

THRIVING IN GROUP FITNESS:
AN EXPLORATION OF THE STRENGTHS, CHARACTERISTICS, AND PROFESSIONAL
STORIES OF ZUMBA PRESENTERS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF SCIENCE

BY

LEEANN M. WILCOX

DR. KIMBERLY HURLEY- ADVISOR

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MUNCIE, IN

JULY 2017

Acknowledgements

I would like to first and foremost thank all of my wonderful fitness colleagues in Muncie who dealt with my texting and discussions about this topic. I appreciate all of you letting me bounce ideas off of you, try out my questions, and brainstorm possible solutions when I hit roadblocks. You all are incredible, supportive people with wonderful, caring hearts.

I would also like to thank my family and friends for being so supportive of me in graduate school and during this whole stressful process. I appreciate the times you took me out for a meal, forced me to spend time away from work, and let me call you up and mindlessly chat to relax a bit in between projects.

Next, I would like to thank all of my wellness colleagues for their support throughout graduate school and this thesis. Beginning this process in my first year was an incredible asset. I appreciate being able to share my ideas with all of you and gain your unique perspectives.

Lastly, I would like to thank my committee for their guidance and help on this project. I especially want to thank Jane Ellery for her help in everything. You have always been by my side, on my side, and so supportive of my growth as a professional and as an individual. I would not be who I am today without your influence and care.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Chapter 1: Introduction	7
Statement of the Problem.....	7
Research Questions.....	7
Delimitations.....	8
Limitations	8
Definition of Terms	9
Assumptions.....	10
Importance of Study.....	10
Chapter Two: Review of Existing Literature	12
The Magic of Zumba	12
Why Master Trainers and Jammers	13
Defining Thrive.....	14
Personality Tests	15
The StrengthsFinder Assessment.....	16
Current Ideology	19
Education and Development.....	19
Connection and Enjoyment	21
Empowerment and Motivation	22
Chapter Three: Research Methodology	24
Introduction.....	24
Population and Sample Description.....	24
Instrumentation	25
Data Collection	25
Data Analysis.....	26

Generalization of Results..... 27

Chapter Four: Results..... 28

Population Description 28

Qualifications to Thrive Within the Field..... 30

Personality Type Results 36

StrengthsFinder Strengths Results 37

Participant Predicted Themes 39

Key Emerging Themes 39

 Respondent Profiles..... 39

 Passion..... 40

 People Skills..... 41

 A Thirst for Growth..... 45

 Introverts vs. Extroverts 48

Answering the Research Questions 50

 How does the current research on education and development, connection and enjoyment, and empowerment and motivation match up with the experience of current Zumba presenters? 50

 What StrengthsFinder strengths and NERIS Type Explorer® personality traits characterize the Zumba presenters that participate in this study? 51

 How do the Zumba presenters participating in this study view their own professional story within the context of their strength and personality traits results? 51

 What commonalities, if any, exist among Zumba presenters, their stories, their strengths, and their personality characteristics?..... 52

Chapter Five: Discussion 54

 Implication of the Research 58

 Current Training Practices..... 60

 Understanding Ourselves; Understanding Our Strengths..... 61

 Strength Discovery Leadership 63

Diverse Team Leadership.....	65
Aspiring Thriving Zumba Presenters	66
Limitations of the Study	67
Recommendations for Future Research.....	68
Does the Personality Trend Continue?	68
Possible Implications of Future Research	70
References	73
Appendices.....	77
Appendix A.....	77
Appendix B.....	81
Email Communications	81

Table of Tables

Figure 1: ZES and ZJ Profiles 30

Figure 2: Personality Type Results 36

Figure 3: All StrengthsFinder Strengths (ZESs and ZJs)..... 38

Figure 4: Personality and Strength Profiles 40

Figure 5: Personality and Strength Profiles 56

Figure 6: All Personality Results (ZESs^{^^} and ZJs^{**})..... 69

Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Fitness professionals come in all shapes and sizes, and they have varying skill-sets and backgrounds. Since fitness leaders differ from one another, understanding the personal and professional qualities that allow them to thrive in the field can be challenging. This study collected the professional stories of Zumba Fitness presenters, Zumba Educational Specialists (ZES) and Zumba Jammers (ZJ), to identify their strengths and personality traits, and to understand their opinions on the necessary qualities to thrive within the Zumba Fitness brand as a Zumba presenter.

Research Questions

1. How does the current research on education and development, connection and enjoyment, and empowerment and motivation match up with the experience of current Zumba presenters?
2. What StrengthsFinder strengths and NERIS Type Explorer® personality traits characterize the Zumba presenters that participate in this study?
3. How do the Zumba presenters participating in this study view their own professional story within the context of their strength and personality traits results?

4. What commonalities, if any, exist among Zumba presenters, their stories, their strengths, and their personality characteristics?

Delimitations

For the purposes of this study, the following delimitations have been identified and should be recognized when considering the results of this study. These include:

1. The researcher was limited to Zumba presenters within her network and through the snowball effect within those individuals' networks, who responded to her communications, and were available to take part in the study.
2. The study covered master trainers and jammers who represented Zumba Fitness, as the researcher has had the most contact with those individuals.
3. The study restricted the sample to the Zumba brand because it was seen as popular, well attended, and appealed to a wide-variety of participants (Kegler, 2017; National Institute for Fitness & Sport [NIFS], 2016).
4. This study was not focused on a diverse population of all types of group fitness formats, so it may not represent the best qualities of every group fitness format offered.

Limitations

This study had the following limitations:

1. The study was based on self-reported information.
2. Study findings illuminated ideas and concepts that will need to be further investigated to determine potential associations or cause and effect relationships.

3. Due to size of the sample population and methods used for investigation, findings were not expected to be representative of all thriving group fitness presenters in all group fitness formats.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms and phrases have been defined. These include:

Zumba Presenter. Zumba Education Specialists (ZESs) and Zumba Jammers (ZJs) that represent the Zumba Fitness brand to instructors and the public.

Zumba Fitness Educational Specialist (ZES). An individual who has been trained and hired by Zumba Fitness as a master trainer to license individuals in the trademarked group fitness format (Zumba, 2017).

Master Trainer. An individual who trains and licenses/certifies individuals to become group fitness instructors. This position requires a certain designated level of experience such as a nationally recognized group fitness certifications from organizations such as American Council on Exercise (ACE) and/or Aerobics and Fitness Association of America (AFAA); however, exact qualifications depend on the individual hiring company (Matthews, 2015).

Zumba Jammer (ZJ). An individual who has been trained and hired by Zumba Fitness to lead ZIN instructors in choreography workshops in the trademarked group fitness format (Zumba, 2017).

Zumba Instructor Network (ZIN). Instructors who pay the monthly licensing fees for the Zumba Fitness trademarks, receive special perks and discounts, as well as continuing education (Zumba, 2017).

Strengths. “A strength is the ability to consistently provide near-perfect performance in a specific activity. Talents are naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied. Talents, knowledge, and skills -- along with the time spent (i.e., investment) practicing, developing your skills, and building your knowledge base -- combine to create your strengths” (Gallup, 2016).

Thriving. An individual who is more successful today than they were yesterday, and are projected to become even more successful tomorrow. This individual is “strong, consistent, and progressing” in his/her life and has a positive outlook for the future (Gallup, 2016).

Assumptions

1. Findings of qualitative research followed inductive reasoning as participant responses supply evidence for, but not proof of, conclusion.
2. Research was intended to uncover patterns in participant responses to help explain indicators of *thriving* Zumba presenters.
3. An adequate sample of Zumba presenters participated to uncover a pattern in responses according to those established by Stockdale (Stockdale, 2002).
4. Researcher created an unbiased, open-minded interview environment to elicit genuine responses from study participants.

Importance of Study

The notion of group fitness has only been popular for a few decades, and the role of a presenter or trainer within the industry, even shorter. Individuals have just begun striving for these leadership roles within the field. The group fitness industry has created certification courses that serve to declare an individual competent to lead classes (Group

Ex Instructor, 2017; Group Fitness Instructor Study Programs, 2017). However, with the establishment of so many different certifications that have differing expectations, is there really a correct foundational set of qualities that every individual must possess? Many organizations such as the American Council on Exercise (ACE) and the Aerobics and Fitness Association of America (AFAA) previously had practical components as part of their certifications, including the live practical skills testing in their evaluations.

However, recently, for some certification processes, these aspects have been removed, leaving successful completion of the certificate to be based solely on performance scores from online tests (Group Ex Instructor, 2017; Group Fitness Instructor Study Programs, 2017). Is this knowledge-based competency performance an adequate indicator of success in practical group fitness instruction? Is that all group fitness instructors need to ensure success: multiple-choice answers?

Examining thriving individuals within the field, especially within such a successful fitness company, will illuminate what characteristics are truly instrumental in the field. Additionally, is there a certain personality type or strength set that is more common to thrive within this role? If there is a trend in what type of person that thrives within this role, it would denote an easy way to acquire leaders most probable to succeed in this particular role. Does the certification process match up with the experience of thriving presenters and what the literature denotes are qualities of a successful group fitness instruction? If not, how can we shift our current practice to better prepare group fitness instructors for success?

Chapter Two: Review of Existing Literature

This literature review adds clarity to understand the scope of practice of this study. The literature review is divided into two sections. The first section covers the justification of seeking Zumba Education Specialists and Zumba Jammers specifically in the format of Zumba for the study, further explanation into the Cantril Self-Anchoring Striving Scale (Cantril, 1965), and justification of using personality types (Wong, 2014) and the Gallup StrengthsFinder strengths assessment (Wong, 2014). The second section covers the current academic understanding of the group fitness field: education and development (Prouty, 2012); connection and enjoyment (Martin & Fox, 2001); and empowerment and motivation (Pearce, 2007).

The Magic of Zumba

Zumba has taken the world by storm, becoming a part of pop culture and appearing in television shows such as the Biggest Loser and parodied on advertisements like Planet Fitness (NBC 2012; Marketing Daily, 2014). Zumba has been known for being fun, easy, and accessible to many people as well as an effective workout (Luetgen, Porcari, Foster, Mikat, & Rodriguez-Morroyo, 2012). This format was the ideal format to choose because it has become such a widely known fitness class; the success and influence of the program has been incredible (Celebrity Lists, 2015). Competition has become high among instructors in this popular dance-based fitness format to reach the point of master trainer due to the population size of instructors.

Why Master Trainers and Jammers

Not all individuals who teach group fitness have extensive qualifications such as the obtainment of current, reliable certifications; education such as a bachelors or masters in exercise or movement; experience of decades in the field; or know-how of every facet of fitness. With the evolution of group fitness leaning towards trademarked specialty programming, anyone can pay a certain amount of money, attend a specialty format training, and walk out a licensed group fitness instructor: “you can fail only if you do not participate in the class” (Zumba Fitness, 2016). What moves an individual beyond someone who holds a single-day license or weekend certification to that of a thriving presenter in a format? Achieving the status of master trainer or jammer is essentially a mark of a flourishing individual who excels in his or her format and field.

Master trainers are viewed as just that: masters of training in fitness. The exact qualifications to become a master trainer within any trademarked format vary from company to company (Matthews, 2015). Most companies require a combination of the following qualities before considering a candidate: at least one current nationally recognized fitness certification (e.g., American Council on Exercise [ACE], American Counsel of Sports Medicine [ACSM], National Academy of Sports Medicine [NASM], National Strength and Conditioning Association [NSCA]); the ability to offer continuing education credits (CECs) for organizations such as ACE and AFAA; a minimum number of years teaching within the fitness industry; a minimum of one to two years of presentation experience; and successful completion of the course or training program that the individual intends to represent (Matthews, 2015).

Additionally, just as there are many instructors who are at varying levels, there are varying levels of master trainers (Matthews, 2015). For the purpose of this study, examining thriving individuals, great effort was placed on communicating with elite, rather than regional, master trainers. Regional master trainers work with their particular area while elite master trainers travel the world, present their trainings and sessions at fitness conferences, and are thriving within the role (Matthews, 2015).

Zumba Jammers are similarly trained and hired by the Zumba Fitness Company to hold instructor choreography workshops for Zumba Instructor Network (ZIN) members. Zumba Jammers are required to hold a national group fitness certification, submit video applications, and go through rigorous training similar to master trainers. Zumba Jammers have the opportunity to be shared on the Zumba social media, hold master classes with ZES, and participate in extra opportunities like the livestream classes from Zumba Home Office. In many ways the Zumba Jammers have complementary roles to the master trainers in the company (Zumba, 2017).

