behavior among millennials and how these behaviors can be taught. Bentley and Nissan’s (1996) literature review of philanthropy found a common agreement that caring and prosocial behaviors can be taught. This aligns with Bjorhovde’s (2002) model of philanthropy education that identifies modeling, cognitive and experiential learning as the three primary educational practices.

These three practices were demonstrated in various ways among the research participants. While Bjorhovde’s (2002) intent for modeling is observing significant others participating in philanthropy through direct donations, modeling may also be attributed to observing peers participation in volunteer fundraising. Modeling is technically a method of cognitive learning. Cognitive instruction includes discussion, reflection, and writing (Bjorhovde, 2002). In many ways, the research participants are engaging in cognitive learning of philanthropy, and volunteer fundraising, through their research participation. This may have influenced their experience, and eventual outcomes, compared to other dancers.

The experiential teaching method allows students to practice what they are learning and reinforces the desired future behavior (Bjorhovde, 2002). Participation in volunteer fundraising, specifically registering for BuckeyeThon and soliciting donations in order to participate in the event, the dancers are engaging in Bjorhovde’s (2002) experiential learning. However, research participants discussed various levels of engagement in the solicitation of donations, including passively posting on social media. The value of experiential teaching of philanthropy through volunteer fundraising may be
less impactful than Bjorhovde’s (2002) intent for teaching philanthropy in the classroom. Additionally, Bjorhovde (2002) noted the challenge of assessing philanthropic learning and behavior, both in the classroom and the cocurriculum.

The application of factual, motivational, procedural, and personal development concepts identified by Bjorhovde (2002) into the BuckeyeThon event planning demonstrates the opportunity for philanthropic learning through event participation. Speeches shared at the Opening Ceremony and Closing Ceremony, as well as the hospital room in the Inspiration Rooms, dancers are exposed to the factual and procedural concepts of how their fundraising efforts are utilized by NCH. Additionally, procedural concepts focus on fundraising and solicitation (Bjorhovde, 2002). BuckeyeThon provides registered dancers with resources to assist in their fundraising efforts, which would be examples of these learning processes.

Multiple research participants emphasized the importance of making a difference and the value of all donations, regardless of size. These statements are examples of motivational concepts as explained by Bjorhovde (2002). This concept of motivation differs from motivation to participate and engage in the experience. However, Bjorhovde’s (2002) concept of personal development is unclear in connection to BuckeyeThon participation. Personal development concepts focus on developing individual awareness of their values, morals, and intrinsic motivation to engage in philanthropy, including choosing causes, organizations, or communities to contribute to (Bjorhovde, 2002). Research participants’ statements of perspective may align with their
awareness of values or morals associated with their event participation, however, there is not enough evidence to verify this assumption.

**Implications for Practice**

The intent of this research was to learn more about volunteer fundraising through dance marathon. The results of this research may be utilized to enhance or develop dance marathon events to intentionally address topics of interest. Three primary areas of interest for practice are recruitment, event experience, physical challenge, and reflection.

All research participants indicated their primary motivation to participate in their first dance marathon was being asked to participate by a peer group. After participation in the research participants’ first dance marathon, the cause, the event, or the Miracle Children may have resonated in the research participants’ motivation to return. However, peers remained a significant factor. This may have been a coincidence among the selected research participants and is worth additional study. The development of marketing and outreach efforts may benefit from a peer-to-peer network of participants rather than broad marketing campaigns focusing on other aspects of the event.

The nature of a 12 hour event allowed research participants to participate in differing activities and levels of engagement during the dance marathon. However, the large scale activities when all dancers were together for common experiences at the beginning and end of the dance marathon resonated as the most meaningful and important to the participants. Knowing the impact these experiences had on the research participants verifies the significance of these events, as well as highlights opportunities to encourage engagement among dancers who may not be engaged in these elements of the
event. The dance marathon committee is intentional in planning activities for participants to engage in. These activities may have greater opportunity to be developmental for participants through advising of staff advisors with a background in student development.

