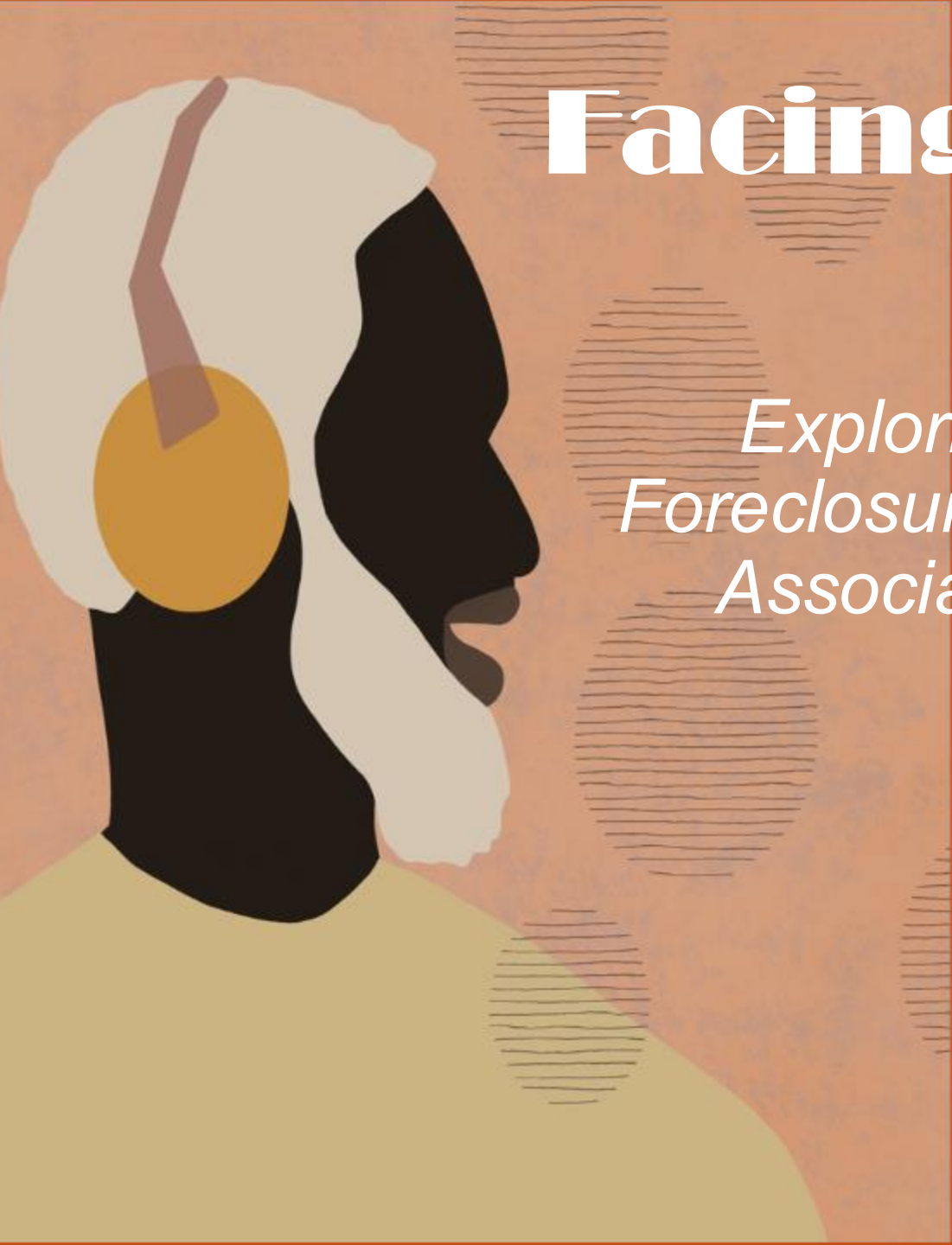


A stylized, abstract illustration of a person's head and shoulders in profile, facing right. The person has dark skin and is wearing a large, bright yellow circular earring. The background is a solid orange color. The person's hair is depicted with light beige and dark brown shapes. The overall style is modern and graphic.

Facing the Music

*Exploring the Presence of Identity
Foreclosure in Working Musicians and its
Association with Mental Health and
Burnout Syndrome.*

- Claire Cannon
- Module 6 - BMPF7010
- Student No – 2217694
- Tuesday 2nd September 2025

The Problem

Lockdowns caused musicians to instantly lose their jobs AND their purpose

(Musgrave, 2022; Littlewood, 2020).

Working musicians experience mental health at a higher rate than the general population

(Hu, 2017; Mind, 2025).

There is currently little protection against a growing risk of widespread musician burnout (Musicians Union 2012).