Defining Thrive

The Cantril Self-Anchoring Striving Scale (Cantril, 1965) has been utilized in organizations such as the Gallup research group to examine subjective life satisfaction. The tool was created by Dr. Hadley Cantril and consists of the following process: imagining a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top; the ladder represents the best possible life for you; which step would you feel you stand on at this time? (ladder-present); on which step do you believe you will stand on in about five years? (ladder-future) (*Understanding How Gallup Uses the Cantril Scale*, 2016). From this scale emerges the self-identified idea of thriving, struggling, and suffering.

According to Gallup, those who are considered “thriving” have “wellbeing that is strong, consistent, and progressing. These respondents have positive views of their present life situation (7+) and have positive views of the next five years (8+)” (Gallup, 2016). Self-identifying as thriving, rather than struggling or suffering, in their current role is the positive trajectory that this study targeted. Therefore, this study collected data from thriving Zumba presenters, specifically focusing on Zumba master trainers (ZESs) and Zumba jammers (ZJs).

For the purpose of this study, thriving master trainers and jammers were consistent and progressing in their career. This was determined by those who travel beyond their local region; lead presentations, sessions, and/or trainings at fitness conferences and conventions; and are progressing, rather than digressing, in their career.

Personality Tests

NERIS Type Explorer® personality testing is made up of 16 personality types, based on the four pairs of opposing descriptors (16 Personalities, 2017). This includes the following: 1) Introvert / Extrovert with introvert exhibiting a higher need to recharge alone after taxing encounters with high stimulation situations while extroverts feed off of high stimulation situations 2) Sensing / Intuition which deals with the ability to perceive the present (sensing) or the future (intuition) 3) Thinking / Feeling in which an individual considers cognitive reasoning over or less than other people’s points of view and 4) Judging / Perceiving with judging exhibiting more organized planning and perceiving exhibiting more spontaneity (The Myers Briggs Foundation, 2017)

Due to the structure of the assessment, personality type is determined by a series of questions. The respondent encountered questions like “You try to respond to your e-

mails as soon as possible and cannot stand a messy inbox” or “You rarely do something just out of sheer curiosity” and the respondent selected how much he or she agreed or disagreed with that statement. The NERIS Type Explorer® allowed the respondent to slide the degree to which he/she agreed/disagreed with each statement, providing a greater reliability than dichotomous response (i.e. yes/no) personality tests (16 Personalities, 2017). Personality typology is widely known and easy to remember, as the results are simply a combination of four letters (Wong, 2014). This particular assessment is free, easy to do, and readily identifiable to most people, which created a safe environment for respondents.

Personality testing based on Carl Jung’s work has been around for quite some time and is considered an accepted measure to understand personality (Carlyn, 1977; McCaulley, 1981; Thompson & Borrello, 1986). Practitioners of the assessment claim that the results of the personality test tend to be stable and do not change over time unless radical events are occurring in a responder’s life (e.g. a sudden death of a significant other) which may impact the manner in which he or she is responding to the questions (Holm, 2015; Wirths, Bowman-Kruhm, & Taber, 1992; Wong, 2014).

The StrengthsFinder Assessment

The StrengthsFinder strengths assessment was created by Donald Clifton, Tom Rath, and a team of scientists at the Gallup Organization (Gallup, 2016). The assessment ranks 34 strengths in order for each individual. While personality typology is quick and easy, the StrengthsFinder assessment is a much finer level of distinction and is unique for each individual. The probability of someone having the exact same Top Five Strengths in

the exact same order on the Clifton StrengthsFinder test (Gallup, 2016) as someone else is one in 33 million chance (Wong, 2014).

The StrengthsFinder strengths assessment asked the respondent questions like “I am a sensitive person; I am a logical person” or “I get to know people individually; I accept many types of people” and the respondent selected the statement he or she believed best aligned with him or herself. StrengthsFinder has great depth that many other assessments do not have (Wong, 2014). Even in the individual analysis, each person’s description of each strength is catered towards his or her own answers, which means that even if two or more individuals had the same strength in their Top Five, their descriptions of those strengths and how it applied to them were different, catered to them and their personal answers (Wong, 2014). For example, even if the Top Strength for one of the two individuals were ‘learner,’ the description would be different in each individual’s reports depending on how he or she answered the questions in the assessment. Each report is unique to the respondent (Gallup, 2016).

The synergy of using the personality test and the StrengthsFinder strengths assessment can lead to “actualizing [an individuals’] strengths and recognizing their challenges as opportunities for development rather than as flaws to hide or to be ashamed of” (Gallup, 2016). Using these two tools in combination can yield a comprehensive picture of an individual. Additionally, strengths are “not affected by mood, and under duress they do not become our weaknesses,” which means that focusing on these traits can assist in understanding the positive qualities of individuals who utilize these strengths to thrive as group fitness instructors (Gallup, 2016). According to Tom Rath, author of *StrengthsFinder 2.0* (2007), “you cannot be anything you want to be—but you can be a

lot more of who you already are.” This study examined if there was a consistent thread between thriving master trainers, their personalities, and their strengths.

Leadership studies with pharmacy students, nursing students, Harvard students, and numerous collegiate leadership courses cite StrengthsFinder strengths assessment as an important tool in better understanding leadership and assisting individuals in the pursuit of leadership; it gives participants a language to discuss aspects of themselves in a constructive manner (Legrow, 2012; Stone, 2004; Sucher, Nelson, & Brown, 2013; Traynor, Janke, & Sorensen, 2010). Individuals, while pursuing leadership in their career and even finding success currently, also denote the impact the StrengthsFinder strengths assessment has had in their continued success in their field (Norwood, 2005).

Using personality typology and the StrengthsFinder strengths assessment in the hiring process is well used in business (Harrington, 2015). Hiring managers use the metrics to determine who might or might not be a good fit at certain organizations or in specific job functions (Harrington, 2015). Todd Wilson, leadership guru and director of Exponential, the largest leadership conference of its kind, recommends personality typology and the StrengthsFinder strengths assessment when considering any individual for a leadership position within a company (Harrington, 2015).

According to Gallup, it may not be enough to simply identify our strengths; we must also “reflect on the natural ways we are inclined to use them” (Gallup, 2016). By raising self-awareness, this gives each individual the choice to consciously bring forth his or her strengths in times of need, which will bring “most positive results for themselves and others” (Gallup, 2016). This awareness will give research participants a common vocabulary in which to discuss qualities of thriving Zumba presenters.

Harvard leadership professor and senior scientist at The Gallup Organization asserts using both measures in tandem will assist the individual in utilizing their results (Stone, 2004). While both measures work to examine different facets of an individual, the personality testing works to orient an individual to better understand and synthesize his or her StrengthsFinder strengths results (Stone, 2004). Personality typology testing largely looks at psychological processing and how an individual takes in his/her surroundings while the StrengthsFinder strengths assessment is geared towards success and performance of an individual (Stone, 2004). Working together, these two metrics can illuminate a better understanding of the individuals who thrive within the Zumba presenter role in a comprehensive manner.

Current Ideology

Before entering any conversation, it is imperative to lay some groundwork, examining the current body of understanding before adding more to the topic. Certifying bodies such as ACE and AFAA have their own courses for aspiring group fitness instructors, as well as resources banks such as IDEA Health and Fitness Association that publish numerous articles on the topic. The following is a brief description of the current ideology to become a thriving group fitness instructor through multiple leaders, certifying bodies, and organizations in fitness.

Education and Development

Joy Prouty, creator of the program Zumba Gold and author of numerous fitness articles with her decades of expertise, points out that the first and most important characteristic to look for is education. While Prouty's own education is extensive and mostly formal, she does not specify that this knowledge has to come from a formal

degree or certification process; however, being knowledgeable about the field, the body, and how to hold a safe, effective class is paramount to success.

According to IDEA, engaging in continuing education credits in the field is something that is becoming “increasingly important as the fitness industry grows more sophisticated, diverse, specialized and evidence-based” (Monroe 2011). Brian Sutton, content development coordinator for the National Academy of Sports Medicine® (NASM) points out on the IDEA website that “certification ensures that you’ve achieved a minimum level of competence and a foundational level of knowledge to work with apparently healthy adult clients. That’s the beginning step, and everyone needs that, but it’s only the beginning” (Monroe 2011).

Shannon Fable, renowned fitness leader, asserts that there are ten traits of highly effective group fitness instructors. Of these, “self-motivated to continue learning and growing” is the top trait (Fable, 2013). Additionally, on her list, “effective” and “inquisitive” also make the cut, arguing for a passion for education, development, and a drive to always be progressing (Fable, 2013). Many other sources echo this idea that education and development is important to be effective, sustain vitality, and evolve with the changing field (Burwitz, n.d.; Caperchione, Mummery, & Duncan, 2011; Chinsky, 2008; Edmunds, Ntoumanis, & Duda, 2006; Pierce, 2007; Puente & Anshel 2010; Rosado, 2014). For example, formal training or some sort of education for leaders was deemed imperative by participants in a qualitative study so instructors know what they are doing to create a class that is designed in a smart manner (Rosado et al. 2014). This was needed, Rosado concluded, to convey a sense of expert-status or a reputation of being a knowledgeable individual (Rosado et al., 2014). Not having this reputation would

mean participants would not trust the instructor or view the leader as competent to lead the class (Bawaskar & Bawaskar, 2001).

Connection and Enjoyment

In addition to being inquisitive for knowledge in the field, Karen Bram, certified fitness instructor, also asserts there is an importance for connection with participants. Bram asks instructors to get to know the names of students attending the class by greeting them and getting to know them (Bram, 1999). Having that personal connection and getting to know the participants on a more personal level increased enjoyment of the exercisers in group fitness classes (Bray, Millen, Eidsness, & Leuzinger, 2005). This level of enjoyment, connection, and realness aids instructors in creating a cohesive class that enthusiastically returns because participants feel they know you, and you know them on a personal level (Bray et al., 2005; Caperchione et al., 2011; Puente & Anshel, 2010).

Instructors that took the time to address any personal questions and gave personal feedback on concerns from participants outside of the actual class time were found to be as important as a knowledge base for the participants in viewing the instructor as an effective instructor (Caperchione, et al., 2011). Shannon Fable asserts, “the greatest gift we can give our participants (and non-participants) is to be REAL” (Fable, 2013). Through that established connection, personal feedback outside of normal class time can occur. Martin and Fox (2001) found that if participants felt the leader had a personal stake in their success, individuals reported lower levels of social anxiety in joining and returning to group fitness classes, increasing retention.

This concept of being enjoyable and having fun also became more important as formats and classes start to become more and more unique. Research has revealed that if a class was enjoyable, group cohesion (Caperchione et al., 2011) and participant

sustained engagement were both more evident (Bray et al., 2005). Puente and Anshel (2010) found a positive impact on a participant's sustained behavior change if the leader was dynamic and motivating. Rosado and colleagues (2014) found that being able to be motivating to others, creative in programming, and dynamic in delivery, especially in this idea of being outgoing and approachable (Rosado, Araujo, Mesequita, Correia, Mendes, & Guillen, 2014). These findings closely tie to the idea of personal feedback; if a leader is approachable, then the participant will be more likely to approach them for personal feedback, feel more of a connection with the leader, and therefore increase enjoyment in the activity (Rosado et al., 2014).

Empowerment and Motivation

The ability to make an activity challenging to all levels and yet empower each participant to reach their own goal is a necessary skill (Cathcart, 1988). Participants experienced higher cohesion and sustained intention to continue to exercise if each level felt adequately challenged and individually able to complete each task (Pearce, 2007). In addition to empowerment, appropriate motivation impacted enjoyment and sustaining the behavior into increased frequency (Puente & Anshel, 2010).

According to Jeff Bell, master trainer and founder of The Bell Fitness Company, it could take months or year to master the art of motivation. "Not everyone responds well to a drill sergeant training style, while others hate to be coddled, so finding a balance of motivational skills that are unique to you, your message, and your clients is going to be vital to your success in this field" (Smith, n.d.). Loughead, Patterson, and Carron (2008) pointed out that understanding group dynamics, especially social dynamics of groups, was paramount in serving the unique needs of the group. This leadership skill was stressed in their findings in that every person is different and every group functions

differently. What works for some may not work for all, so understanding group dynamics and how to capitalize on them to the group's success is a meaningful skill to have. To understand how each individual fits into the group, establishing a non-judgmental, personal relationship with participants will allow the leader to understand how each participant plays into the total group dynamic.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Introduction

This section clarifies the methodology of the research process, explains the population, instrumentation, data collection and analysis methods, and generalized results.