One of the most impactful experiences noted by research participants was the Inspiration Rooms. However, as a passive event on the third floor of the Ohio Union, only one research participant participated in this activity. However, after participating in the activity, it became one of the most significant individual activities of the dance marathon experience, having never participated in previous years. It would appear that encouragement or facilitation of participation in passive learning activities, such as the Inspiration Rooms, would further engage dancers throughout the event.

All research participants noted the physical challenge of standing for 12 hour. While multiple research participants noted illness or pre-existing injuries prior to the event start, it did not deter their participation. However, the nature of an event where participants stand may be ableist in design. The physical challenge of standing from six to 40 hours does not provide an outlet for those individuals who are physically unable to do so. It may be worth examining the value and significance of event length and fundraising results.

In considering the potential for long-term outcomes and influence of dance marathon participants, an opportunity for reflection appears to be missing in the experience of the research participants. The research participants were given a process through which to reflect on their experience, so their outcomes may be more developed than a general participant. Research participants identified how much they enjoyed
having the opportunity to reflect on their experience in contrast to past years of participation. Coordinating passive or direct reflection opportunities of dance marathon participants may result in long-term effects and could be designed in such a way to encourage future philanthropic participation.

**Implications for Research**

In an effort to understand the experience of dance marathon participants, this study utilized research across various disciplines to create a baseline for consideration and understanding of the phenomenon. Through this research and comparison of dance marathons to CSEs, connections can be made to create opportunities for continued research and refinement. Of particular note are gender and ethnicity, longitudinal findings, and volunteer fundraising in other contexts for college students.

The findings note a few similarities among research participants of the same gender. However, as noted in the selection process, BuckeyeThon did not ask for race/ethnicity or gender in the registration process so these criteria were not included in the selection of research participants. Additionally, limited data existed on the representation of these characteristics among event participants. This is an opportunity for further exploration to better understand motivations, event experience, and outcomes among genders or ethnicities. Women comprise more than half of all undergraduates in the United States (Strout, 2007); it may be interesting to further research the gendered participation rates of dance marathons. Additionally, most research on gender and ethnicity is within the context of donor behavior and may not translate to volunteer fundraising.
This research addressed participants in a single dance marathon in a single point in time. However, dance marathons benefitting CMN hospitals have existed for 25 years. There is limited known longitudinal data on dance marathon participants. While the research participants identified outcomes of self-reported takeaways and learning, longitudinal research could more thoroughly address aspects of philanthropic giving and volunteer fundraising participation over time. This information could further inform dance marathons and higher education institutions on the value of cocurricular volunteer fundraising activities.

Volunteer fundraising through dance marathon is just one example of cocurricular volunteer fundraising on college campuses. From student-created initiatives to non-profit efforts to engage college students, this research focused on the experience of a dance marathon benefitting CMN with a specific focus on pediatric oncology and hematology. Other dance marathons benefit CMN hospitals without a specific beneficiary department, while there are some dance marathons not affiliated with CMN that benefit other hospitals and causes. The connection BuckeyeThon has with CMN and NCH influences the experience dancers may have at the event. Further research should address other contexts of dance marathon volunteer fundraising with various beneficiaries, multiple institutions, and years of existence. Additionally, research should address walks, runs, relays, and other cocurricular philanthropy experiences through volunteer fundraising.

**Researcher’s Reflection**

Studying the experience of dance marathon participants provided rich data and insight into five very different individuals. This experience was significant for me as a
higher education professional and as a researcher. As a professional, this research confirmed my commitment to the cocurricular experience of college students. Regardless of the outcomes and experiences, each participant shared learning moments and personal impacts from their participation in the event. As a researcher, this study focused my energy on understanding a small group within the larger potential of research that exists on this topic.

I am continually considering future opportunities to continue to explore this topic in new ways. Not only is there opportunity to research dance marathons, but other positive elements of the cocurricular experience, rather than focusing on negatives from a problem-solving lens. As students engage and create opportunities for prosocial behavior, I am interested how these behaviors can be further developed, supported, and measured. Finding ways to facilitate reflection in cocurricular experience is another takeaway for my own professional interest.

