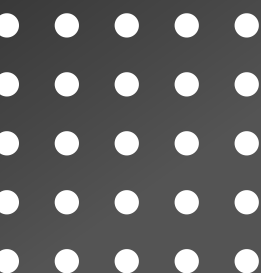
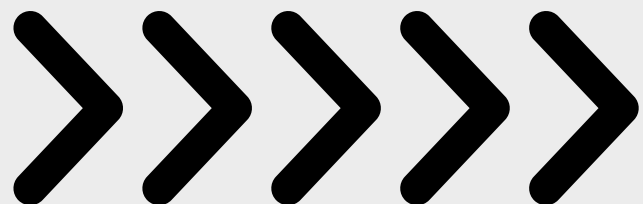


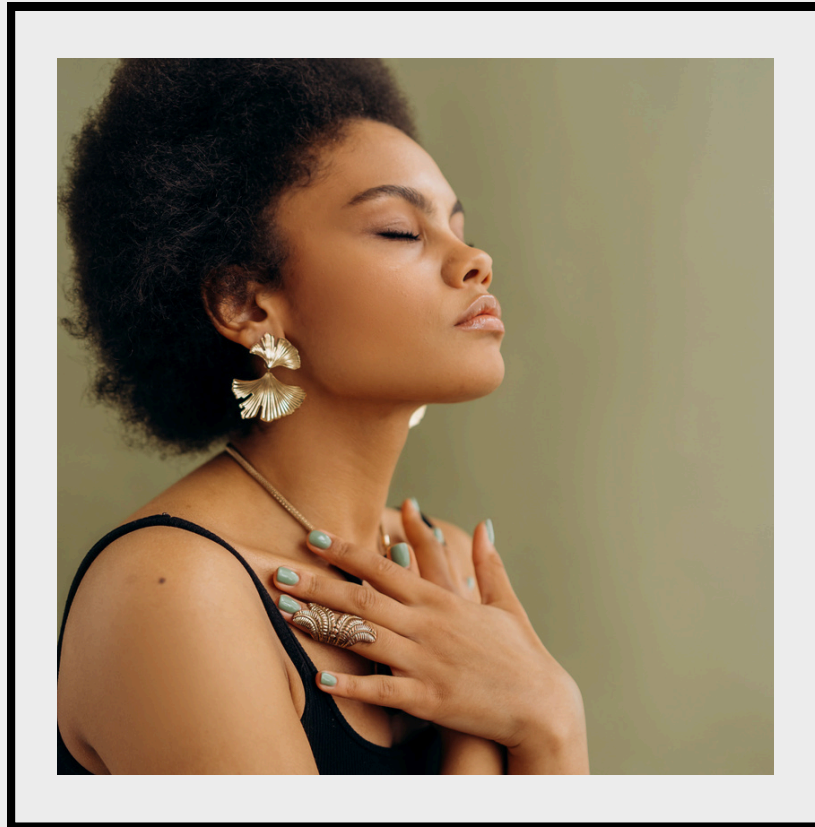
CAN ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT TRAINING (ACT) FACILITATE CREATIVE FLOW AMONG PROFESSIONAL VOCALISTS?

Presented by May Oskan



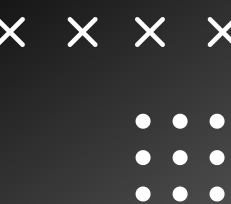


CONTEXT: WHAT IS ACT?



Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is a psychotherapeutic model based on six key processes intended to improve **psychological flexibility** through the promotion of mindfulness and acceptance (Juncos et al., 2017).

When used outside of psychotherapy, ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Training) **shows promise as a music performance coaching method** (Shaw et al., 2020; Mahony et al., 2022), and may have a positive impact on **flow**.





CONTEXT: WHAT IS CREATIVE FLOW?



Flow is a heightened state outside of ordinary experience in which time seems to pass differently, attention seems effortless, action is merged with awareness, and skill and challenge are equally balanced (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988).

A lack of distractibility and self-consciousness allows for **complete immersion in a task and the spontaneous generation of new ideas** (Doyle, 2017).





IDENTIFYING A GAP IN THE LITERATURE

- Most performance coaching research focuses on the alleviation of problematic music performance anxiety (MPA).
- ACT shows promise as an intervention for MPA (Shaw et al., 2020; Mahony et al., 2022).
- Individuals with less MPA experience more flow, therefore ACT may have an **indirect positive** effect on flow by reducing MPA (Mahony et al., 2022; Roman and Juncos et al., 2021).
- Psychological **inflexibility** “showed an indirect [negative] effect on performance flow” (Roman and Juncos et al., 2021).
- The direct impact of ACT on creative flow has not yet been studied.





RESEARCH AIMS

Moving beyond a pathology-centered approach: looking for a **positive link** between **psychological flexibility** and **flow**.

- “Optimal functioning cannot be attained solely by the absence of pathology” and “methods for facilitating **positive functioning** need to be **actively cultivated**” (Cohen and Bodner, 2019).
- Through increasing psychological flexibility, ACT may cultivate **optimal functioning** beyond the reduction of negative symptoms (Chelkowska-Zacharewicz and Baran, 2023).





RESEARCH QUESTION

Can Acceptance and Commitment Training (ACT)
Facilitate Creative Flow among Professional Vocalists?