Population and Sample Description

This study involved six individuals invited to participate based on their designation as a Zumba Education Specialist or Zumba Jammer in Zumba Fitness. The initial invitations were extended to a convenience sample of ZESs and ZJs from the Zumba Fitness network that qualified as elite Zumba presenters. Elite presenters travel to host their instructor trainings/workshops and present at fitness conferences, conventions, etc. (Matthews, 2015). When selecting Zumba presenters to invite to the study, they had to meet both qualifications to qualify. There are multiple formats within the Zumba brand such as Aqua Zumba, Zumba Gold, Zumba Step, Zumba Kids, and STRONG by Zumba (Zumba Fitness, 2017). While Zumba Fitness has become a diverse company of specialty formats, the sample size reflected the diversity of the formats, including as many specialty types as possible. Another three ZESs were included in the initial interview but did not complete the entire research process.

Instrumentation

This study involved multiple tools to support the data collection efforts, including the Strengths Finder strengths assessment tool (Gallup, 2016), NERIS Type Explorer® personality assessment (16 Personalities, 2017), and a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide (Appendix A). The assessment tools were used to identify the strengths and personality traits of participants. Prior to, and following, the personality and strengths assessments, the semi-structured interview guide facilitated a discussion to help collect the professional story and perceived characteristics of thriving Zumba presenters (Appendix A).

Data Collection

All participants were assigned a participant pseudonym that was used with all recorded information to protect the confidentiality of the individuals. Data collection began by conducting an initial recorded telephonic semi-structured interview. In this interview, participants described their background information; completed the Cantril Self-Anchoring Scale (Gallup, 2016), a self-identified evaluation of whether or not they consider themselves to be *thriving* as a ZES or Jammer; and discussed qualities of a thriving Zumba presenter. If the ZES or Jammer did not consider himself/herself to be thriving in the field through the Cantril Self-Anchoring Scale or through their own self-assessment, this concluded their participation in the study. If the participant identified himself/herself as a thriving presenter, he/she was asked to continue in the study to the strength and personality testing.

In the participant's own time, self-identified thriving individual completed the previously validated and widely used tools from The Gallup Organization (Gallup, 2016)

and NERIS Analytics Limited (16 Personalities, 2017). Participants immediately received the results of these assessments and then forwarded their results via email to the researcher. For the NERIS Type Explorer® personality typology testing, participants communicated the personality type to the researcher. For the StrengthsFinder assessment, participants downloaded their “Strengths Insight Report” and forwarded that report to the researcher. Once the assessments were completed and forwarded to the researcher, participants scheduled a time to participate in a recorded telephonic interview that lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. In the time that elapsed between the assessments and the follow-up interview, participants were asked to reflect on the information they received from the assessments and how it impacted their work as a Zumba Presenter.

This final recorded telephonic interview followed a semi-structured interview question set and discussed how the results of the two assessments entered the discussion concerning qualities of thriving Zumba Presenter. The assessment results provided vocabulary to discuss the impact of certain qualities of the participants and how that impacted their ability to thrive as a Zumba Presenter. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The audio files from the interviews were erased once the transcripts had been created. De-identified transcripts were retained and could be used as a teaching tool for supporting skill development related to qualitative data coding. The use of these anonymous transcripts were explained in the informed consent document that participants signed prior to participation.

Data Analysis

The assessment scores were used to inform the interviews. A content analysis of the transcripts was used to compare the existence and frequency of themes that emerge.

“Content analysis is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text” (Weber, 1990, p. 117). The processes that were used to identify and define themes in the transcripts followed those established by Stockdale (Stockdale, 2002). In this process, within each question, themes were identified and appropriate quotes were included within each theme. Each theme was coded so that it could be pulled and used accordingly.

Generalization of Results

This qualitative study was designed to help understand the complexity surrounding thriving as a Zumba presenter. The results were used to expand our understanding of potential traits, characteristics, and skills in group fitness leadership, and could inform fitness leadership training. The findings were exclusive to a single group of fitness master trainers and jammers and cannot generalize a larger group.

Chapter Four: Results

This chapter: (a) overviews the population that participated in the study; (b) presents the results, illustrated in theme charts and graphs; (c) shares the results of the personality and strengths testing; (d) offers an overview of some of the themes the respondents predicted would be consistent; and, finally, (e) discusses the themes that emerged consistently among the participants of this study.

Population Description

Three Zumba Education Specialists (ZESs) and three Zumba Jammers (ZJs) completed the study. Two of the ZESs were female (Charlotte and Alice) and one was male (Matt); this ratio was the same with the ZJs (Camila and Sophia; Liam). All individuals who started the research process qualified for the entire study.

Of the ZJs, Camila and Liam were in their first year in the role and Sophia has been in the role for several years. Of the ZESs, Alice considered herself a part of an exclusive group of individuals who are regularly contacted for elite opportunities. Alice described the experience: “I get an awesome opportunity as an Education Specialist to be one of their top talent that’s selected to do photo shoots, DVDs, and other projects within the company that revolve around doing choreography or just being more of an ambassador and a face for the program.” Matt and Charlotte had been with the company for many years; Charlotte was even one of the first sets of ZESs for Zumba, originally referred to as “master trainers.” All of the participants were very visible in the Zumba

community, appearing on marketing materials, social media posts, and in special events such as Livestream classes, convention sessions, conference appearances, and other special opportunities.

There were various reasons why participants first began Zumba; however, several of the respondents noted that an individual such as a spouse, sibling, or friend invited them to try the format. Another reason was to lose weight, more specifically after the birth of a child. Alice explained: “if you would have asked me back when I was in high school if I would ever have a career in the fitness industry, I would have said no way because I honestly did not like working out; I didn’t like fitness... I just fell in love with [Zumba]. I fell in love with the program, I fell in love with the personalities that I started to meet...and I just instantly felt like it was something that I wanted to be a part of, and on a much greater scale.”

Of the nine respondents, almost all had some sort of background in fitness and/or dance prior to starting Zumba. Some were group fitness instructors at a facility, other had grown up in a culture that incorporated dance and music in their lives or in a family that encouraged dance or performance, and others studied the field in a formal manner at a university. Three respondents had professional dance background prior to Zumba, so the format came naturally to them; however, they had to gain fitness industry knowledge to complement their background. Five of the respondents also previously had their group fitness certification through a recognized body such as ACE or AFAA, which is a requirement for both roles of ZES and ZJ. Those who had a background in fitness most likely had a group fitness certification or some sort of general group fitness instruction experience.

There was less variation occurring within the ZJs compared to the ZESs, as two of the ZJs had a moderate background in fitness and dance and one had experience in neither. The ZESs had more extensively professional backgrounds than the ZJs, as only the ZESs had professional dance backgrounds or a degree in the fitness field.

Name	Matt	Charlotte	Alice	Camila	Sophia	Liam
Background	Degree in Fitness	Degree in Fitness	Professional Dance Background	Grew Up Dancing; Moderate Fitness Experience	Grew Up Dancing; Moderate Fitness Experience	No Prior Experience
Experience	Experienced	Experienced	Elite	First Year	Experienced	First Year
Role	ZES*	ZES	ZES	ZJ**	ZJ	ZJ

*Zumba Education Specialist (master trainer)

**Zumba Jammer

Figure 1: ZES and ZJ Profiles

Qualifications to Thrive Within the Field

Each of the respondents focused on different aspects of his or her role. The two roles of ZJ and ZES are very similar. A ZESs role is to travel to different locations around the United States or the globe, depending on the territory of the ZES. They are responsible for communicating with the facility; securing the location; ensuring the location is fit for the training; marketing the training; arranging their travel accommodations; providing appropriate supplies for the training such as a laptop, slideshow presentation, and other specialty materials; and conducting necessary administrative tasks such as inputting completion records. A ZJs role is similar in that they also are responsible for communicating with the facility; securing the location; ensuring the location is fit for the workshop; marketing the training; arranging their travel accommodations; providing appropriate supplies for the workshop such as the printed

choreography notes; and conducting necessary administrative tasks such as inputting completion records. However, the ZJs all also noted that their role included being a community leader, networking with other instructors, and being involved in their immediate community in the form of teaching classes, being a part of events, and supporting other instructors. Another ZES did note that in their particular role, one should be a role model for others, similarly to how the ZJs described their role; however, much of the scope was to be well known and be able to fill master classes and trainings.

The qualifications to become a ZJ or ZES included a combination of the following: one or more group fitness certifications through ACE and/or AFAA; liability insurance; CPR and AED certifications; additional trainings such as Basics 2 and Pro Skills (ZES); a ZIN member in good standing; video submissions; and face to face interviews.

Qualifications have varied a bit over the last decade and have become more specific. Some of the ZESs noted that the company was willing to work with them to obtain all of the necessary qualifications when they first were hired; however, now the company was less lenient. One ZES pointed out that “right now it’s not the same as it was starting the company...there are a lot of people who want this job so they’re a lot more picky.”

When asked if respondents thought the minimum qualifications were exhaustive in necessary qualities that were needed to thrive within the role, some responded with “yes” and some responded with “somewhat.” However, when broken down into ZJs and ZESs, all 3 ZJs answered with “yes,” while only one ZES agreed. When probed for additional qualities that would be useful to thrive within their role, respondents included

such qualities as more education, marketing, team player, relationships, social/people skills, presenter personality, teaching skills, Pro Skills training, a drive for continuing development, finance (business skills), and adaptability within the fitness industry.

Matt confessed: “Honestly I don’t think any of those fitness exams helped me do anything.” Charlotte echoed the idea: “I think Zumba does not necessarily require the amount of education that it takes to do this job.” Many ZESs made the specific point that the minimum education required to get into the role is simply a minimum qualification; it does not necessarily mean that an individual will thrive in his or her role. Lastly, Alice noted “sometimes I feel like having the certifications are almost things that look good on paper, but you also have to have a specific personality to be able to present and be likeable among people who want to come and take your trainings...some of those things aren’t necessarily things that I think people can learn, I think they’re almost innate abilities that people have.”

The participants were then asked what were traits of a thriving ZJs or ZESs, many types of qualities were mentioned. The vision was quite varied; however, several themes of having full trainings or workshops; helping others live healthier and happier lives; and helping instructors have successful classes were common qualities of a thriving ZES or ZJ. Other themes that emerged were to be respected among other Zumba instructors or even others within the same leadership role; having people travel to specifically take a jam or training with a particular ZJ or ZES; that the individual connects and gets to know others; and some simply said that a thriving ZJ or ZES was someone who’s sharing his/her passion with others.

One of those abilities that was repeated time and time again was passion. Passion, according to the Zumba Pro Skills training manual, was the most important quality of a thriving Zumba instructor, and arguably any group fitness instructor. Several respondents spoke of passion as instrumental. “Passion is what really attracts people to you. When they see that you are genuinely excited and in love and just fired up over something, people want to be around people like that...you cannot teach people passion,” said Camila.

These desired qualities varied between ZJs and ZESs. There was a noticeable leaning towards community building and instructor enrichment among ZJs, while ZESs had some more business-minded responses as to what thriving means in their role. Matt pointed out “I can post as many trainings as I want but that doesn’t mean that people are going to sign up...if I’m flying somewhere then I have to make sure that I make enough money to make the trip worth it.” However, he continued, striking a balance between seeking sensible business choices and yet seeking to satisfy the participants was necessary: “if you’re business minded all of the time people see right through that.” The ZES’s role required a little more financial risk in paying to post, travel, and invest hours in teaching a training, so being a little more business minded was beneficial to their ability to not lose money on long trips across the globe.

Next, respondents were asked what qualities they personally possess that have been most beneficial to them in their journey towards a thriving Zumba presenter. Five of the respondents noted that connecting with others and people skills have been incredibly beneficial to them. Four of the respondents specifically spoke about being their authentic, honest self as a top quality. Whether it was to project themselves in an honest

way or to be relatable to others, being authentic and real was a quality that many noted as helpful in connecting and thriving. Some other responses were brutally honest, noting being pretty and young as something that has been helpful to them, as they have thrived in the field. Charlotte noted:

...it can be disheartening to see things you don't think should be going on in other people's classes are highlighted as the standard because they're popular or they're pretty or strong... It's not a performance-based job. There are so many other factors involved and you have to be willing to let that go...this is one of the few industries where hard work does not equate success.