As a practitioner who no longer works directly with dance marathons, I am also interested how this study, and future studies, can inform practice. I am interested in exploring how this study is applied to the development of new dance marathons in contrast to improving established dance marathons. Additionally, the application of this study to other contexts of cocurricular involvement may also be demonstrated in my practice.

The process of determining research participants also identified a lack of information on gender and ethnicity. While efforts were made to collect demographic information about dancers through the registration process, gender and ethnicity were not
included in this information. This reinforces my critique and consideration of data gathering, including why information is gathering, whom it identifies, and whom it does not. Without this information, the story and explanation of the participants is incomplete.

Summary

Millennials are touted as being anti-social, disengaged, and disloyal. Story after story, headline after headline notes the negative societal connection of this upcoming generation. However, more than 300 colleges and universities across the United States host dance marathons benefiting Children’s Miracle Network hospitals. Thousands of college students are participating in volunteer fundraising, raising millions of dollars for pediatric cancer, among other causes.

Little to no research exists on the cocurricular experience of students participating in philanthropy programs. However, research on philanthropy education, donor behavior, and charity sport events aligns with the process of designing cocurricular volunteer fundraising events, such as dance marathon. Specifically, the process and opportunity to develop and enhance prosocial behaviors among participants in these events, can be examined through further research and understanding of their experiences.

Nonprofit organizations, cocurricular philanthropy programs, and higher education institutions may benefit from further understanding of college student philanthropy experiences. Specifically, student led initiatives, such as dance marathons, that facilitate volunteer fundraising experiences, may be designed to influence future philanthropic behavior. Nonprofit organizations, including higher education institutions,
may benefit from continued exploration of the impact and outcomes of student engagement in volunteer fundraising and cocurricular philanthropy.
References


http://doi.org/10.1057/ijea.2010.14


http://fundraising.stjude.org/site/PageServer?pagename=utd_home


Appendix A: Initial Individual Interview

This is the first in-person interview with the research study participants, it will verify the demographic and biographic profile of the participant, and gather some initial context of their dance marathon experience.

1. What pseudonym would you like to use?

Review responses to Demographic and Biographic Questionnaire responses.

2. What is your identified gender or do you prefer not to answer? (Free response to be coded using the below options)
   - Female
   - Male
   - Transgender
   - Self-defined
   - Prefer not to answer

3. How do you identify your race/ethnicity or do you prefer not to answer? (Free response to be coded using the below options)
   - African American/Black or African decent
   - Asian American/Asian (East, South, Southeast)
   - Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
   - Latino(a)/Hispanic American
   - Native American/American Indian/Alaskan Native
   - Middle Eastern/Arab American
   - White/European American
   - Multiracial
   - Other
   - Prefer not to answer
4. How do you identify your sexual orientation or do you prefer not to answer?

(Free response to be coded using the below options)

• Heterosexual
• Bisexual
• Lesbian or Gay
• Questioning
• Prefer not to answer

5. Are you (yes or no):

• An international student?
• A veteran?
• A first-generation college student?
• A member of a social Greek organization?
• A varsity-level athlete?
• Finanacially dependent on your parent or guardian?

6. Do you work?

7. As a student at Ohio State, do you take part in any community service events?

8. As a student at Ohio State, do you take part in volunteer fundraising events

(raising funds for a specific cause)?

9. As a student at Ohio State, do you hold a leadership position in a student organization?

10. What was your approach to fundraising for BuckeyeThon this year?

• I am mainly focused on meeting the minimum ($100) fundraising goal.
• I would like to exceed the minimum goal but it is not a large priority.
• I am trying to raise as much as possible.

11. What means of fundraising did you use to meet your goal?

12. Besides the registration fee, did you end up paying any of your own money (out of pocket) towards meeting your fundraising goal? If so, how much?
13. What led you to participate in BuckeyeThon as a dancer (not a virtual dancer) the first time?