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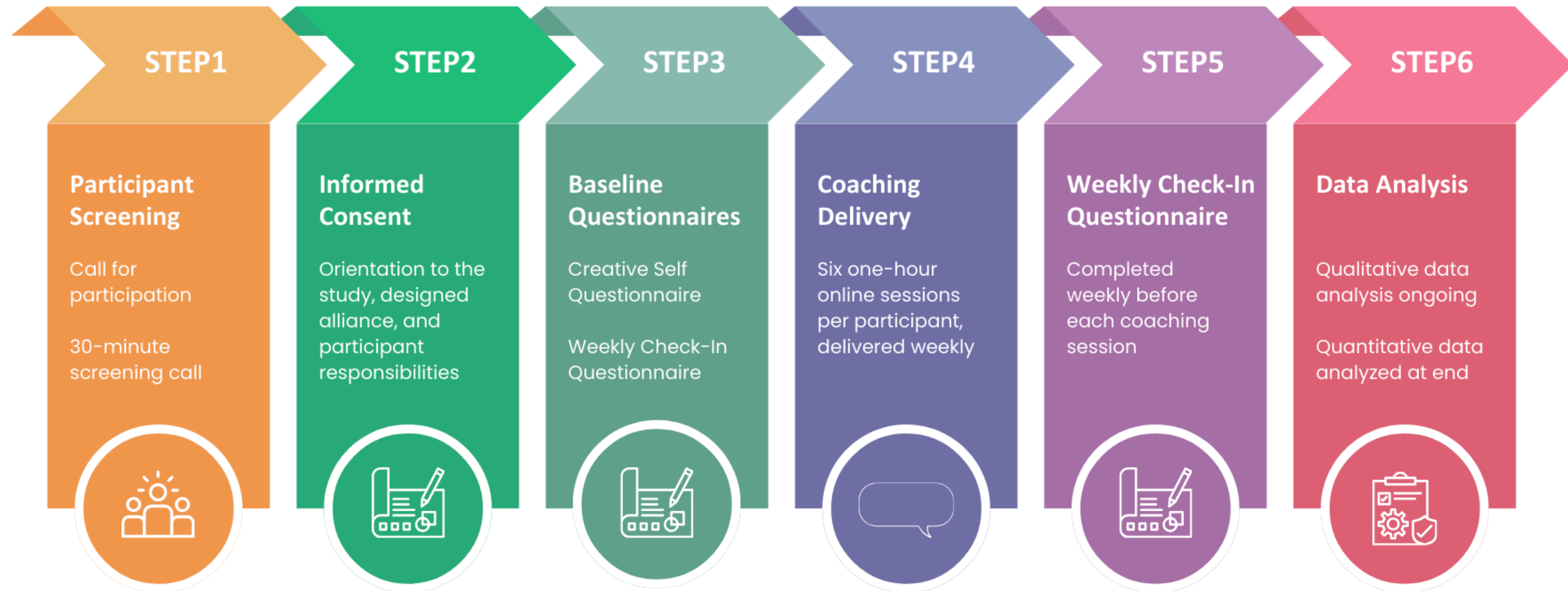
STUDY DESIGN

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MIXED METHODS MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

- Five participants
 - Six one-hour coaching sessions each, delivered weekly via video call
 - Baseline qualitative data: structured preliminary interview
 - Baseline quantitative data: Short Scale of Creative Self
 - Weekly check-in: combination of Psy-Flex and Psychological Flow Scale
 - Thematic analysis of coaching session transcripts
 - Exit interview to collect participant feedback
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Project Workflow





METHODS



QUANTITATIVE

Karwowski's Short Scale of Creative Self

- Baseline measure of creative personal identity, creative self-concept, and creative self-efficacy (Zielinska et al., 2022).

Weekly Check-In Questionnaire

- **Psy-Flex:** a scale designed to measure psychological flexibility as a set of changeable factors over time (Gloster et al., 2021).
- **Psychological Flow Scale (PFS):** measures the extent of flow experienced during a single task or event the preceding week (Norsworthy et al., 2023).





METHODS

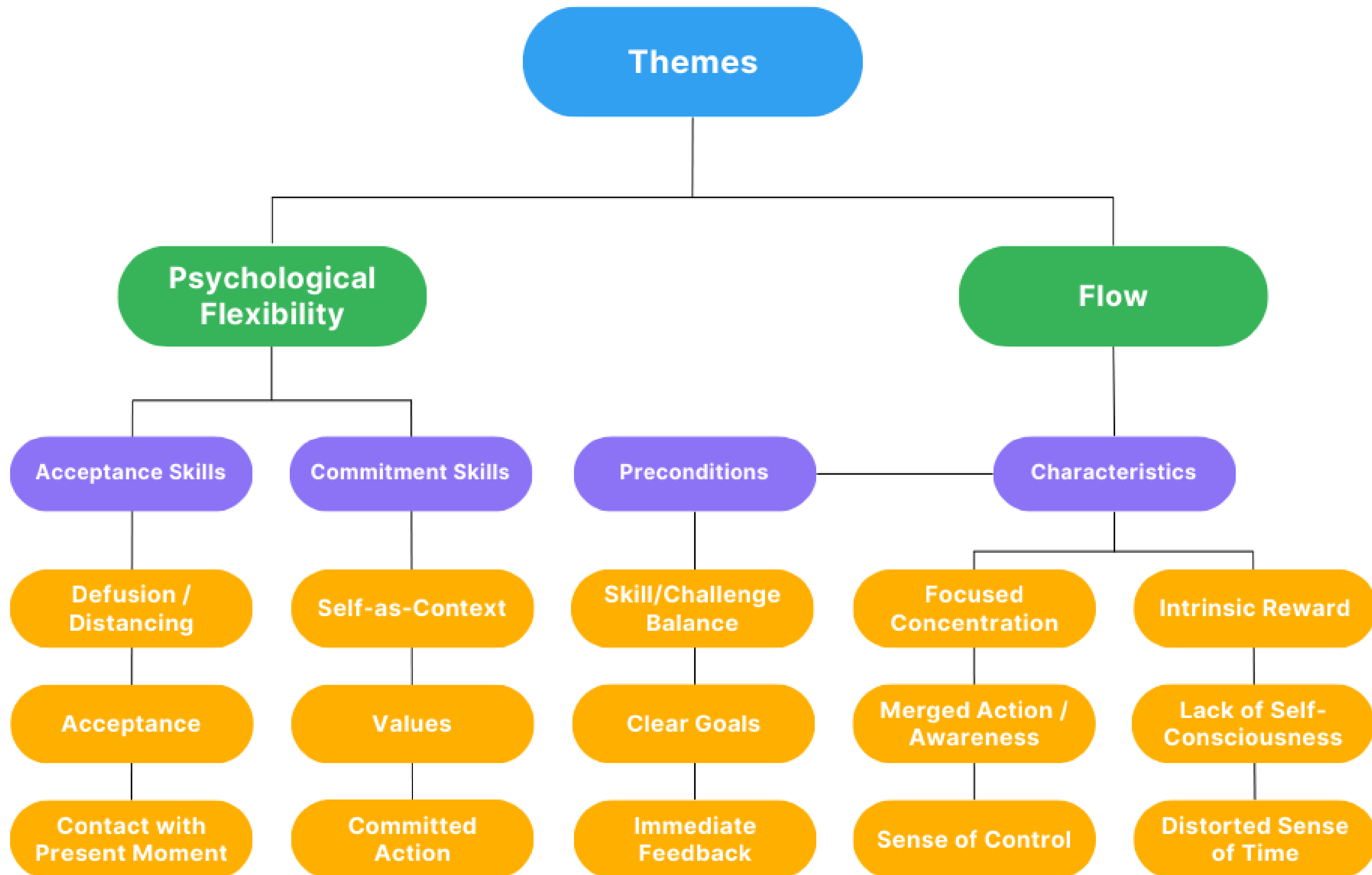
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QUALITATIVE