Again, there appeared to be a difference between ZESs and ZJs in their responses. The particular qualities that the ZJs focused on were centered around people skills and community building, more than likely since the idea of a thriving ZJ seems to be focused on relationship and community-building while ZESs tended to have more business and matter-of-fact responses. Camila said, "I like to connect with people. I like to talk to people, I like to kind of get into their business. I like to talk to people and get to know a little bit more about them." Sophia pointed out:

...staying connected, networking, and having true connections, building true relationships is a main thing. And I think if you don't have that, I don't think you'll make it as a jammer because we're here to serve. I think that is something that needs to be on the top of our mind, on top of our lists. We are here to serve, not to shine.

When asked if that connection is necessary to thrive within the field, Sophia continued:

I would say are the most ‘popular’ have that...at least the ones that I’ve met, and I think that’s the reason why they are where they are, because I’ve seen a lot of humility. And when you talk to them, their feet are on the ground and I [have] seen how pride has been a big stumbling block for some other people who might be incredibly talented...I think in the long run, whether you get to the top with or without humility, if you don’t have it, you’re going to fall down. I don’t think you can stay up there too long without it.

Liam explained that they are “ambassadors of the program and so we have to make sure that we’re doing it properly because ZIN members look up to us to see what we do.” Many of the ZESs also mentioned connecting with others, but again, it was as a means to fill classes and gain more recognition. There was a focus on utilizing those connections for a productive purpose.

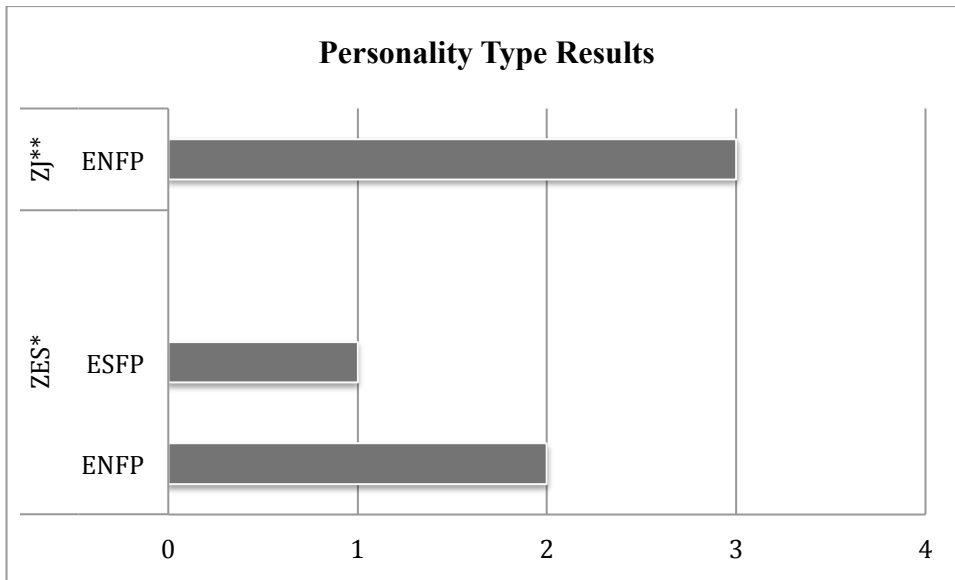
Lastly, respondents were asked if they believed that the qualities that have been so helpful and instrumental for them would also be consistent with their peers. A few respondents ventured to affirm that the qualities they suggested should be universal, such as being authentic and having a continued desire to learn; however the majority of the respondents were sure that there would be much variation in suggested qualities from respondents.

Another ZES felt certain qualities should be consistent among others in this role: “You need to really believe what you are teaching to other people...everything is about the passion, everything is about the knowledge, everything is about [how] honest you are with the people.” Several other participants who believed there would be consistency

noted the following traits: passion, connecting with others, and continuing to learn; however, these, it seemed, could show up in different ways in different people.

Personality Type Results

Out of the 16 possible personality types, only one ESFP and five ENFPs resulted in this study.



*Zumba Education Specialist (master trainer)
 **Zumba Jammer

Figure 2: Personality Type Results

Breaking down the results between the ZESs and the Jammers, the study showed one ZES recording an ESFP result and two ZES recording an ENFP result. However, all three ZJs were ENFPs. This finding seems to correlate with their desire to build communities and connect with instructors. Sophia agreed with these results: “I do find myself in situations where I am the encourager and I do have lots of people who call me when they are trying to accomplish something.”

The ENFP is also known as the Campaigner or the Encourager and the ESFP is also known as the Performer. ESFP personality types are described as people who “spontaneously breaking into song and dance... No other personality type is as generous with their time and energy as ESFPs when it comes to encouraging others, and no other personality type does it with such irresistible style” (16 Personalities, 2017). This personality type made sense with the performer aspect of the position, having to present and put on a show for masterclasses. The ENFP personality type is described as someone who enjoys the “social and emotional connections they make with others” (16 Personalities, 2017). This personality type was the only type among the Zumba Jammers, which correlated with their common themes of community building and connections with others. There was, however, an even split between the ZESs of the two personality types.

StrengthsFinder Strengths Results

In total, the Top Five Strengths were: four with Positivity, three with Includer, three with Relator, three with Adaptability, three with Empathy, two with Communication, one with Developer, one with Connectedness, one with Input, one with Futuristic, one with Activator, one with Woo, one with Maximizer, one with Harmony, one with Belief, one with Responsibility, one with Arranger, and one with Ideation.

According to the *Strengths Based Leadership*, strengths fall into four different categories: 1) *strategic thinking (st)*, 2) *executing (e)*, 3) *influencing (i)*, and 4) *relationship building (rb)* (Gallup, 2016). Of the 30 different strengths results from the six respondents, 19 of the 30 top strengths were in the *relationship building* category. Five of the 30 top strengths were in the *influencing* category. Three strengths were in the *strategic thinking* category, as well as three strengths in the *executing* category.

Overwhelmingly, *relationship building* was the most common type of strength evident in the respondents. No single respondent had all five top strengths in the *relationship building* category; however, every respondent had at least one strength in *relationship building* and at least one strengths from another category.

All StrengthsFinder Strengths (ZESs and ZJs**)*

<u>Strength</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>ZESs</u>	<u>ZJs</u>
Positivity	Relationship Building	2	2
Includer	Relationship Building	1	2
Communication	Influencing	0	2
Adaptability	Relationship Building	2	1
Empathy	Relationship Building	3	0
Relator	Relationship Building	2	1
Maximizer	Influencing	1	0
Harmony	Relationship Building	1	0
Responsibility	Executing	1	0
Belief	Executing	1	0
Ideation	Executing	1	0
Arranger	Executing	0	1
Futuristic	Strategic Thinking	0	1
Activator	Influencing	0	1
Woo	Influencing	0	1
Developer	Relationship Building	0	1
Connectedness	Relationship Building	0	1
Input	Strategic Thinking	0	1

*Zumba Education Specialist (master trainer)

**Zumba Jammer

Figure 3: All StrengthsFinder Strengths (ZESs and ZJs)

When broken down, two of the three ZJs found Communication, Includer, and Positivity in their Top Five Results. Of the Top Five Results among ZESs, all three respondents had Empathy in their Top Five. Additionally, two of the three also had Relator, Positivity, and Adaptability in common.

Participant Predicted Themes

At the conclusion of the interview, the participants were asked what they expected would be common to find among their peers. Some of the respondents replied with some of their strengths that they believed were truly integral to success, such as connectivity, communication, and developer. Other respondents responded with both positive strengths and possible weaknesses that also might show up consistently like a love for people, being a people pleaser, and organization. One particular trait was consistent among all respondents: people skills. In addition to specifically naming people skills, other respondents expanded on that idea to include aspects of people skills such as relating to others, sociable, a love for people, connectivity, developer, comfortable in front of people, and positivity.

Key Emerging Themes

Several of the predictions that individuals made were consistent among all respondents. All participants spoke of people skills and all had at least one of their Top Five Strengths as a *relationship building* strength. In addition to people skills, passion, a thirst for knowledge, adaptability, and taking risks were also woven into many of the stories told by participants.

Respondent Profiles

The following table represents the personality and strength profile combinations of the participating ZESs and ZJs to demonstrate the unique combinations.

	Matt	Charlotte	Alice	Camila	Sophia	Liam
Personality Type	ENFP ⁺	ESFP [#]	ENFP	ENFP	ENFP	ENFP
Strength #1	Adaptability (rb ¹)	Adaptability (rb)	Positivity (rb)	Positivity (rb)	Adaptability (rb)	Futuristic (st)
Strength #2	Positivity (rb)	Relator (rb)	Relator (rb)	Includer (rb)	Positivity (rb)	Includer (rb)
Strength #3	Empathy (rb)	Harmony (rb)	Belief (e)	Relator (rb)	Developer (rb)	Activator (i)
Strength #4	Includer (rb)	Responsibility (e ³)	Empathy (rb)	Arranger (e)	Connectedness (rb)	Woo (i)
Strength #5	Maximizer (i ²)	Empathy (rb)	Ideation (st ⁴)	Communication (i)	Input (st)	Communication (i)

⁺Personality Typology consisting of Extrovert, Intuitive, Feeling, and Perceiving

[#]Personality Typology consisting of Extrovert, Sensing, Feeling, and Perceiving

¹StrengthsFinder *Relationship Building* category

²StrengthsFinder *Influencing* category

³StrengthsFinder *Executing* category

⁴StrengthsFinder *Strategic Thinking* category

Figure 4: Personality and Strength Profiles

Passion

Many of the participants spoke of passion; some in general with fitness while some spoke of Zumba specifically. Charlotte told a story of when she first knew she wanted to get into this role in some capacity. She saw a master trainer that she admired and approached her at a conference:

I want to do what you do; I want to get on stage and I want to educate people. And she just kind of looked at me and she said ‘Well okay: you’re never home; you’re home like two or three days a week; you never sleep; you’re always marketing yourself; and your whole life becomes what it is that you are traveling about. If that sounds interesting to you then you go right ahead.’ Literally walked off...I was kind of bummed about her response. It wasn’t encouraging. It wasn’t helpful...but I still wanted to do what she did. I wanted to educate people, and it wasn’t so much being on stage, I just wanted to teach. And I think it took me probably 15 years to figure out that teaching is my passion.

Charlotte still pursued this role with unrelenting passion. Many participants echoed this mentality; regardless of the obstacle, participants reported persevering due to unwavering passion for the role, format, or brand. Alice spoke about how she found her passion for the format almost instantaneously: “I just fell in love with it. I fell in love with the program, I fell in love with the personalities that I started to meet...and I just instantly felt like it was something that I wanted to be a part of, and on a much greater scale.” She went on to work diligently to get her face out to the right people and become top talent within the company. Participant after participant spoke of passion for the format, for educating, for building community, for people, to inspire, and to help change lives.

In the Zumba Pro Skills Training manual (Zumba Fitness, 2013), the materials cited passion as the very first and foremost important quality of a successful instructor or leader in Zumba. In creating the program, Zumba looked at the research and found much emphasis on continuing education and technical skills; however, when actual directors and leaders within the industry were asked, passion was the number one quality that was believed to make the most impact. Sophia pointed out “you need to know what you are talking about, but if you don’t have that passion that goes with it, then you’re not going to get anywhere.” Having passion (for the format, the position, helping others), it seemed, was the foremost quality of any thriving individual.

People Skills

As mentioned in the previous section, all of the respondents argued that having people skills in some manner was absolutely essential to thriving within the role. Over and over again, participants named people skills, empathy, and connecting with others as integral to success in their role. Through the scope of communication, Alice touched on the idea of relating and connecting with others in many aspects of their work:

I've always valued having really good communication skills, and I think that that helps a lot in my particular skills just because I do that skill with so many personality types that I teach. So being able to communicate and being able to recognize how people are feeling and what their personality is communicating to me... it helps me approach them in a way that makes them most comfortable in a learning setting...so many people come in and think I'm not the right body type, I'm not the best dancer, or I'm young, or I'm too old, or... and there's just such a different mentality in Zumba. And in the Zumba family where there's this idea that like all walks of life are accepted and so you know when you're standing in front of a group of people you can sense those that feel that certain way and those who are nervous or intimidated or scared. It helps being able to relate or empathize with people, it helps you almost adjust your learning plan because you have to be able to reach every person in the room, and if there's 50+ people in the room, you have to be able to think quickly and change your plan quickly if something doesn't feel right, and you can sense that with people in the room.