14. What did you think of the experience?

15. What led you to participate in BuckeyeThon again?

16. What was the most important part of the event for you?

17. What was the most meaningful experience during the event?

18. Looking back at your BuckeyeThon experiences, what do you take with you?

19. How has participating in BuckeyeThon influenced you?
Appendix B: During Event Interviews

These will be held throughout the event to get progressive insight into the research participants’ experience.

Interview 1

1. What has been the most meaningful experience of the event so far?
2. What has been the most challenging aspect of the event for you so far?
3. What have you learned during the event?
4. How has being part of a team influenced your participation in the event?
5. What is motivating you to continue and to complete the 12 hours?

Interview 2

1. Can you describe what activities and/or rooms you have participated in so far during the event?
2. What has been the most meaningful experience of the event so far?
3. What has been the most challenging aspect of the event for you so far?
4. What have you learned during the event?
5. How have Color Teams influenced your participation in the event?
6. What is motivating you to continue and to complete the 12 hours?
7. Other than restroom breaks, at this point in the event, have you taken a break from the physical challenge by sitting or lying down?
Interview 3

1. What activities, events, or programs have you participated in since our last interview? Did you visit the Inspiration Rooms on the 3rd floor?

2. What has been the most meaningful experience of the event so far?

3. What has been the most challenging aspect of the event for you so far?

4. What has participating in this event taught you?

5. At this point in the event how has being part of a team influenced your participation in the event?

6. What is your primary motivation to complete the dance marathon?

7. Other than restroom breaks, at this point in the event, have you taken a break from the physical challenge by sitting or lying down?
Appendix C: BuckeyeThon Registration Questions

1. Please enter your OSU email address (lastname.#)

2. Please enter your 9 digit BuckID (student ID) number

3. How did you hear about BuckeyeThon?
   - Student Involvement Fair
   - Student Organization
   - Friend
   - Residence Hall
   - Greek Organization
   - Social Media
   - Other

4. If you selected “other,” in the above list, please specify.

5. Why are you participating in BuckeyeThon?
   - My Friends Are
   - My Floor/Residence Hall Is
   - My Student Organization Is
   - My Sorority Is
   - My Fraternity Is
   - My Interest in the Cause
   - My Medical Background
   - Relates to My Major
   - Other

6. What year are you in school?
   - 1st Year
   - 2nd Year
   - 3rd Year
   - 4th + Year
   - Graduate/Professional
   - Staff
   - Faculty

7. Where do you live?
   - On-campus
   - Off-campus
   - Regional Campus

8. If you live on campus, where do you live?
9. If you live on a regional campus, please select where your campus is.
   • Wooster
   • Lima
   • Mansfield
   • Marion
   • Newark

10. Have you previously attended BuckeyeThon?
   • Yes (853)
   • No (1398)

11. What is your shirt size?

12. List any dietary restrictions and medications you are taking.

13. Please enter a non-university email.

14. How many years have you participated in the Dance Marathon prior to this year?
   • 0
   • 1
   • 2
   • 3
   • 4
   • More

15. Are you an OSU alum?

16. Emergency Contact Name

17. Emergency Contact Address

18. Emergency Contact City

19. Emergency Contact State

20. Emergency Contact Zip Code

21. Emergency Contact Phone Number

22. Emergency Contact Relationship

23. Emergency Contact E-Mail Address
Appendix D: Email Recruitment of Participants

Invitation E-mail – 1st Sent
From: Colette Masterson
Subject: BuckeyeThon 2015 Research Study

Hello!

Thank you for registering to participate in BuckeyeThon 2015! We are conducting a research study on the experience of students who participate in volunteer fundraising events like BuckeyeThon and the learning that results from participating in similar events. According to our records, you have participated in BuckeyeThon previously and are eligible to participate in this research. We are looking for 5 – 10 students who are current undergraduates, at least 18-years of age, with dance marathon experience who are planning to participate as a dancer during the Friday shift of this year’s BuckeyeThon. We hope that you will consider taking part in this research.

What does it mean to participate?