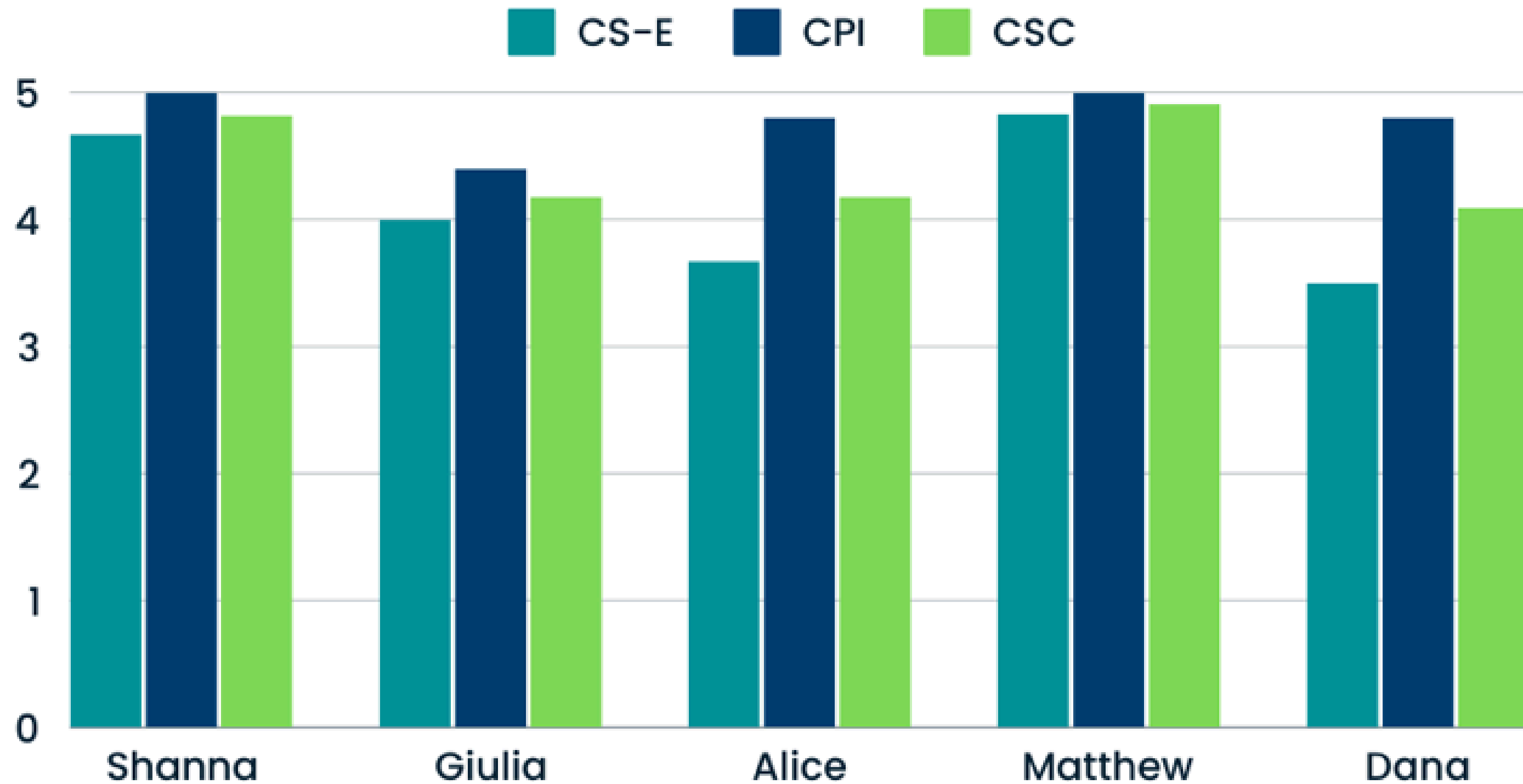
Coaching Session and Exit Interview Transcripts