Previous Findings

Musicians score highly in their values around their work (Cannon, 2023).

Lack of control and fairness heightens musicians' burnout vulnerability (Cannon, 2022; Maslach and Leiter, 2016).

If identity is turned into an occupation, it can cause burnout (Cannon, 2023; Lopez-Iniguez et al., 2022).

Musicians display an unusual level of passion compared to the general population (Cannon 2024; Bonneville-Roussy and Vallerand, 2020).

The Research Aim

Explore relationship between identity foreclosure and burnout in musicians

01

1. Discover how working musicians describe their adolescent identity development?

02

2. Identify links between identity foreclosure and mental health in working musicians'

03

3. To fill a gap in the literature investigating identity foreclosure, mental health and working musicians.

Literature review findings

- Identity vs role confusion (Erikson, 1959).



- Four identity statuses. Foreclosure = commitment without exploration (Marcia, 1966).



- Musicians: Early talent. pressure + parental/social input (Davis, 2019)



- Burnout: emotional exhaustion, low accomplishment, depersonalisation (Maslach et al., 1997).

Methodology



- SEQUENTIAL MIXED METHODS DESIGN



- PHASE 1: SURVEYS (CVE-M, PWS)



- PHASE 2: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS (3 PARTICIPANTS)



- ANALYSIS: INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS (IPA)

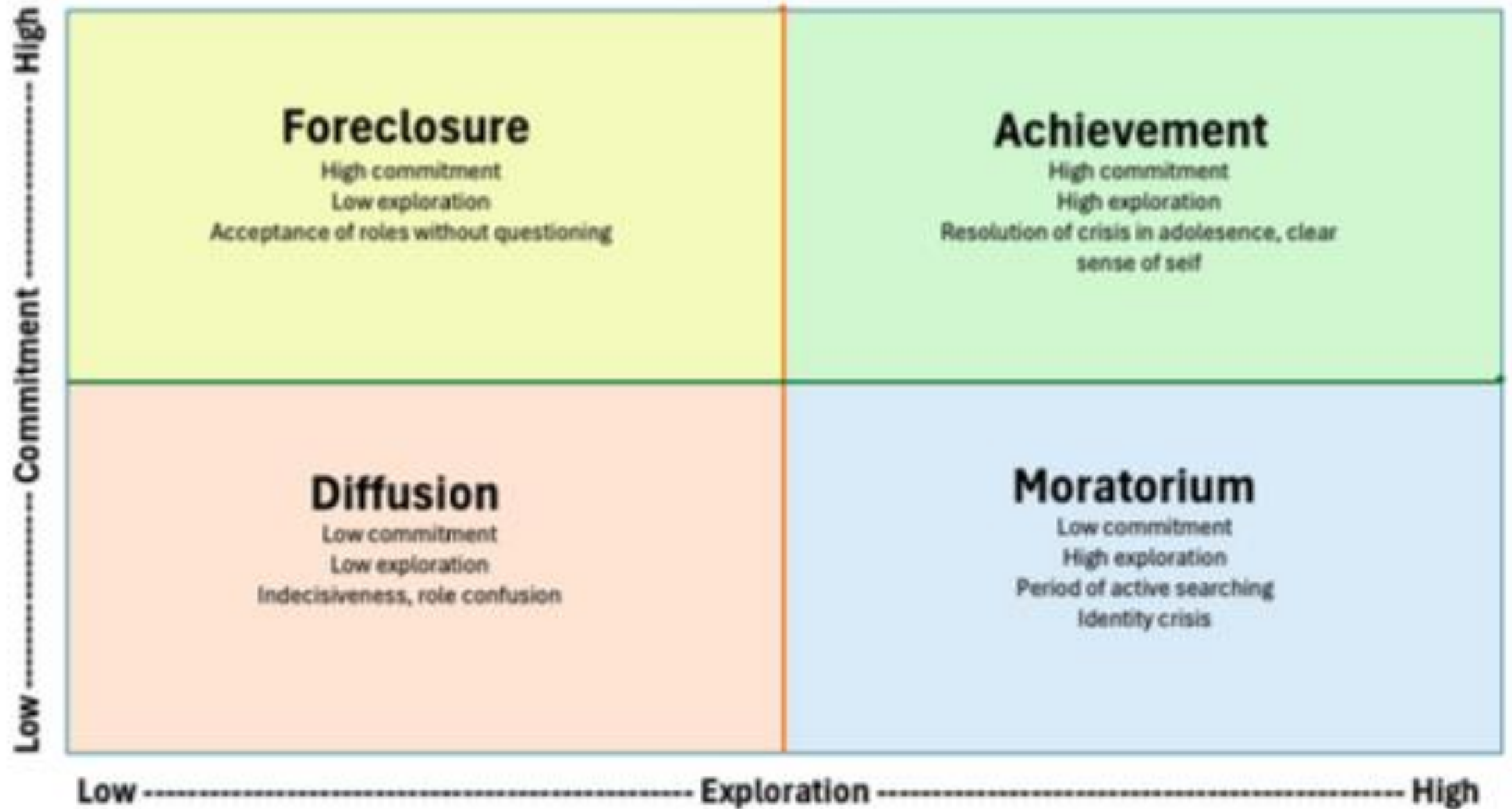
1: Quantitative Findings (CvE-M)