• Participation in this study will involve completing a Demographic and Biographic Questionnaire online. This survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. Your response is confidential and the questions asked will help to create a biographic reference for your experience.
• From the results of this questionnaire we will narrow down to our invited research participants. Research participants will come from a variety of experiences with no one specific criteria ensuring selection. Unfortunately space is limited and we will not be able to include everyone.
• If selected as a research participant you will have an initial individual interview prior to the dance marathon on Friday, February 6. This should take approximately 30 minutes.
• Throughout the 12 hour dance marathon you will be asked to participate in up to 3 individual and/or group interviews to discuss your experience and learning. These should take no more than 30 minutes each.
• Up to 3-days following the dance marathon you will be asked to complete a personal reflection of up to 500 words to describe your experience and learning since the event.
• Participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw without penalty at any time.

To participate in the research and complete the Demographic and Biographic Questionnaire click here

We encourage you to click on the link above to indicate your consent to participate in this research study. If you require technical assistance, have any questions, or feel you have been harmed as a result of this study, please contact Colette Masterson by e-mail
at EMAIL ADDRESS or by phone at CELL PHONE or Dr. Peter Mather by email at EMAIL ADDRESS or by phone at CELL PHONE.

Screen Reader Accessibility Note: This survey can load a version optimized for use with a screen reader. To load that version, screen reader users should press Enter/click on the link at the top of the page that says “Activate an optimized version of the page designed specifically for JAWS version 11 and greater.” Though the link mentions the JAWS screen reader, the optimized version will work better with all screen readers.

Thank you for your participation!

Colette Masterson
Doctoral Student, Ohio University
CELL PHONE | EMAIL ADDRESS

**Invitation E-mail – 2nd Sent**
From: Colette Masterson
Sent: Subject: BuckeyeThon 2015 Research Study

Hello!

Last week you received an e-mail from me, inviting you to participate in a research study on the experience of students who participate in volunteer fundraising events like BuckeyeThon. As a registrant for BuckeyeThon 2015 I wanted to reach out to you again to see if you would be interested in being considered for this research. According to our records, you have participated in BuckeyeThon previously and are eligible to participate in this research. We are looking for 5 – 10 students who are current undergraduates, at least 18-years of age, with dance marathon experience who are planning to participate as a dancer during the Friday shift of this year’s BuckeyeThon. We hope that you will consider taking part in this research.

What does it mean to participate?

- Participation in this study will involve completing a Demographic and Biographic Questionnaire online. This survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. Your response is confidential and the questions asked will help to create a biographic reference for your experience.
- From the results of this questionnaire we will narrow down to our invited research participants. Research participants will come from a variety of experiences with no one specific criteria ensuring selection. Unfortunately space is limited and we will not be able to include everyone.
• If selected as a research participant you will have an initial individual interview prior to the dance marathon on Friday, February 6. This should take approximately 30 minutes.
• Throughout the 12 hour dance marathon you will be asked to participate in up to 3 individual and/or group interviews to discuss your experience and learning. These should take no more than 30 minutes each.
• Up to 3-days following the dance marathon you will be asked to complete a personal reflection of up to 500 words to describe your experience and learning since the event.
• Participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw without penalty at any time.

To participate in the research and complete the Demographic and Biographic Questionnaire click [here](#).

We encourage you to click on the link above to indicate your consent to participate in this research study. If you require technical assistance, have any questions, or feel you have been harmed as a result of this study, please contact Colette Masterson by e-mail at EMAIL ADDRESS or by phone at CELL PHONE or Dr. Peter Mather by email at EMAIL ADDRESS or by phone at CELL PHONE.

Screen Reader Accessibility Note: This survey can load a version optimized for use with a screen reader. To load that version, screen reader users should press Enter/click on the link at the top of the page that says “Activate an optimized version of the page designed specifically for JAWS version 11 and greater.” Though the link mentions the JAWS screen reader, the optimized version will work better with all screen readers.

Thank you for your participation!