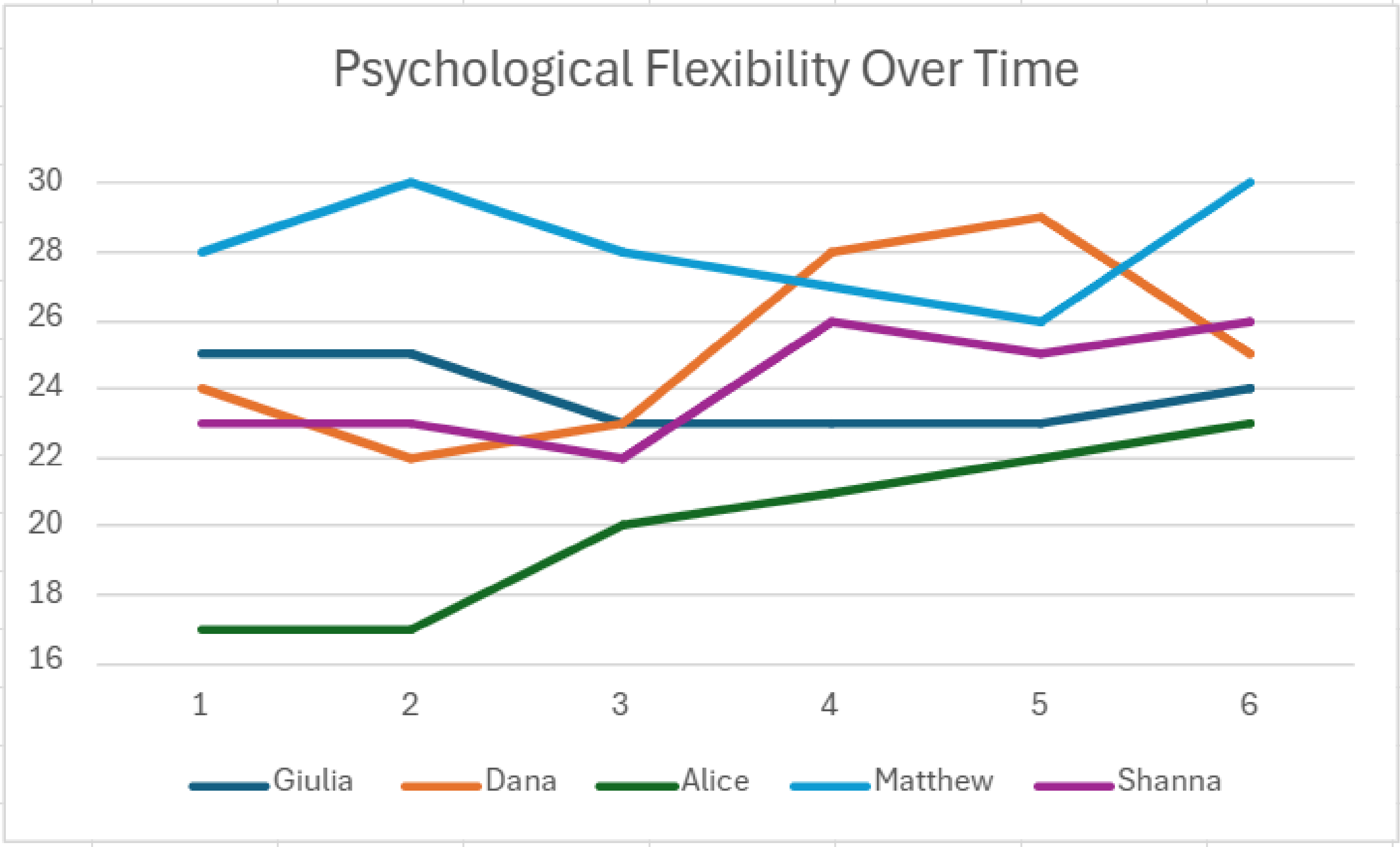
- Analyzing narrative data with respect for the individual contexts in which thoughts and behaviors occurred (Hayes et al., 2013) to develop an in-depth understanding of the rich experiences that had taken place (Tsang, 2013).
 - Session transcripts coded based on key markers of psychological flexibility and flow, providing a narrative of participant experiences (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).
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Thematic Analysis