This connection seemed essential to thriving within the field. Several respondents tied this idea to being real or authentic with others or having "realness" in interpersonal interactions.

Another ZES argued that being authentic was the most important quality any individual could have in this role. She explained:

I'm very real. I'm the same person right now talking to you, I'm the same with anyone...with my family, friends, in my trainings...I'm very down to earth and relatable because I feel that that is so much more important than pretending that

you are perfect, pretending that you're always nice, that you're always in a 100% good mood, nicest person ever stepped foot on the planet. That's not real. I feel that it's better to be real and relatable, because it's the people who have the power not the ZESs.

Charlotte spoke of honesty almost as second nature to her: "I think it's just a compulsion to be honest. I feel disingenuous if I'm not doing it, but I also don't feel as effective. I have a hard time making my point or being effective with something if I'm not also being honest." Matt echoed his thoughts in being authentic and real rather than putting on a front: "if you're business minded all of the time people see right through that." The idea of being a little transparent, or at least knowing when to appear a little transparent, gave the audience a sense of knowing them and connecting with them.

On the other side, Matt also connected with the possible weakness of being a people pleaser, "caring too much, and wanting the people to like us...caring, almost to a fault sometimes, about what other people think, and if people like what you are doing." Many respondents strongly noted that as a considerable obstacle. Sophia spoke of being overwhelmed with the experience of the instructors:

When I'm choreographing new music for my ZIN jam sessions, sometimes I find myself wondering if I'm giving people too hard of combinations, or...I want to make sure that everybody is happy and everybody learned the songs, and nobody thought they were too hard. And at the same time, I like to push people to grow because I see them like little goldfish in a tank, you know, and if I don't give them that combination that will be a little bit more difficult, I feel like they're not going to grow. So sometimes that has been a hindrance, because some people

might get turned off by it, and that upsets me because I want people to be happy with the services I am providing them.

Matt spoke on being a people pleaser because he just wanted to make “sure that everyone has a great experience” in his trainings and classes. Charlotte in particular was incredibly gifted with the strength of empathy and explained:

...being with people and wanting them to have a good time and being able to respond to them and how they are feeling in the moment has been really helpful for me. I think that has really led to part of my success is that I am personable, and so that helps me, that helps people like me, connect with me, it helps them, you know, enjoy our time together which is really helpful.

It seemed like this particular quality could be both a strength and an obstacle in this role. Alice gave an example: “I feel in situations where things have gone wrong in a training...I can adapt to it really quickly and I can change it...I don’t want it to ruin the experience of the other people, so I figure out what I have to do to fix it in those types of stressful situations. So I feel like in a professional atmosphere when things get stressful, I can adapt, and find a way to take the stress out of it.” These people skills and being highly aware of others helped to move these professionals through difficult situations.

Several of the respondents spoke of overcoming, or working on overcoming, that obstacle of being a people pleaser. Sophia explained:

I don’t take things personal because when certain Jammers get very upset they can get a little flustered and just short and rude, but I know it’s not personal. So I adapt to that, and I think that has been one very good thing with working with other Jammers that are very different from myself. And not just Jammers, just

ZIN members and students, I think I can adapt to a lot of different kinds of personalities so, like I think because I'm an encourager. I think I also try to help people open their eyes a little more and help them to see it's not really such a big deal that things have shifted, or our plans have been changed.

Alice spoke of overcoming her prior focus on what others thought of her: "my success is based off of if I'm doing better than I did the last time, not necessarily what other people think." A mixture of adapting, a reoccurring strength, and tapping into their many relationship building strengths assisted participants in largely overcoming people pleasing obstacles.

A Thirst for Growth

While formal education was not a major necessary theme, the desire to continually learn and grow was a reoccurring theme. Individuals spoke of taking time every day to focus on something to help move along their career and keep them thriving. Another ZES spoke of her inspiration, the creator of Zumba, Beto Perez:

I think Beto probably inspires [me] the most...it is his baby...if he wanted to, he could just sit back and collect a paycheck and just experience life at every front. But he does not stop, because he always wants it to be the best that it can be. In order to be the best, you can't ever stop reaching; you got to constantly do more, be more, reach for more, and so that really inspires us and motivates us to never get comfortable but to continue on and continue to better ourselves... Don't feel that you've arrived just because you become a ZES or a master trainer.

Charlotte spoke about constantly working towards getting better and refining her skills: "when I'm home, I'm teaching classes, creating choreography, working on the drills, or working on details for trainings to make sure that I understand the materials so when I

deliver, it's seamless." This constant working towards getting better and refining skills was a common thread among respondents.

When asked to place themselves on the Cantril Self-Anchoring Scale, where respondents selected a number representation from 0 to 10 rating how satisfied they were with their career situation, several participants shared a common desire to never reach 10, regardless of how hard they persevere towards their goals. Alice explained: "I don't want to say 10 because that means I have no further to go...I never want to put myself at the top because I want to keep myself in a place where I always have to grow and I have to push myself to more." Camila placed herself "in the middle, maybe a bit higher at a 7. I don't want to go low because I definitely don't hate what I am doing. I absolutely love it. Do I think there's still some more growth? Yes, absolutely. That's why I can't put myself as a 10 because I think there's always room for growth and [to] learn and continue to become even better than what I was yesterday." Lastly, another ZES noted keeping herself challenged as a reason why she never wanted to come to that end number on the scale: "I hope that I never feel I have reached a 10 because I don't want to ...get comfortable; I like being challenged." There was a consistent drive to always stay learning, never reach an end-goal, and yet always strive to keep progressing towards something more.

Many noted that they have worked to earn other licenses, certifications, and complete independent learning often. Camila was hard at work immediately before her second interview:

I was choreographing about 40 minutes on a salsa, and it had a clave beat that I just couldn't get. And I thought to myself: you know what, I have to work on this

clave beat. So I went on a website, and I was taking a course, like an hour and a half course, on salsa beat, and it was very basic stuff that I probably already, hopefully, knew. But I knew if I watched this course, I would be able to perfect that step and get that little clave out of the way for this salsa I have in a jam session coming up. So yeah, I do love to spend time learning, and I was so completely focused...I love learning, and I love re-learning the same thing over and over again. I love knowledge.

Another ZES noted a constant immersion into the field: "I try to find what is coming now, what is trending now in the fitness world. What is happening now, who are the best instructor[s], not just Zumba, but also in other programs to know what is going on in the fitness world, because we are working on it. And also, I try to improve myself...I think everyone has to continue studying, continue growing every day." This thirst for knowledge, especially within the fitness field, aided these individuals to be ready for changes in interest.

Another ZES pointed out, "fitness change[s] all the time...and we can't think that we know everything." Matt noted, "it's keeping up with trends and what people want and not forcing the forecast." He went on to divulge some of the formats he was working on learning better to prepare for what he believed was coming next. Being prepared for the ebbs and flow of the industry was nearly always on the minds of respondents. Another ZES noted that "we don't know how many opportunities we are going to have in the future or not, we just have now. And now is the moment to do everything." Liam retold that was how he got into his current role: "I don't fear saying yes to anything...even if I don't know how to do something...I don't fear saying yes when opportunity knocks on

my door.” When he applied for his current role, he had simply jumped in and said yes to the opportunity. In his second interview, Liam continued to speak of this idea of taking risks as integral in his success:

I’m not afraid to just jump on something and start doing it. Even though I might not know what the outcome might be, I’m just like whatever, I just get it started...I’m really an advocate about people saying yes to opportunities, even if they don’t know what it’s going to turn out to be. Even if they don’t know how to do it, because you can always learn later. And that opportunity may come up again, ...so we just need to say yes and jump on it when it’s presented to you.

Being able to take those risks and adapt towards future trends in the industry allowed these individuals to continue to thrive as the demand for certain programs changed.

Zumba may not always be as popular as it is currently, and if these thriving individuals desired to stay thriving in the field, they had to be willing to take risks, adapt to new trends, and be in a place of learning.

Introverts vs. Extroverts

Lastly, would any introverts show in this study? Many of the participants had strong opinions as to whether or not introverts or extroverts would be present in this role, and if introverts could even thrive within this role successfully. Some of the participants hesitantly chose extroverts, like Liam: “My initial thoughts are to definitely say extroverted, because we are always meeting new people. So I definitely think we need to be that people person, like to be around people.” Charlotte firmly believed that all people in this presenter role would be extroverts. “I think they’re all going to be extroverts. I think some of them might be like me and they might be on the line, um, but I don’t think an introvert could do this job.” However, several participants cited personal friends or

colleagues who seemed to be more introverted as examples that it could be done. Sophia noted: “I know a couple of introverts, and I’ve worked with some of them before, and I think when it comes to them having to be social, they know how to get out of their comfort zones and do it.” Camila cited one of her close friends as an example of a thriving introvert:

One of my best friends is an introvert. Put her in front of a Zumba class and she’s a completely different person. She needs that to become this person that sometimes she’s too shy to show. So I guess that you don’t have to be an extrovert. I think in the grand scheme of things it doesn’t matter. It helps, but it doesn’t matter... if you would have asked me five years ago if you have to be an extrovert, I don’t think that’s true...some people think you have to be an extrovert to be successful, that couldn’t be further from the truth.

Other respondents focused on the people skills aspect. Teaching group fitness could bring some individuals out of their shell, which could bring forth this ideal presenter that many participants described. Alice retold:

I think that there’s a mix of the two. I’m kind of thinking about when we all get together in our annual meeting, and how we kind of discuss and talk with people...there’s definitely some people who speak up more and are more loud or offer their opinion more, and then there [are] definitely those people who will kind of lean back and offer their opinion later. So I think that you definitely have a little bit of both... but we all hold the same role.

It seemed there could be some introverts out there in this role, but they simply did not take part in the study. Matt pointed out that “maybe it’s just my own circles... like who I

hang out with the most are the more introverted, and we're kind of forcing ourselves to be more extroverted."

All of the respondents resulted as extroverts in their personality profile, and all of the respondents were heavily gifted with people skills, so the question begs if they were correct in their thinking. Some shared that their results put them towards the middle of the spectrum, that they may have introverted tendencies, and those individuals described situations in which they had to break out of their shell and overcome those "shy" tendencies. For some, coming across as full of energy in the performer role was a struggle at times. Camila cited her extroverted personality as a great strength in thriving: "although it's not a requirement to teach in the Zumba world, because I know plenty of people who are not, and they are fantastic instructors, I do think it helps me." The ability to use energy rather than be exhausted by the incredible stimulation of being in the spotlight was definitely an upper hand that extroverts have. However, it seemed that the importance of people skills and the ability to push through those possibly exhausting obstacles was more important than being an extrovert.

Answering the Research Questions

How does the current research on education and development, connection and enjoyment, and empowerment and motivation match up with the experience of current Zumba presenters?

Some of the key themes from the literature review appeared in the responses of the participants. For example, many of the participants described their passion for continued learning and development, citing a drive for development as a trait of a thriving presenter. A few spoke of their continuing development with such passion that they considered it their full-time job to stay up-to-date with the happenings of the field.

People skills could manifest in deep connections with others. It was difficult to create connections if an individual lacked people skills.

However, enticing motivation, eliciting empowerment, or forcing enjoyment weren't necessarily ideas participants discussed. Those concepts seemed to be secondary and consequential when development and connection were present. Passion, as most described, was instrumental in communicating the presenter's authenticity and positive energy.

What StrengthsFinder strengths and NERIS Type Explorer® personality traits characterize the Zumba presenters that participate in this study?

As described more richly in previous sections, the NERIS personality types present within this study were rather homogeneous. One ESFP, the Performer, was present while five ENFPs, the Campaigners, were present. Overwhelmingly, there seemed to be a trend in this position of extroverts, feeling, and perceiving.

While the personality types were relatively consistent, the StrengthsFinder strengths were varied. Some trends were evident, such as a large amount of *relationship building* strengths. However, there were individuals who had profiles very unlike others. There did not seem to be a trend or commonality among strengths beyond the type.

How do the Zumba presenters participating in this study view their own professional story within the context of their strength and personality traits results?

All of the participants noted that their personality and strengths reports “made sense” to them. Most of the individuals would describe the accuracy of the reports as “eerie” in how detailed they were, even in seemingly unrelated tendencies such as connecting the Includer strength with the unique trait of being more mentally alert in the afternoon.