Colette Masterson
Doctoral Student, Ohio University
CELL PHONE | EMAIL ADDRESS
Appendix E: Demographic and Biographic Questionnaire

This online questionnaire will be used to verify the eligibility of potential research study participants and to understand the demographic and biographic profile of the participant if selected for the research study.

1. Please enter your first name.
2. Please enter your last name.
3. Please enter your OSU email address (lastname.#@osu.edu).
4. Please enter a non-university email.
5. Are you over the age of 18?
   - Yes
   - No
6. What year are you in school?
   - 1st Year
   - 2nd Year
   - 3rd Year
   - 4th + Year
   - Other [Please explain.]
7. Where do you live?
   - On-campus (University managed apartment or residence hall)
   - Off-campus
8. What is your major (majors) and minor(s) (if applicable)?
9. Are you still planning to attend BuckeyeThon as a dancer during the Friday shift from 8pm – 8am?
   - Yes
   - No
10. Have you previously attended BuckeyeThon as a dancer (not a virtual dancer)?
   • Yes
   • No

11. How many years have you participated in BuckeyeThon as a dancer (not a virtual dancer) prior to this year?
   • 1
   • 2
   • 3
   • 4

12. What is the best estimation of the longest you attended your most recent BuckeyeThon as a dancer (not a virtual dancer)?
   • 0 – 3 hours
   • 3 – 6 hours
   • 6 – 9 hours
   • 9 – 12 hours
   • I stayed the whole time.

13. Are you now, or have you ever, been a member of the BuckeyeThon organization or its leadership team?
   • Yes
   • No
Appendix F: Selected Participant Confirmation Email

Hello NAME!

Thank you for your interest in participating in the BuckeyeThon 2015 Research Study. You have been selected as a research participant during the Friday (Scarlet Half) of BuckeyeThon.

This will consist of one (1) 30-minute interview prior to BuckeyeThon to be held on Friday, February 6, and up to three (3) 15-minute interviews throughout BuckeyeThon.

If you are still interested, please reply to this email to confirm, along with times you are available between 10am and 5:45pm on Friday to meet for your 30-minute pre-event interview.

If you are no longer participating in BuckeyeThon on Friday, or are no longer interested or available to participate in this research, please let me know that as well.

Please reply to this email by **5pm on Wednesday, February 4** to verify your status in this study.

Thank you again and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
Colette

Colette M. Masterson
Doctoral Student, Ohio University
CELL PHONE | EMAIL ADDRESS
Appendix G: Scarlet Half Schedule

Scarlet Half Dance Marathon Schedule - 2015

BuckeyeThon at The Ohio State University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color Team Holding Rooms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Red</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance Room 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blue</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartoon Room 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:00 PM</td>
<td>Dance Marathon Check-In*</td>
<td>Performance Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:45 PM</td>
<td>Color Team Parade*</td>
<td>Great Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 PM</td>
<td>Opening Ceremonies*</td>
<td>Great Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:15 PM</td>
<td>Miracle Moment*</td>
<td>Archie Griffin Grand Ballroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ongoing Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Video Games by</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ExtraLife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maudine Cow Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inspiration - Kid</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showcase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danny Price Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lounge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Merchandise Sales</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stained Glass Lounge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:30 PM</td>
<td>Swing Dancing Hour</td>
<td>Dance Room 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 PM</td>
<td>Meet and Greet - The Kids*</td>
<td>Ohio Staters Traditions Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 PM</td>
<td>Morale Dance Section 1*</td>
<td>Archie Griffin Grand Ballroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Dinner - Great Hall Meeting Room