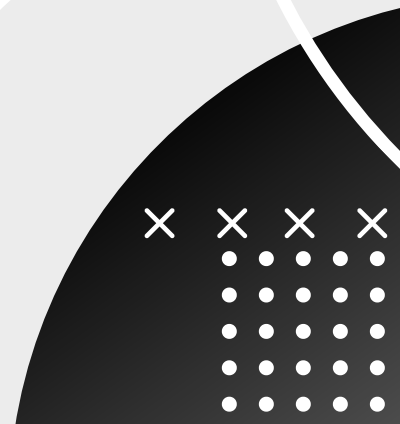


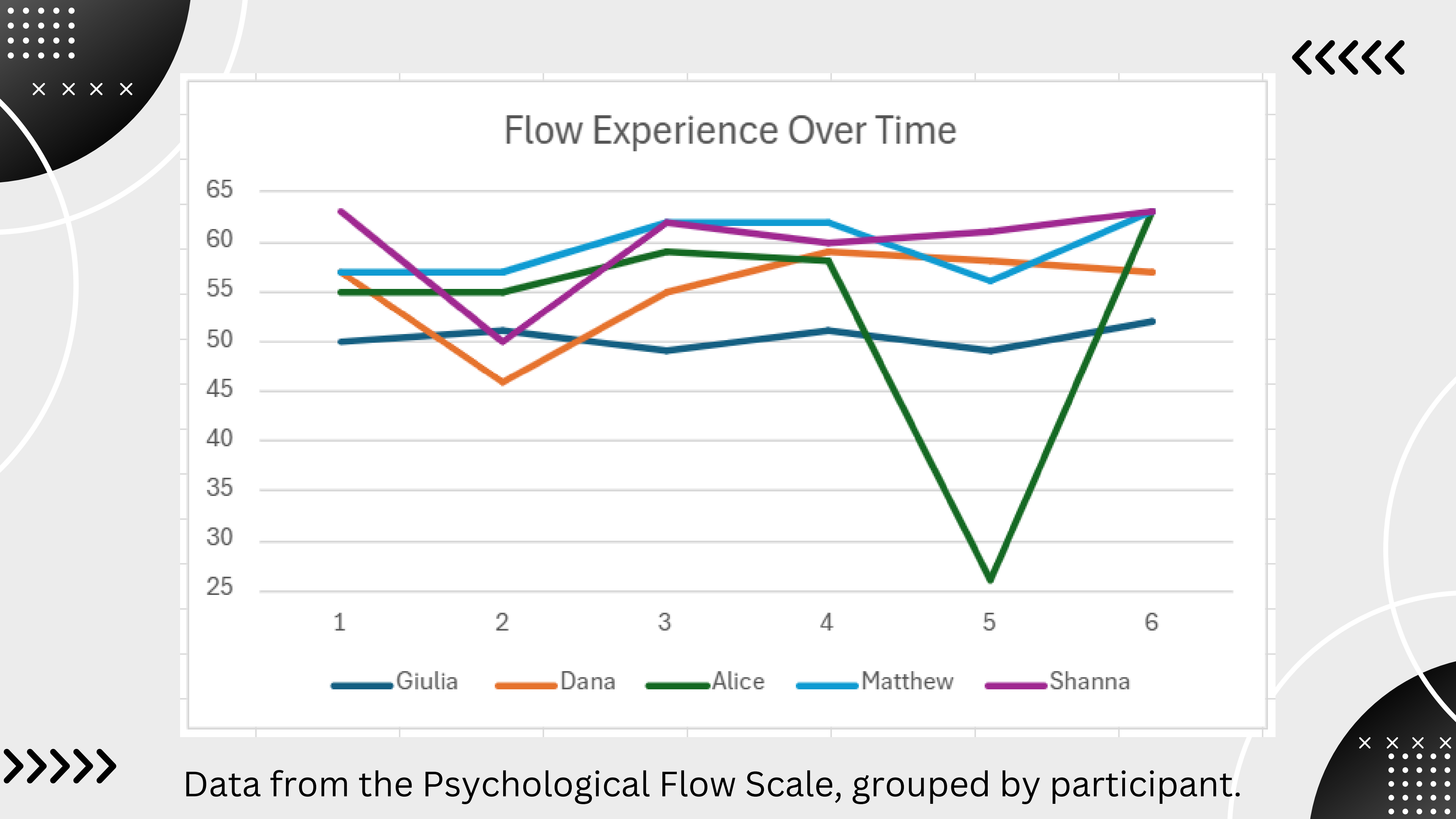
SHORT SCALE OF CREATIVE SELF





Data from the Psy-Flex Scale, grouped by participant.





Data from the Psychological Flow Scale, grouped by participant.



FLOW VARIABILITY

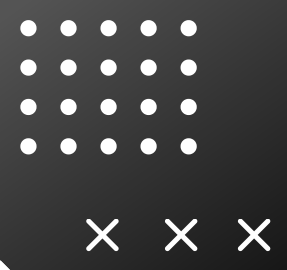
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Stollberger and Debus (2020) coined the concept of “flow variability”, suggesting that some individuals experience peaks and valleys in their levels of available flow from day to day, while others can access flow on a more stable basis.

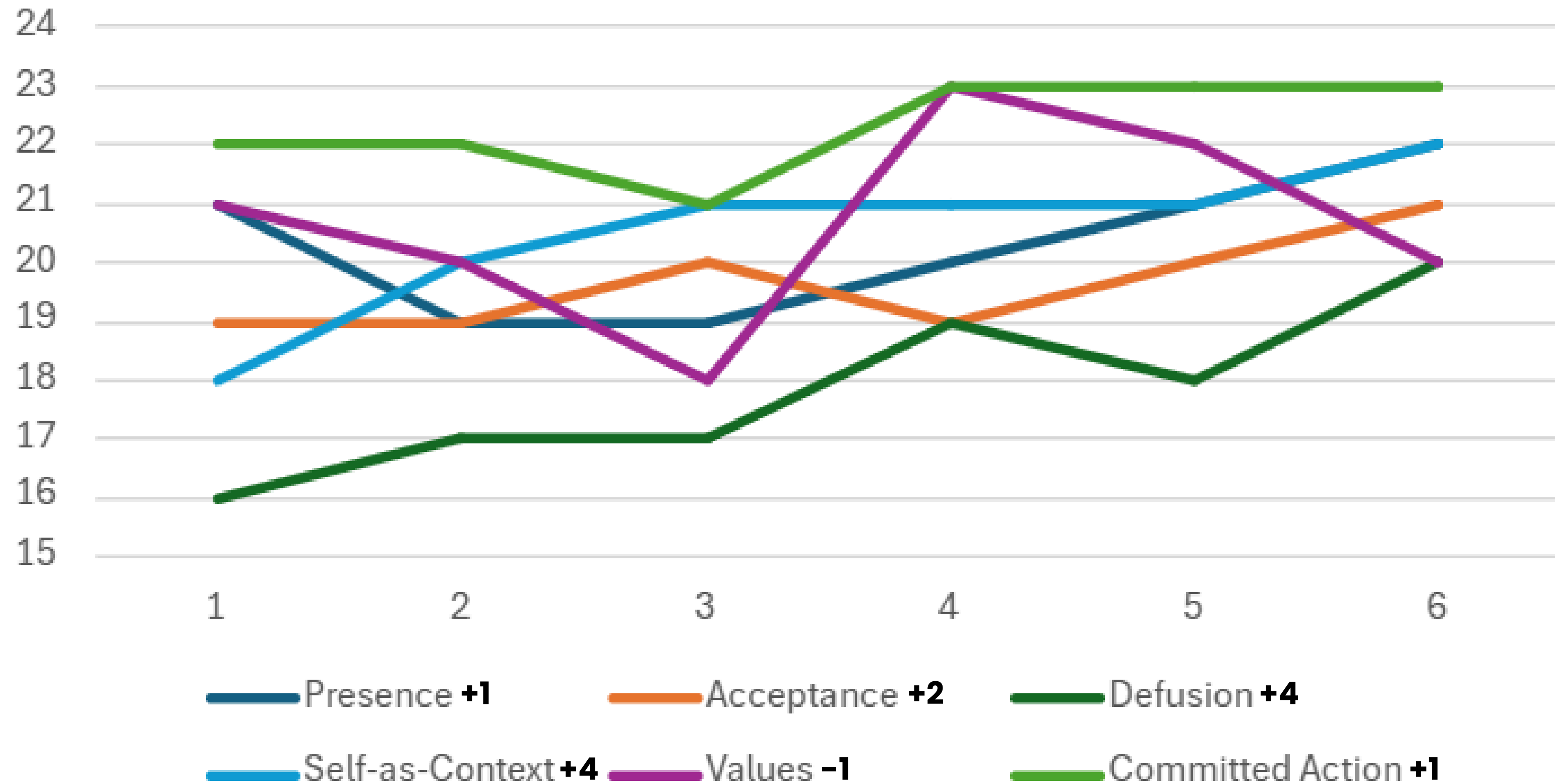
While they argue that consistent access to flow is more beneficial in traditional workplace settings, access to deeper, albeit more variable, absorptive states may be more beneficial to artists working on an irregular schedule.