Many of the second interviews, speaking of the personality and strengths results, could be tied into themes from the participant's first interview. Those who spoke of a great desire to build community had strengths like Communication, Connectedness, or Positivity while those who identified as creative innovators found Ideation as a strength. Participants who spoke of empathy and understanding had a top strength in Empathy and Harmony, while those who spoke of developing others had strengths in Maximizer and Includer.

The biggest difference in respondents was when the participant was aware of his or her strengths or not. For some, the results weren't surprising, but they noted they hadn't thought this deeply about themselves before. Others seemed to be much more aware of their tendencies and strengths and spoke about them with more ease. Others, while they may not have already known their strengths, found themselves drawing on them and performing much smoother after the experience. Overall, all participants noted how helpful the experience was to understanding themselves better and utilizing the experience to develop as an individual and professional.

What commonalities, if any, exist among Zumba presenters, their stories, their strengths, and their personality characteristics?

Some common themes among participants was utilizing and capitalizing on what made them different. If they had a background in dance or performance, they used that background to help them stand out as a dancer. If they had a passion for building community, they described that as their asset. If they were knowledgeable about fitness or the fitness industry, they allowed that to guide their career within fitness. There wasn't a consistent trait or background that truly led to successfully thriving within the field.

There were some trends within the StrengthsFinder strengths toward *relationship building* strengths. All participants had at least one top strength in *relationship building*, and most had more than one. Positivity and Includer were common strengths. Most of the participants with Positivity tended to express that strength in positivity towards their future and themselves. They were resilient to defeat and saw failure as an opportunity to grow. They didn't take no for an answer and relentlessly followed their passions. Their positivity also drew others to them, which assisted those who valued community to develop a positive, safe, welcoming space for all.

There was definitely a commonality among the personality types within this particular role. While there were 16 different possible types, only two were reported. Additionally, the only difference between the two reported typologies was one letter difference: sensing versus intuition. All respondents were extroverts. All respondents were feeling. All respondents were perceiving. While it may not be necessary to be one of these two typologies, it seemed there might be a commonality for these two types to thrive within this particular role.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the traits, characteristics, and personal stories of current thriving Zumba presenters through personal interviews, personality testing, and StrengthsFinder strengths assessment results to determine if there were any commonalities between individuals.

The most common personality type was the ENFP personality type. This was prevalent among the ZJs mostly, but also apparent with the ZESs. Taking the individual aspect of this personality type, this personality type is an extrovert (E); meaning individuals of this type thrive in stimulating situations. With the exciting and fast-paced life of a Zumba presenter, being an extrovert would be helpful. Introverts (I) tend to feel exhausted and drained in stimulating situations. So while it might be possible to be an introvert and in this role, it may be that those who thrive tend to be extroverted and not have to overcome such obstacles. This personality type is also strong in intuition (N); meaning individuals are full of possibilities and abstract thinkers. In this role, individuals tended to be thinking about the next step and take in impressions and patterns well. This allowed individuals in this role to adapt quickly, as many described adaptability as a trait that aided them well. There was one individual who was sensing (S), which meant this individual was grounded in the present and noticing details, which may also be helpful for an individual in this role (16 Personalities, 2017).

With the company of Zumba focusing so heavily on acceptance and reaching every individual, no matter how out of the fitness mold they may seem, may explain why so many in this role had feeling (F) in their personality type. Many of the participants spoke of being people pleasers and caring deeply about others, so this might lead into facets of their personality like passion for others, connecting with others, and authenticity. Lastly, all participants were perceiving (P) rather than judging (J). The ability to be flexible, go with the flow, be relaxed, and spontaneous was very common. Again, many participants spoke about adaptability being an important trait for someone to thrive within this intense role. As the personality type ENFP is commonly referred to as the “Campaigner,” it made sense that most of the aspects focused on building relationships and supporting a cause, brand, or idea (16 Personalities, 2017).

Looking into the combination of the traits, Isabel Meyers sectioned off each personality type into four different groups: the SPs, the SJs, the NFs, and the NJs. For most of the participants, they were an NF. NFs, according to Meyers, are “friendly to the core” and are very concerned that their family, friends, and acquaintances are having a good time (Keirse, 2009). Additionally, the specific personality type is so full of enthusiasm that they are seemingly “boundless” and “contagious” in their energy (Keirse, 2009). People “look toward them for wisdom, inspiration, courage, and leadership,” which puts them in a good place to be an educator and ambassador for a popular fitness company (Keirse, 2009). ENFPs have “outstanding intuitive powers” and are “unusually skilled in handling people” (Keirse, 2009). Additionally, ENFPs have a great positive outlook, tend to get bored in routine work, and work well as both teachers and in the communicative arts (Keirse, 2009). All of these attributes described

in the personality typology connect with the participants’ interview narratives and many of the strengths represented. This particular personality type is extremely people-centric, which, since respondents noted people skills again and again as a top necessary quality, it was no surprise that this trait was very present in all of the data.

Consequently, there was a high volume of *relationship building* strengths from the StrengthsFinder strength assessment. Most of the StrengthsFinder and personality results could be directly tied back to specific phrases and key concepts brought up in the initial interview. Participants valued building relationships with others and demonstrating how much they care for their community on a regular basis. With all of this emphasis on people skills, out of all of the possible categories of strengths, *relationship building* makes the most sense. Of the results, there were two individuals who were unique in their combinations of strengths and personality type.

	Matt	Charlotte	Alice	Camila	Sophia	Liam
Personality Type	ENFP ⁺	ESFP [#]	ENFP	ENFP	ENFP	ENFP
Strength #1	Adaptability (rb ¹)	Adaptability (rb)	Positivity (rb)	Positivity (rb)	Adaptability (rb)	Futuristic (st)
Strength #2	Positivity (rb)	Relator (rb)	Relator (rb)	Includer (rb)	Positivity (rb)	Includer (rb)
Strength #3	Empathy (rb)	Harmony (rb)	Belief (e)	Relator (rb)	Developer (rb)	Activator (i)
Strength #4	Includer (rb)	Responsibility (e ³)	Empathy (rb)	Arranger (e)	Connectedness (rb)	Woo (i)
Strength #5	Maximizer (i ²)	Empathy (rb)	Ideation (st ⁴)	Communication (i)	Input (st)	Communication (i)

⁺Personality Typology consisting of Extrovert, Intuitive, Feeling, and Perceiving

[#]Personality Typology consisting of Extrovert, Sensing, Feeling, and Perceiving

¹StrengthsFinder *Relationship Building* category

²StrengthsFinder *Influencing* category

³StrengthsFinder *Executing* category

⁴StrengthsFinder *Strategic Thinking* category

Figure 5: Personality and Strength Profiles

Charlotte was the only participant to go through the entire research process with the personality type ESFP. While the only difference was that second letter, S, all other respondents resulted in ENFP. Charlotte spoke of an incredible ability to sense other people.

I can be in an airport and tell my husband: that person is going through something traumatic; that person is really angry; that person is really you know happy. And he always is confused; he always thinks I'm making up stories in my imagination. He says that for years, you know, you're just imagining that. And I'm like no, it's clear as day, how come you can't see it?

Her strength of empathy became an almost psychic ability to read people. Many points in the interview, she spoke through the lens of this particular strength:

...being with people and wanting them to have a good time and being able to respond to them and how they are feeling in the moment has been really helpful for me. I think that has really led to part of my success is that I am personable, and so that helps me, that helps people like me, connect with me, it helps them you know enjoy our time together which is really helpful

While it may have been a one-letter difference in the personality typology, Charlotte still was able to make it a great strength that worked in her favor for situations that still tied closely to the ENFP personality type. It was possible that her N/S trait was borderline, which could mean that her S was not as extremely expressive.

The other individual who was slightly unique in the study was Liam. Liam did not have a top strength in *relationship building*. In fact, all of his strengths were geared more toward the other strength categories, with only one in *relationship building*, while other

participants were heavily in *relationship building*. However, many of his *influencing* strengths were people-heavy, such as Communication and Woo. Additionally, it seemed like one of his values was building relationships within the community, which may be why his personality type followed all the other participants. Liam specifically spoke often of “inspiring people.” He explained: “My huge thing with Zumba itself is just that I get a chance to inspire people.” One of his top indicators of a thriving Zumba presenter was someone who was “making those connections” with people in the community and inspiring others, regardless of being in the position of Zumba Jammer. He fit right into the conversation of many themes the other Jammers included in all of their interviews: community, networking, and positively impacting and inspiring others.

Implication of the Research

The implications of this study are mostly applicable to those who seek to thrive within the Zumba Fitness format as a presenter; however, this data can also provide themes to explore further concerning leadership in a multitude of ways. Overall, this study illuminates important issues that need further exploration regarding the implications of current thriving Zumba presenters and characteristics of thriving leaders, regardless of the field.

This study revealed that thriving within the role of a Zumba presenter wasn't necessarily about education, but passion (for the format, for people, for inspiring and teaching others, for the industry, etc.) and a drive for growth. According to Self-Determination Theory, “an interested, open, learning organism can better adapt to new challenges in changing contexts” (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Having passion for the format and for growth opens individuals to be better equipped to take on the changing, and

sometimes risky, fitness industry. As the popularity of certain formats ebb and flow, and as obstacles come to fruition, these traits may lead to the inclination to take risks, seek opportunities, and adapt to change. Passion and this desire for growth and learning would certainly lend itself to success in other fields as well. Being aware of their strengths and being their unique self impacted the respondents' ability to differentiate themselves from others and find their own niches, even within the same role.

People skills, having those relationship-building strengths, were present and, in the participants' opinion, incredibly important to success. This particular role relies heavily on the interaction and support of others. If other instructors and participants in their fitness classes didn't enjoy and support the ZESs and ZJs, their ability to thrive would greatly diminish. While this may not be the case for many companies in how leaders are chosen or deemed successful, the inclusion of people skills in a leadership or management role may be more important than previously believed. In many instances, managers are promoted from within a company to fill the leadership role without attention to whether or not their strengths align with the responsibilities of the new role; the individual may simply be good at what they do. However, once companies focus on the strengths of their employees and how well those strengths align with the realities of the new role, individuals could be better placed in roles that enable more success for the future (Gallup, 2015). The reality is that managerial roles tend to have different responsibilities than subordinate roles, which would require different strengths. Including these necessary strengths in the narrative of the hiring process would help to select candidates that truly reflect possible success for the company.

Current Training Practices

Currently, certifying bodies such as ACE and AFAA are moving towards all online, multiple-choice exams to deem an individual sufficient to lead group fitness classes. Attempting to capture an individual's level of passion and/or commitment is difficult through a simple multiple choice question format. However, these are the qualities of thriving presenters in one of the most popular fitness formats in the world. Other topics such as networking and marketing could be addressed better in the training if organizations were committed to having updated, best practices on the topics.

Overall, what thriving group fitness instructors were experiencing in the field and what certifying bodies are currently doing to deem an instructor prepared to be successful in the role do not seem to match up. Many respondents specifically stated that gaining their required certifications did them little assistance in thriving within the field and was referred to several times as "just a piece of paper." What is the point of paying for a national certification if the goal of the process isn't to help prospective instructors truly thrive as leaders of the group fitness classroom and in the industry?

Returning a live teaching portion of the exam to the process might assist in evaluating people skills and possibly allow for opportunities for networking among individuals. Additionally, encouraging self-discovery, possibly strengths and personality discovery, could also serve as beneficial in assisting aspiring group fitness instructors in finding what makes them unique to be better prepared to thrive in the role. These certifying agents should prepare aspiring group fitness instructors to not only qualify to teach group fitness classes, but guide individuals to thrive within the role as well.

Understanding Ourselves; Understanding Our Strengths

A major emerging theme from respondents was to understand what makes an individual unique and capitalizing on that, rather than trying to impersonate anyone else.

Another ZES told of her struggles when she first came into her role:

The first couple of years as a ZES, I was trying to look at what everyone else around me was doing, other ZES, and seeing what made them successful, and I tried to model myself after that person. I ended up very frustrated; I ended up very insecure, feeling like I was never enough, and the reason was because I'm not that person. I don't have that. We are all so different.

Many of the respondents echoed her thoughts in finding out what makes an individual tick and shying away from comparing one person to others. According to Sophia, the key was “not trying to compete and keeping yourself humble because there is always someone better than you.” It was evident that these thriving individuals already knew “everyone has their own strong points and if you can just tap into what you're... strong points are then...you will thrive in your own way.”