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Pink and Red</th>
<th>Orange and Yellow</th>
<th>Green and Blue</th>
<th>Purple and Black</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:45 PM - 10:15PM</td>
<td>10:15PM - 10:45PM</td>
<td>10:45PM - 11:15PM</td>
<td>11:15PM - 11:45PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:45 PM</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>Great Hall Meeting Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45 PM</td>
<td>Face-Painting</td>
<td>Danny Price Student Lounge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45 PM</td>
<td>Minute to Win It</td>
<td>Cartoon Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 PM</td>
<td>Buckeye Twirl Activity</td>
<td>Performance Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 PM</td>
<td>Morale Dance Section 2*</td>
<td>Archie Griffin Grand Ballroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 PM</td>
<td>Buckeye Blanket Bash</td>
<td>Round Meeting Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 PM</td>
<td>Morale Dance Boot Camp</td>
<td>Ohio Staters Traditions Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 PM</td>
<td>Fundraising Push</td>
<td>COLORS: Red, Pink, Purple, Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15 PM</td>
<td>Meet and Greet - Captain Kidd</td>
<td>Ohio Staters Traditions Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 PM</td>
<td>Break Dancing Hour</td>
<td>Dance Room 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45 PM</td>
<td>Fundraising Push</td>
<td>COLORS: Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 PM</td>
<td>Morale Dance Section 3*</td>
<td>Archie Griffin Grand Ballroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 PM</td>
<td>Field Day</td>
<td>Cartoon Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 PM</td>
<td>Captain Kidd - Band Performance</td>
<td>Archie Griffin Grand Ballroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:15 PM</td>
<td>Recess Hour</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Fundraising Push</td>
<td>FINAL TEAM</td>
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<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>PARTICIPANT C</td>
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<td>Haircutting by Aveda</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Miracle Moment*</td>
<td>Archie Griffin Grand Ballroom</td>
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<td>Morale Dance Boot Camp</td>
<td>Ohio Staters Traditions Room</td>
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<td>Morale Dance Section 4*</td>
<td>Archie Griffin Grand Ballroom</td>
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<td>12:15 AM</td>
<td>Ice Cream Walk</td>
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<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>PARTICIPANT D</td>
</tr>
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<td>Buckeye Country Super Hour</td>
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<td>12:45 AM</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>PARTICIPANT E</td>
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## Snack - Great Hall Meeting Room

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12:45AM - 1:15AM</td>
<td>Orange, Yellow, and Red</td>
<td>Pink, Purple, and Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15AM - 1:45AM</td>
<td>1:45AM - 2:05AM</td>
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## Snack - Great Hall Meeting Room
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12:55 AM</td>
<td>1:10 AM</td>
<td>Miss Ohio &amp; Roxy</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1:15 AM</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:10 AM</td>
<td>1:15 AM</td>
<td>Miracle Moment*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15 AM</td>
<td>1:30 AM</td>
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<td>1:45 AM</td>
<td>Meet and Greet - Miss Ohio</td>
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<td>2:30 AM</td>
<td>CarnOVAL Hour</td>
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<td>1:45 AM</td>
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<td>2:00 AM</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
</tr>
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<td>2:20 AM</td>
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<td>Tug of War</td>
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<td>3:25 AM</td>
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<td>4:00 AM</td>
<td>bRAVE*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5:45 AM</td>
<td>Casino</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:00 AM</td>
<td>6:00 AM</td>
<td>Gaga Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00 AM</td>
<td>5:05 AM</td>
<td>Miracle Moment*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00 AM</td>
<td>5:15 AM</td>
<td>Morale Dance Section 7*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5:30 AM</td>
<td>Morale Dance Boot Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:15 AM</td>
<td>5:30 AM</td>
<td>Interview 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30 AM</td>
<td>6:30 AM</td>
<td>Jump Rope Club Activity</td>
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<td>5:45 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:45 AM</td>
<td>6:00 AM</td>
<td>Interview 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 AM</td>
<td>6:15 AM</td>
<td>Morale Dance Section 8*</td>
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**Breakfast - Great Hall Meeting Room**