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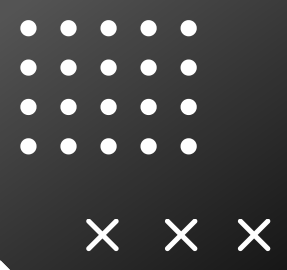




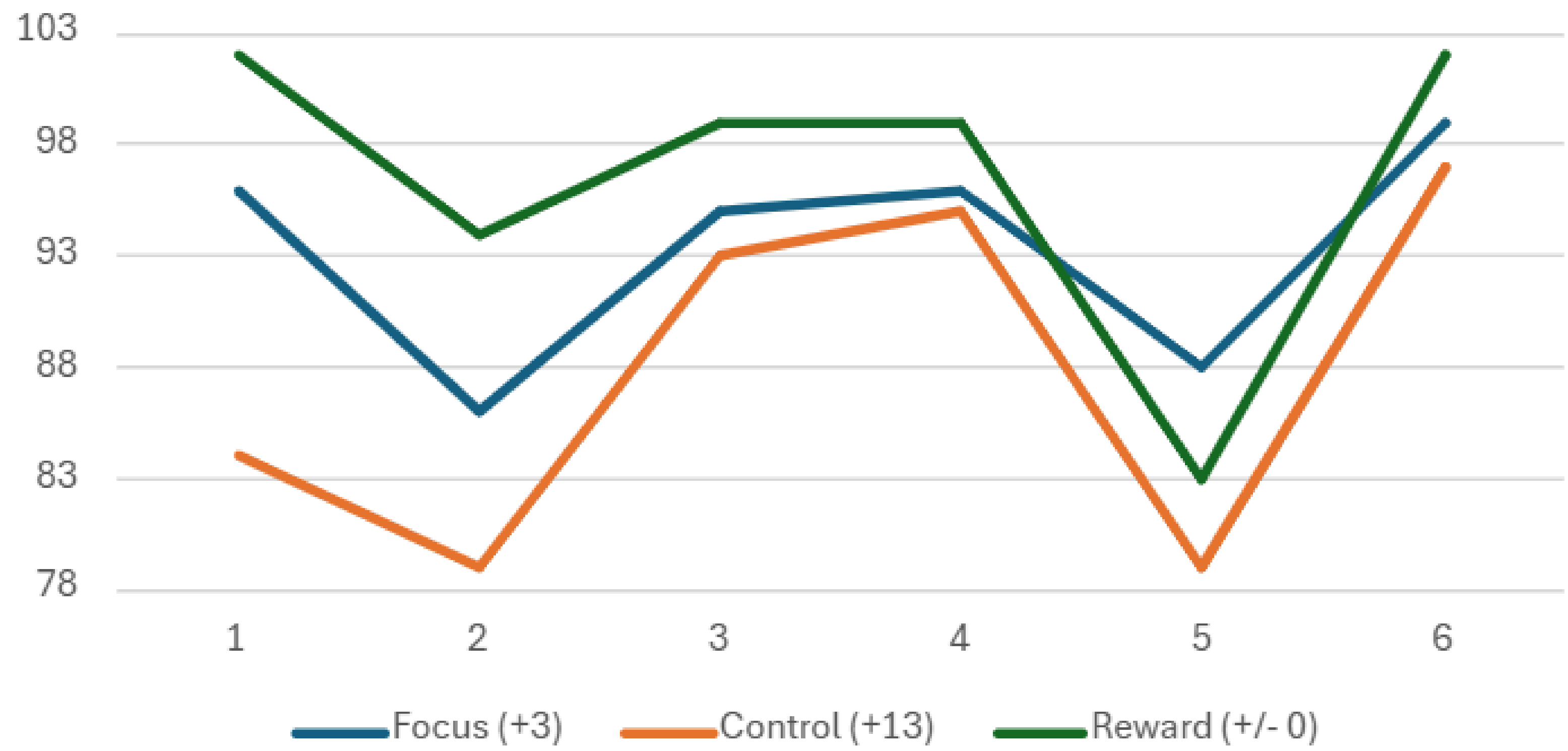
ACT Skills Over Time



Data from the Psy-Flex Scale, grouped by question.