It was easy to get caught up in what others have. Charlotte revealed: “A lot of the ZESs that I know or trainers in the industry that I look up to don't have most of [my own] skills. They have a whole a whole other set of skills that I look at and think gosh I wish I had that.” Even the participants who have had wild success and have remained thriving in the field for many years still sometimes had to remind themselves of this notion.

However, the end realization was that “we have all sorts of personality which I think is beautiful thing. We have someone for everyone.” Perhaps these messages showcase what has made Zumba so successful? Alice pointed out:

I think one of the things that makes Zumba what it is the differences that are out there. So I think if we were all like carbon copies of each other, I think it wouldn't be as exciting, or as fun or fresh, because there are different people all over the world. So I think there are some core things that people in this role may need to have and will have, but then everybody is going to have something different that's going to make them unique in their role.

This theme persevered among participants. Having goals rooted in competency and mastery of skills rather than performance goals, trying to be like someone else, improved intrinsic motivation, enhance achievements, and improves overall wellbeing of individuals (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Several participants spoke of how they overcame feelings of inadequacy by focusing on their own strengths and unique qualities, shifting focus from external measures of success to nurturing existing internal qualities, and finding their own authentic self. Another ZES concluded: "We all have different things, in the industry or in the world, and that's what makes everyone shine."

Participants spoke of refining their existing strengths to assist them in thriving in the field. Camila explained that she worked on her strength of communication and found a way to shift from simply a great talker, to someone who can capitalize on different communication styles to gain trust and success:

I like to find the best way to communicate with them because not everyone understands things the same way or can read you the same way, that's something I've learned through the years because I am very direct sometimes. I say what I feel at the moment and I've learned in the past that that doesn't necessarily work

for everybody, so that's why I've learned to just listen to people and see their communication language and kind of go from there.

According to Dunn (1959), having a creative outlet to express emotion is paramount to the highest level of wellbeing, an outlet that these thriving individuals have through this dance format. Once this is achieved, individuals can experience “the fullness of life of which man is capable” (Dunn, 1959). This fullness of life could easily be expressed by thriving in their role. Liam specifically pointed out that his success came from “thinking and being different” from others. Finding out what made them unique and tapping into that strength helped these individuals to flourish in the field.

Several of the participants specifically noted how helpful these assessments had been in understanding themselves better. Sophia described the experience: “it was very interesting, thank you for sending it. I learned a lot about myself.” Many participants noted it was “scary how accurate these things” were and they “spot on.” Alice in particular found this exercise to be extremely helpful in making her more cognizant of what she was doing on a day-to-day basis to overcome obstacles. If a person understands who they are, their strengths, and then develop themselves through that lens, it can lead to more acceptance and peace with who an individual is and how they can better thrive.

Strength Discovery Leadership

In the second interview, Alice explained how she struggled with the personality and strengths test. She found herself doubting her answers: “I struggled a couple of times on exactly what to say on some of the questions I was like am I really this way, or am I just thinking that I am? So I actually took that test twice and I did switch some of my answers to see and it still came up with the same thing, which was interesting.” She explained, “After I took it, I seemed to rely on those strengths more the next couple of

days.” Alice’s mentality shifted to focusing on this new information that she learned about herself. For the next few days, she noticed that she started to stop and think, “Those are my strengths, so how can I use those as to help in my life or in my job or just build off of them?” The strengths revolution shifted the focus from how can an individual improve weaknesses and learn what they do not already know, filling in their gaps of knowledge, to focusing on what makes an individual unique, and how to capitalize on those strengths (Gallup, 2001).

Upon concluding the final interview, Alice made a point to say “I really love getting to take those and read about them, so I really liked that a lot,” drawing from her strengths and becoming more aware of what her natural abilities could do for her.

Additionally, Charlotte mused:

I kind of wonder if people who are not in tune with their own strengths would be good at this job because being up in front of people for that long, you have to rely on the things you do well because you are not always on your game for the whole eight hours. There are times you’re on your game and there are times when you are not. During a session with people, it’s very different getting to know a group over eight hours than over one or two [hours]...So I think all the ZESs will be attuned, whether they know it or not, they will be attuned to their strengths, because they all, I think, instinctually rely on them when they are in front of a crowd performing for a long period of time.

It seemed those individuals who were already aware of their strengths, (i.e. as a few participants seemed to capitalize on their natural strengths already) were struggling less than others to continue thriving and reaching a level of success they were satisfied with.

According to Gallup, leaders who know and have honed their strengths in their career do exceptionally well. Using strengths lead to experiencing more satisfaction and intrinsic motivation for daily challenges and tasks (Gallup, 2015). Those that used their strengths feel more effective, happier in their role, and more accomplished in their work (Gallup, 2012).

Once individuals understand their strengths and inner self, they can function optimally in their environment; without that understanding, there is turmoil and missed opportunity (Dunn, 1959). According to Gallup, those who use their strengths are six times more likely to be engaged in their jobs; six times as likely to do what they do best every day; and three times as likely to have an excellent quality of life” (Gallup, 2017). Understanding the strengths of an individual could be an incredible asset to thriving in any role. Camila took this notion of understanding her strengths a little further and expressed how she utilized her strengths in building teams for special projects in her Zumba career as well as her professional, daytime career.

Diverse Team Leadership

For most, innate strengths are not enough to truly thrive in every situation. Camila described how she utilized her strength of Arranger to specifically assist her in overcoming a weakness she had: being unfocused. She described her everyday life as: “I always get a lot of ideas, that weakness of not finishing things.” To combat that part of her personality, this participant surrounded herself with “people who are the complete opposite of me when it comes to those different talents...I literally can get a team together and make that great masterpiece.” According to Self-Determination Theory, the desire of competency allows “the unique talents of individuals in a group to become

maximized in niche-relevant ways, and this differentiation may in turn produce benefits for all group members” (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

In her second interview, Camila spoke of how capitalizing on the strengths of others also worked with her in her Zumba career in putting together events, speaking of a recent fundraiser she had put together for a needy family. This technique of building teams based on strengths could be incredibly helpful in completing larger tasks, organizing, events, and accomplishing great goals in the community. Whether helping others to figure out what their own strengths are and encouraging them, or finding out what they themselves are gifted at doing and refining that skill, Matt agreed that “finding out what makes people unique and then celebrating it all together and letting everyone shine and letting them do what they’re really good at” seemed to be the key to success for the community as a whole.

Gallup found in developing teams based on strengths that groups that focused on their strengths had better communication, collaboration, team dynamics, better productivity, and were more effective and committed (Gallup, 2015). Once teams were able to identify the strengths of members, individuals better understood each other, allowing more fluid execution of tasks (Gallup, 2015). Capitalizing on this knowledge, many companies have worked to identify and utilize the strengths of employees to achieve incredible spikes in productivity and positive leaps in company culture (Gallup, 2001).

Aspiring Thriving Zumba Presenters

With the many talent contests that Zumba Fitness runs throughout the years looking for special choreography for exclusive songs, occasions to present with well-known ZESs, and opportunities to travel and teach special masterclasses, understanding

the results from this study and the common themes could assist organizers and aspiring talent alike to better prepare themselves for success. By recognizing unique talents and utilizing diverse strength-sets, individuals can build better teams, ensuring more success for events, facilities, and projects.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to individuals who answered the email recruitment letter and followed through with the research process. Some of the obstacles included:

- **Difficulty communicating with individuals:** Emailing made communication slow. And with incredibly busy individuals who travel the globe representing the format, communication was difficult, and it sometimes took weeks to receive a response.
- **Availability:** Many of the respondents, especially the elite thriving ZESs, were incredibly busy and difficult to communicate with. A few responses were from assistants denying the study request.
- **Perceived lack of time:** Many of the individuals are very busy traveling every weekend or even to several locations within a weekend, so finding time to commit to the entire process was difficult, even with allowing several months to complete the process.
- **Concern of possible consequences:** A few individuals expressed concern of saying something that would get them in trouble. This concern seemed to keep a few individuals from participating in the study and a few expressed a desire to clear their participation through certain people before agreeing to continue.

Additionally, many of the individuals contacted for the study had experienced

some negative contacts with fans, as many are seen as celebrities within the Zumba world, so many were hesitant to participate for fear of how personal or invasive the study might be.

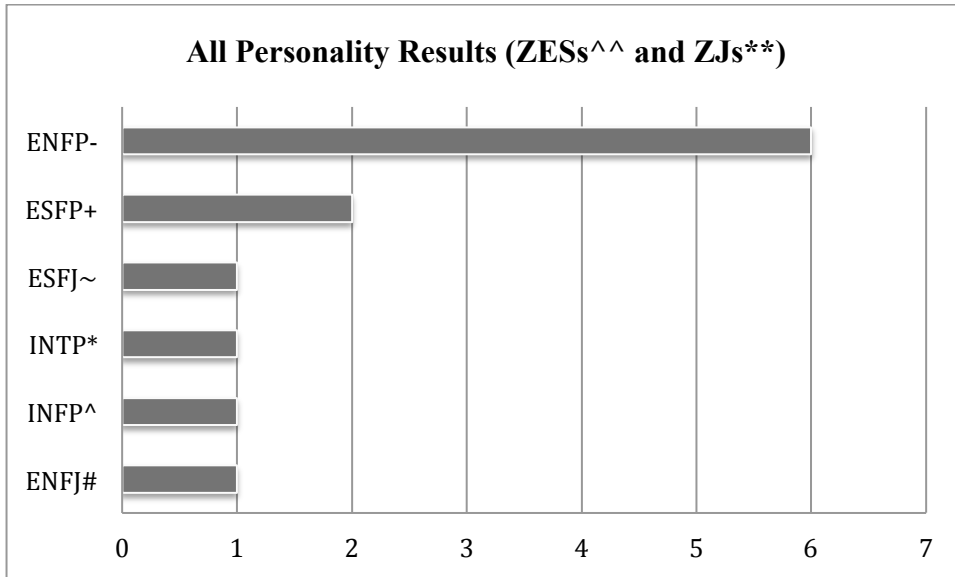
The limitations impacted the number of participants that agreed to participate and who were able to follow through. For some, it took weeks to come to the conclusion that it just wasn't going to work. For others, communication was slowed during the process to a point that we could not finish the process in the span of time allotted, which was several months. While having a larger window may have helped a few individuals, for many, it was a perceived lack of time rather than an actual lack of time. They were constantly traveling, so when they were available, this study wasn't a high priority. Combining this concern with perceived negative consequences in participating, many of the individuals were not interested in the process.

Recommendations for Future Research

Does the Personality Trend Continue?

In this study, only two personality types, ENFP and ESFP, showed up among participants. There seemed to be a possible trend in personality types common among Zumba presenters. After the conclusion of this study, some additional thriving ZESs and ZJs submitted their personality findings:

Only one ZJ had the ENFP result outside the study group. Other results included a similar ENFJ, another ESFP from a ZES, as well as two types that were not present in the study: introverts (INFP and INTP).



^^Zumba Education Specialist (master trainer)

**Zumba Jammer

-Personality Typology consisting of Extrovert, Intuitive, Feeling, and Perceiving

+ Personality Typology consisting of Extrovert, Sensing, Feeling, and Perceiving

~Personality Typology consisting of Extrovert, Sensing, Feeling, and Judging

*Personality Typology consisting of Introvert, Intuitive, Thinking, and Perceiving

^Personality Typology consisting of Introvert, Intuitive, Feeling, and Perceiving

#Personality Typology consisting of Extrovert, Intuitive, Feeling, and Judging

Figure 6: All Personality Results (ZESs^^ and ZJs)**

However, looking at the results through the scope of all 12 individuals who completed and submitted their personality results, there is a noticeable trend of ENFP in this particular presentation role. A few introverts resulted, which means that it is not impossible for introverts to be selected for and thrive in this role; however, further analysis into how introverts flourish within the role could lead to a greater understanding of how personality typology does or does not play a part in thriving as a Zumba presenter and leader within group fitness.

In the future, a larger sample size would be helpful to determine if these trends are truly descriptive of the population. A longer timespan would also be ideal, to work with the busy schedules of especially the elite ZESs. Or, if the Zumba Company was willing to

administer these tools at their annual ZES and/or ZJ meeting, the entire current population could be evaluated at once to determine if the trends in this study are representative of the larger population. Lastly, seeing if trends continue outside of Zumba: if these are universal trends or if they are dependent on this particular format? Are certain personality and strengths more present in mind/body classes rather than Bootcamp classes, versus dance classes or cycling classes?