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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Casino</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:00 AM</td>
<td>6:00 AM</td>
<td>Gaga Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00 AM</td>
<td>5:05 AM</td>
<td>Miracle Moment*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00 AM</td>
<td>5:15 AM</td>
<td>Morale Dance Section 7*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:10 AM</td>
<td>5:30 AM</td>
<td>Morale Dance Boot Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:15 AM</td>
<td>5:30 AM</td>
<td>Interview 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30 AM</td>
<td>6:30 AM</td>
<td>Jump Rope Club Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:30 AM</td>
<td>5:45 AM</td>
<td>Interview 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:45 AM</td>
<td>6:00 AM</td>
<td>Interview 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 AM</td>
<td>6:15 AM</td>
<td>Morale Dance Section 8*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 AM</td>
<td>6:06 AM</td>
<td>Miracle Moment*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 AM</td>
<td>7:00 AM</td>
<td>Bhangara Hour</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:00 AM</td>
<td>6:45 AM</td>
<td>Balloon Baseball</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:00 AM</td>
<td>6:15 AM</td>
<td>Morale Dance Boot Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:15 AM</td>
<td>6:45 AM</td>
<td>Human Foosball</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6:15 AM</strong></td>
<td><strong>6:30 AM</strong></td>
<td>Interview 3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6:30 AM</strong></td>
<td><strong>6:45 AM</strong></td>
<td>Interview 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6:45 AM</strong></td>
<td><strong>7:00 AM</strong></td>
<td>Interview 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00 AM</td>
<td>8:00 AM</td>
<td>Closing Ceremonies*</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>7:00 AM</strong></td>
<td><strong>7:15 AM</strong></td>
<td>Interview 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 AM</td>
<td>8:30 AM</td>
<td>Dance Marathon Check-Out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Items on the schedule identified by the researcher, in consultation with the 2015 BuckeyeThon leadership, that were deemed central to the dance marathon experience, or desired for dance marathon participants to be present for a period of time, if not the entire time scheduled.
Appendix H: Post-Event Reflection Directions

These will be the directions for the research study participants to complete their post-event reflection to be sure they understand the information being sought.

Directions: Now that you have completed BuckeyeThon 2015, as a final way to understand your experience, please complete and submit a reflection of no more than 500 words. In your reflection please consider the following questions:

• What was the most meaningful experience during the event?
• What did you learn about yourself or others from these experiences?
• In general, what things did you take from your participation in the event? For example, what did you learn, what will you remember, etc?

Optional: Please share up to 3 photos from the event that represent the most important moments of your experience. These can include photos you took during the event, photos found through social media, BuckeyeThon’s website, or other sources as long as they are from this year’s event.
Appendix I: Post-Event Reflection Email

Hello NAME,

Thank you for participating in the BuckeyeThon 2015 Research Study. The final piece of the study is a post-event reflection as described to you previously. Please find the directions below.

Directions: Now that you have completed BuckeyeThon 2015, as a final way to understand your experience, please complete and submit a reflection of no more than 500 words. In your reflection please consider the following questions:

- Please identify and describe the most meaningful experiences during the event. Please rank them in order of importance/meaning.
- What did you learn about yourself or others from these experiences?
- In general, what things did you take from your participation in the event? For example, what did you learn, what will you remember, how has your participation in BuckeyeThon changed you, etc?

Optional: Please share up to 3 photos from the event that represent the most important moments of your experience. These can include photos you took during the event, photos found through social media, BuckeyeThon’s website, or other sources as long as they are from this year’s event.

Please submit your final reflection by Wednesday, February 18.

Sincerely,
Colette M. Masterson
Appendix J: Post-Interview Reflection by Researcher

This was the structure model for the researcher to reflect on each interview with each participant.

The participant seemed –

Compared to the last interview –

Further inquiries should focus on –

Student Characteristics –

Event Context –

Interviewer Reflection of Self –
Appendix K: IRB Approval

A determination has been made that the following research study is exempt from IRB review because it involves:

Category 2: research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior

Project Title: A Study of Student Experiences in Volunteer Fundraising through Dance Marathon Participation

Primary Investigator: Colette Mae Masterson

Co-Investigator(s):

Advisor: Peter Mather

Department: Higher Education & Student Affairs

Rebecca Cale, AAB, CIP
Office of Research Compliance

Date: 11/25/14

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your application for review. Any additions or modifications to the project must be approved (as an amendment) prior to implementation.