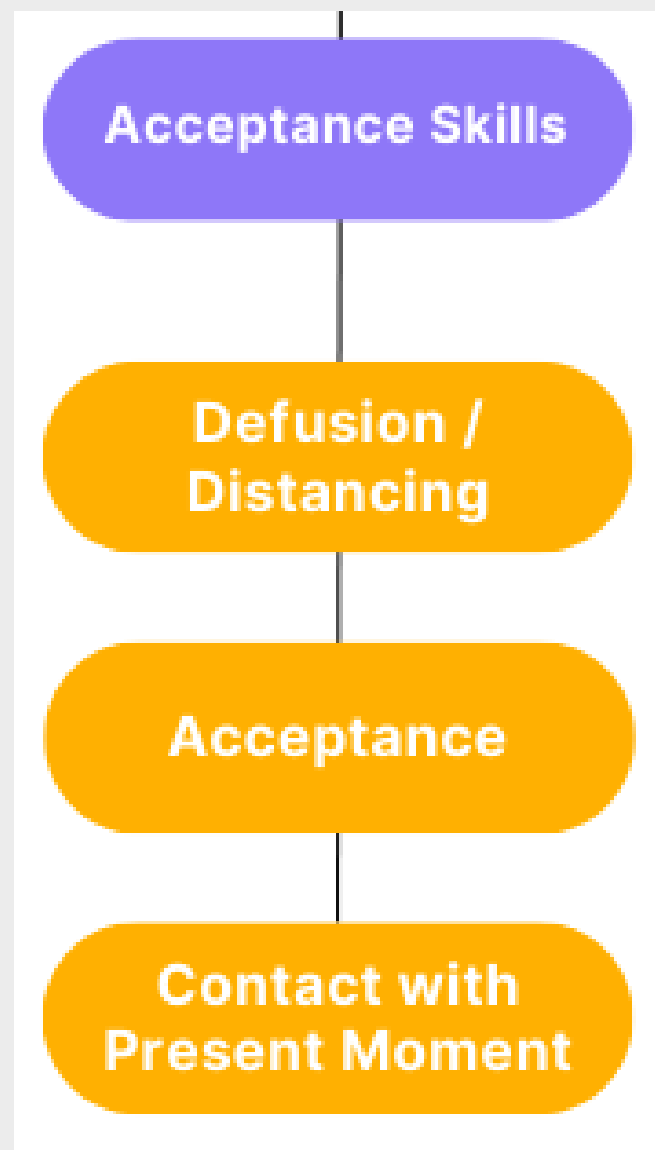


Flow Qualities Over Time



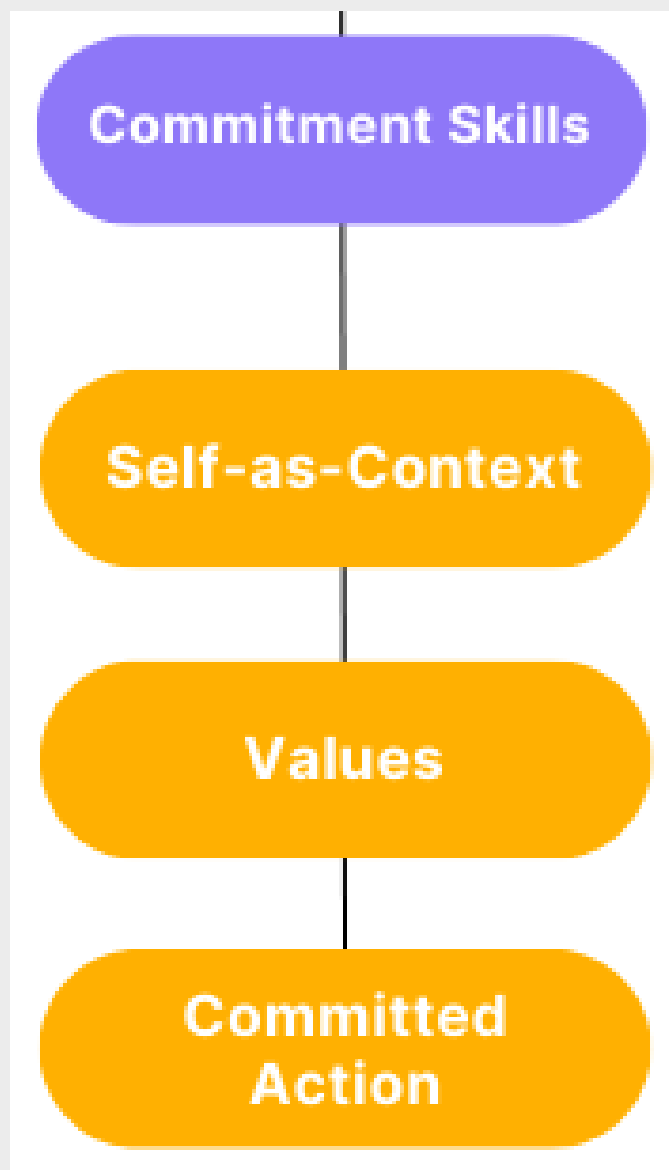
Data from the Psychological Flow Scale, grouped by question topic.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS: ACT ACCEPTANCE SKILLS



- Intrusive thoughts, rumination, worry, preoccupation with past events and future possibilities were common.
- Exercises to notice and label thoughts, feelings, and sensations helped participants feel more present.
- Specific, experiential strategies, like journaling, worksheets, and mindfulness practices, were more helpful than holding the general intention to be present. x x x

THEMATIC ANALYSIS: ACT COMMITMENT SKILLS



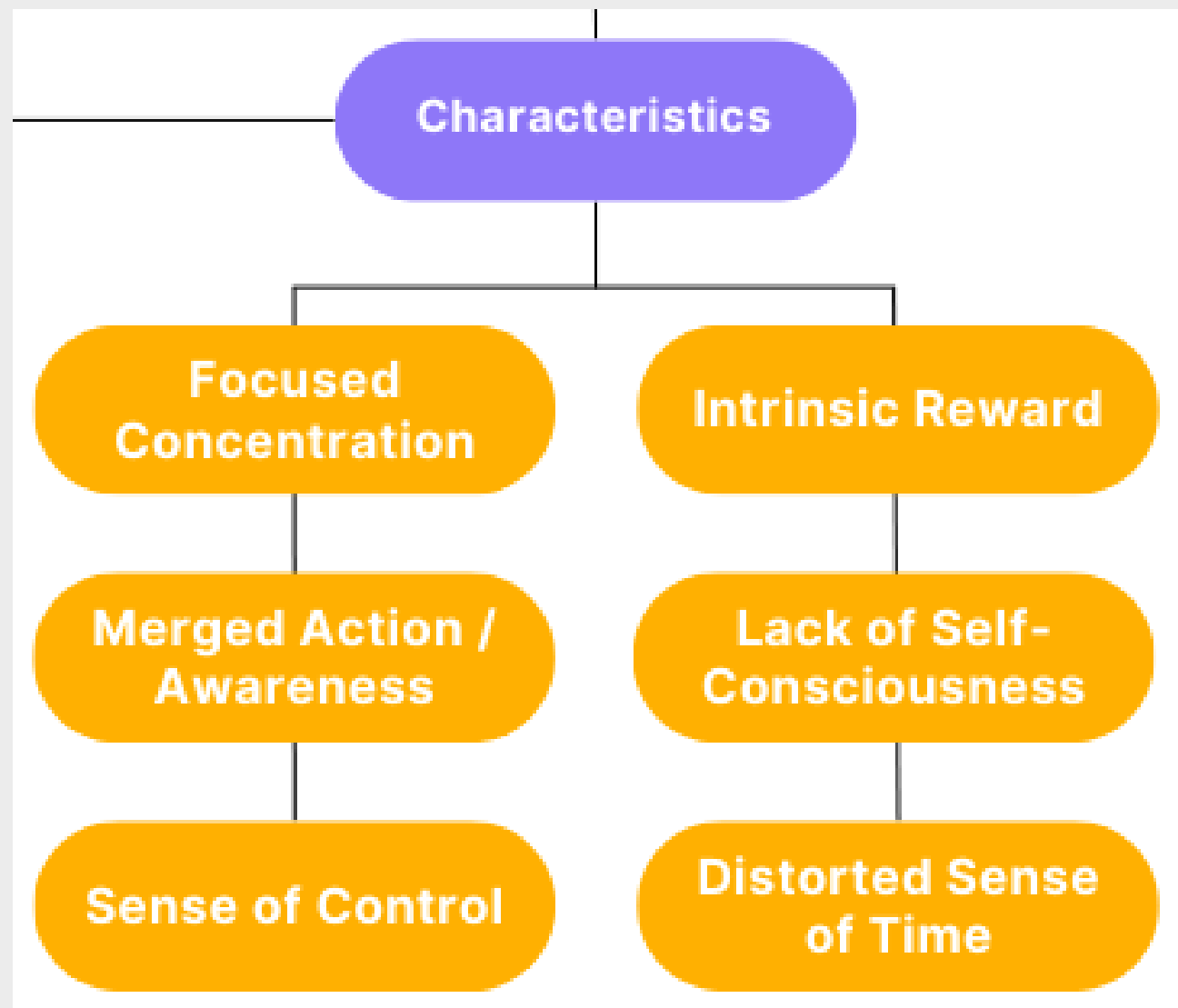
- Participants often volunteered observations about self-as-context after practicing defusion exercises.
- Most participants had never engaged in values clarification exercises before.
- It took time and repetition for participants to reliably differentiate values from goals and/or moral behavior.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS: PRECONDITIONS OF FLOW