Possible Implications of Future Research

If a trend does continue in personality types among individuals in this particular role or similar roles in other group fitness formats, it may be helpful in understanding the demands of this position. As this is still a new career path for many, the shape of the position and the responsibilities it entails changes with different formats and demand for the format presented. What is best for Zumba might not necessarily be best for Yoga or a Bootcamp-style class, as the formats and demographics of individuals participating in the formats can vary greatly. Individuals who desire to pursue a career presenting or training others in a format may have a better idea of the strengths that aid individuals to be more likely to thrive in that particular position.

Another avenue for future research would be to see how individuals who are considered “struggling” and “suffering” on the Cantril Self-Anchoring Scale would compare to those who are “thriving.” Questions arise as to whether or not the personality types or top strengths would be similar or different from those who are thriving within the role as the participants in this study were. If they are similar, what are the differences between the individuals? If they are different, are there truly certain personality types and strength-sets that thrive better in this role than others?

Additionally, if a trend does continue, this could be a topic to discuss in a group fitness instructor training: traits of individuals who thrive within the field. Do the aspiring instructors have some of the traits? If not, how will they problem-solve through situations in which their strongest strengths aren't as helpful? For example, if the individual does not have strong people skills, as this has been identified throughout the study as an important skill to have, how will an aspiring group fitness instructor work to bolster that trait or problem-solve through situations that may require more skills than they currently have?

While there were trends apparent in this study, this does not mean that individuals who do not fit the exact mold of thriving Zumba presenters in this study or in future studies will fail in the field. This study examined a specific group of individuals who filled a specific leadership role within the Zumba Company. There are many other leaders within the company that thrive in other important roles. Several participants in this study noted how diverse leadership was incredibly helpful in accomplishing tasks and promoting success. Some participants described a time when they needed an assistant with complementary strengths and qualities to help them thrive when their schedules were fuller. Without the diverse thinking, viewpoints, and strengths in the variety of leadership roles within the company, it could not have become so successful for so long. Diverse leadership is necessary.

This research is not meant to exclude a personality type or an individual with a very different Top Five Strength list. You can't be the best someone else, but you can be the best you. Much of the respondents' success was through discovering what made them unique and special and working on that aspect of themselves. The future leadership role

of an individual may shift as strengths, characteristics, and personalities are explored; however, utilizing natural abilities breeds more success, happiness, and effectiveness than attempting to replicate another individual. It may be that many of the individuals in this study shared some common factors, but they were not a homogenous group. To be truly successful, leadership can, and should, be heterogeneous.

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Appendices

Appendix A

First Interview

Introduction:

Hello _____, my name is LeeAnn Wilcox; it's nice to [meet you/see you again].

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me this [afternoon/morning] for my thesis research on the project entitled: Thriving in Group Fitness: An Exploration of the Strengths, Characteristics, and Professional Stories of Zumba Presenters.

We are interested in learning more about your experiences and perceptions involving the career of a Zumba presenter. The information we gather will be used to gain an understanding of what it takes to thrive within the group fitness field as a Zumba presenter and whether or not your experience matches up with the current research and training process.

In this interview, we will cover your background: what has led you to the position you are currently in. Next, we will discuss the term “thriving” and what that means. We will also cover what you believe are the skills or traits that you have that have been the most beneficial to you in your career. This interview should last between 30 minutes and an hour.

I have sent you the informed consent document for you to read. Please remember that anything that you say will be kept strictly confidential. This conversation is being recorded. I will transcribe this conversation and then remove your name and replace it with a pseudonym for any presentations or publications. All other identifying information will be removed. No one will get access to the interview apart from the myself and my research advisor. Please feel free to respond candidly and honestly. In addition, if you say something during the interview and decide later that you do not want us to use it, we can redact the tape and it will not be included.

I would like to remind you that your participation in this interview is entirely optional. You don't have to participate and there will be no penalty for not participating. If you decide to start and then part of the way through change your mind, it is okay to stop at any time.

Does everything sound okay? [Wait for response] Is it okay to begin? [Wait for response] Do you have any questions about the interview or any other information I have given to you before we begin? [Wait for response] Okay then, let's begin.

1. What drew you to Zumba? How did you discover this particular format?
2. What drew you to become a ZES/Jammer?

3. Tell me about what you do as a ZES/Jammer. What are you responsible for? What do you do for this role?
 - a. How did you get into this position?
 - b. Was this a field you have always been in? If not, what is your background in?
 - i. Describe your current level of knowledge in this field.
 - c. Were there any established qualifications to becoming a ZES/Jammer in Zumba? If so, do you remember what they were?
 - i. Have those qualifications changed since you've become a ZES/Jammer?
 - ii. The definition of thriving is described as an individual who is progressing or flourishing within his or her role. How have those qualifications matched with your experience of what is necessary to thrive within this role?
4. What does thriving as a ZES/Jammer mean to you?
 - a. How do you feel you do or do not match up to your own definition of a thriving master trainer?
5. The Cantril Self-Anchoring Scale was developed by Dr. Hadley Cantril for the purpose of identifying thriving individuals. A thriving ZES/Jammer is viewed as an individual who is more successful today than he or she was yesterday, and are projected to become even more successful tomorrow. Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible experience as a ZES/Jammer and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible experience as a ZES/Jammer.
 - a. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?
 - b. On which step do you think you will stand about five years from now?
6. According to the Cantril Self-Anchoring Scale, a thriving individual is one who selects a 7 or above on their current situation, noting it as positive, and an 8 or above for five years from now, again noting it as positive. Thriving individuals are described as “strong, consistent, and progressing.” According to the scale you are/are not seen as thriving. Do you agree with that assessment?
 - a. (If he/she self-identifies as a thriving Zumba presenter)
 1. What skills or traits do you believe were the most beneficial to you in your journey to thriving Elite ZES/Jammer?
 - a. Are these skills or traits things that *all* Elite ZESs/Jammers should have to be thriving? Or do you think these may vary from person to person?

Conclusion (If doesn't qualify):

Thank you for participating in this section of the research process. At this time, you do not qualify to move forward in the research process for the purpose of this study.

However, your insight is appreciated in better understanding the group fitness field in regards to the experience of a Zumba presenter. Do you have any questions? Thank you for your participation. Would you like to receive the results of this research? What is the best email contact for you to receive those results?

Conclusion (If does qualify):

Thank you for participating in this section of the research process. Your insight is appreciated in better understanding the group fitness field in regards to the experience of a Zumba fitness presenter. I will be in contact with you regarding moving forward with the second phase and final phase of the research process. I will be sending you an email with a link to the personality test and a unique, one-time-use access code for the StrengthsFinder strengths assessment with directions in how to take the online assessment. These are the two measures we will be using to continue our discussion on necessary skills/traits/qualities of a thriving elite master trainer.

Personality testing has been recognized and used by many organizations and companies as a way to better understand the people in their roles. The results of personality testing can give a way to discuss personal tendencies and why people act the way they do.

The StrengthsFinder strengths assessment has been created by the Gallup organization, an organization with an incredible reputation for data and having an accurate pulse on the wellbeing of the world. This particular assessment has been acclaimed for its insightful reports. The chances of two individuals having the same results is 1 in 33 million, so it will be incredibly unique to you report.

I personally taken both measures and have found them to be helpful in my personal growth and the understanding of who I am and why I work the way I do. I hope you also get a worthwhile experience in this next step of the research process. I know I have thoroughly enjoyed it myself. What is the best email to send this next piece to?

After you have completed the personality test and StrengthsFinder strengths assessment at your best convenience, you will forward your results to me and we will schedule our final interview discussing your results and final thoughts. This final interview should be about the same amount as this one, 30 to 60 minutes, and will also be semi-structured and at your best availability.

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions?

Thank you again for your participation. I look forward to speaking with you one more time after you've completed the personality test and StrengthsFinder assessments.

*Second Interview***Introduction:**

Thank you for completing the second phase of this research process and finishing it out today in discussion. You have completed the initial interview where we covered your background and initial discussion about skills and traits that have led to your thriving career; you have also taken a personality test, as well as the StrengthsFinder Assessment, and have looked through your results. In this interview, you will identify your results, discuss the significance of your results, and use the two experiences to conclude our conversation from our first discussion on the skills and traits of thriving Zumba presenters.

1. The results of your personality test are that you are _____ typology. What stuck out to you in your results?
 - a. How accurate are these results in describing you? Provide an example of how accurate or inaccurate they are?
 - b. Can you use an example to describe a time when your personality type was either a great asset or a great hindrance in your experience as a Zumba presenter?
2. The results of your StrengthsFinder strengths assessment have your top 5 strengths as _____. What stuck out to you in your results?
 - a. In your experience, how accurate are these results? Can you provide an example of how accurate or inaccurate they are?
 - b. Can you use an example to describe a time when some of or one of your top StrengthsFinder strengths were either a great asset or a great hindrance in your experience as a Zumba presenter?
3. With these two tests in mind, what personality traits and strengths would you expect to see consistently among your peers of thriving Zumba presenters?

Conclusion:

Thank you for participating in my masters thesis research. I hope you enjoyed our conversations as well and found value in the personality test and StrengthsFinder strengths assessments. Your insight is appreciated in better understanding the group fitness field in regards to the experience of a Zumba fitness presenter. Would you like to be informed of the results of this study? If so, what is the best email address for that communication?

Appendix B
Email Communications
Recruiting Email

Greetings.

My name is LeeAnn Wilcox and I am a graduate student working with Dr. Kimberly Hurley at Ball State University. I am conducting my masters thesis research study about thriving elite Zumba master trainers: commonalities, their personal stories, and whether or not their experience aligns with current research and training practices for group fitness instructors. I am emailing to ask if you would like to participate in this research process as you have been identified as an elite Zumba master trainer. Participation is completely voluntary and your answers will be kept confidential.

If you are interested, please reply to this email and we will coordinate our first interview.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me (lmwilcox@bsu.edu) or Dr. Kimberly Hurley (kshurely@bsu.edu).

Thank you for your time.
LeeAnn Wilcox
Graduate Students
Ball State University

Email Following First Interview

Email Contact for Testing:

Good morning/afternoon _____!

Thank you again for participating in the first interview! I enjoyed speaking with you and hearing your story. In this email, you will find directions to the personality test and StrengthsFinder strengths assessment, valued at \$15, free to you.

1.) The personality test should take approximately 15 minutes. This test can be found for free by following this **website link: <https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test>**

After you have completed this test, please record your 4-letter typology result somewhere and explore the other typologies on the website. Please read your results and enjoy the side navigation for a more detailed report.

2.) Your unique StrengthsFinder strengths assessment **code is _____**. This is a one-time-use code. Once you have started the test, you cannot pause and resume another time. It will take between 30 and 45 minutes to complete. Questions are timed at 20 seconds. If you do not answer within the 20 seconds, it will move on to the next question, so **please plan ahead to have an uninterrupted span of time to complete the assessment.** You cannot retake the assessment. **You can redeem your unique access code here:**

<https://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/Register/en-US/Index>

After you have received your unique reports, please save your “STRENGTHS INSIGHT REPORT” as a PDF to send in your email back to me. I have attached my own personal report, as well as a PDF list of all of the strengths so you will have an idea of what to expect. Your report may look a little different than mine; however, you will receive your top 5 strengths with descriptions of each and how they specifically relate to you.

With the access code, you’ll also receive a free copy of the StrengthsFinder 2.0 e-book, which will help you understand the StrengthsFinder assessment and the 34 themes in a fuller capacity if you so desire. To download the e-book, sign in to your account and click *Download My E-Book* on your dashboard.

Once you have completed the assessments, please email your:

- **4-letter personality typology**
- **A PDF copy of your StrengthsFinder “STRENGTHS INSIGHT REPORT”**

to lmwilcox@bsu.edu, **NO LATER THAN MARCH 31st**, and we will schedule our final interview. If there is a conflict in completing these two assessments and scheduling the final interview, please let me know as soon as possible.

Thank you again for your participation! I hope you enjoy the results of your assessments. Please take a moment to explore the resources on both websites, seeing what other typologies there are and what other StrengthsFinder strengths are possible. Make sure to read through your results and take time to digest them before our final interview. We will discuss your results, what stuck out as you read through your reports, and how those pieces enter our conversation of thriving elite master trainers.

I look forward to hearing back from you soon!