- Participants often experienced burnout and frustration when working at the limits of their capacity.
- Immediate feedback is not always available when practicing or writing music alone.
- Setting values-based goals enabled participants to manage expectations, work at an appropriate level of challenge, and give themselves specific feedback.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS: CHARACTERISTICS OF FLOW



- Experiences of intrinsic reward were highly valued and sought after by participants. Experiences of play, free experimentation, and discovery in the moment were often mentioned as positive and desirable signs.
- Focused concentration and a sense of control were also valued, but participants tended to view these components as means to an end, or necessary access points for feelings of wonder, joy, and satisfaction.



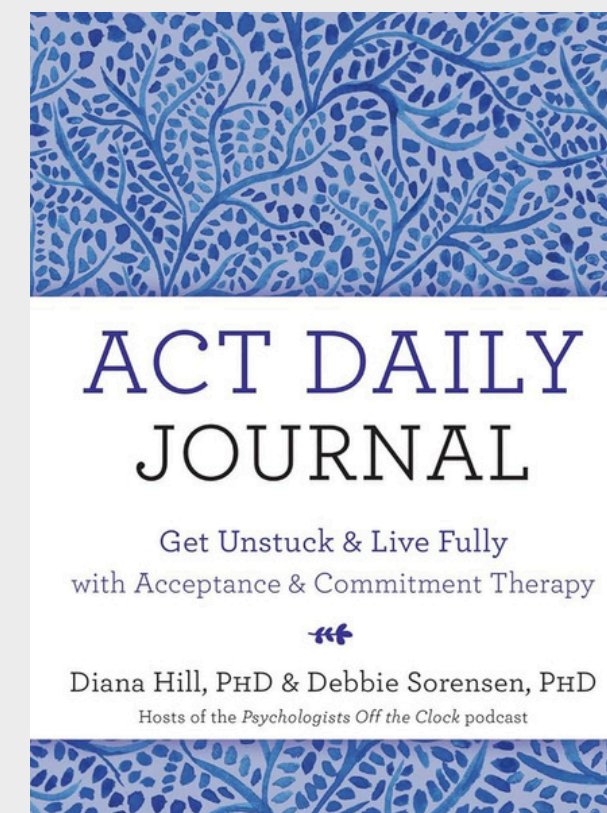
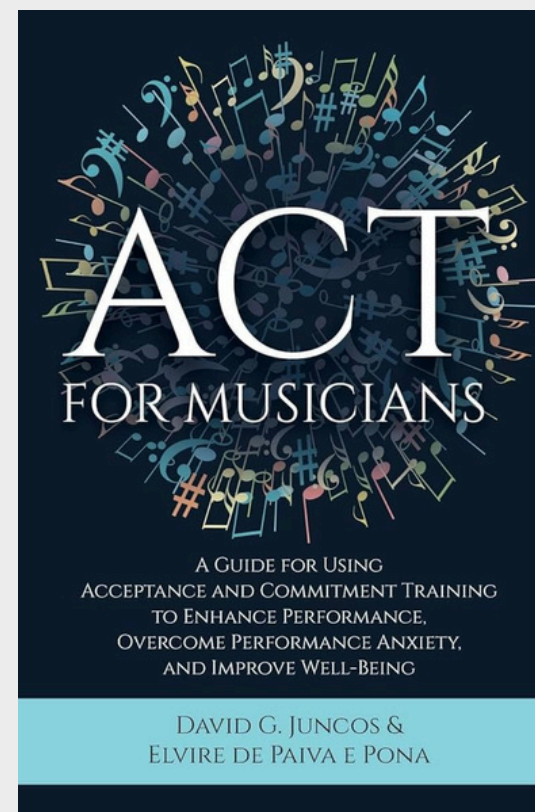
CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Participants found ACT coaching valuable, especially with regard to overcoming procrastination and resistance to practice.
- ACT coaching may be particularly effective in improving the skills of defusion and self-as-context, encouraging musicians to observe their thoughts from a distance rather than identifying with them.
- Further research is needed to determine clinical or statistical significance.



A FEW ACT RESOURCES

- ACT for Musicians by David G Juncos and Elvire de Paiva E Pona
- ACT Daily Journal and the ACT Daily Card Deck by Diana Hill and Debbie Sorensen
- Contextual Consulting <https://contextualconsulting.co.uk/>



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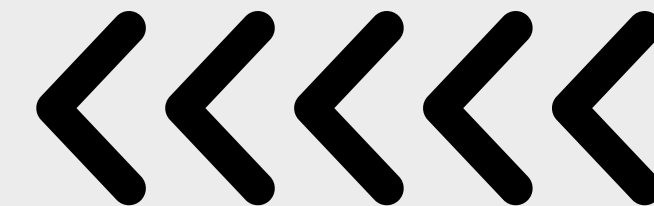
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THANK YOU!

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