- N = 22 participants

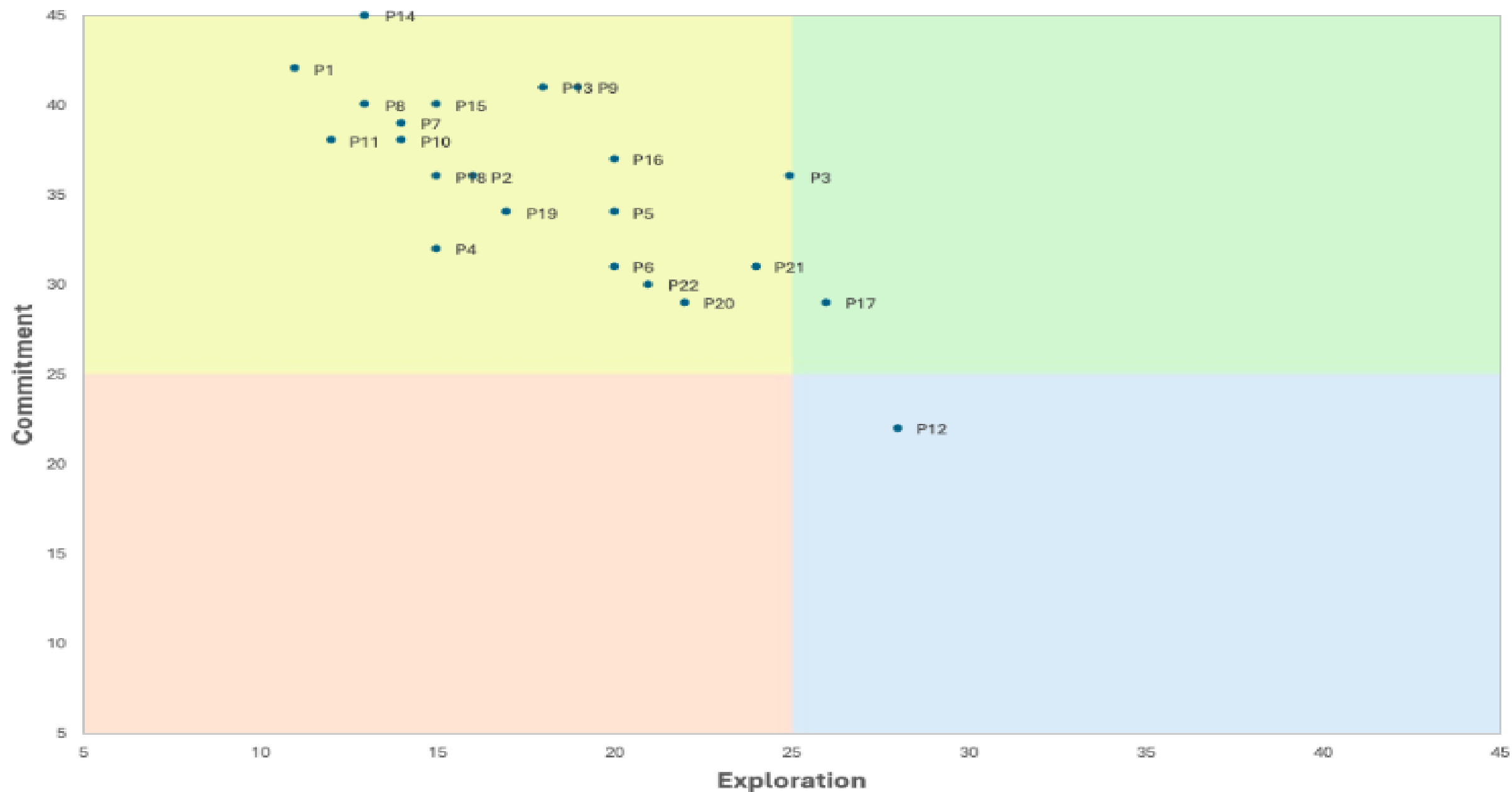
- Exploration = med/low
(M = 18.1)

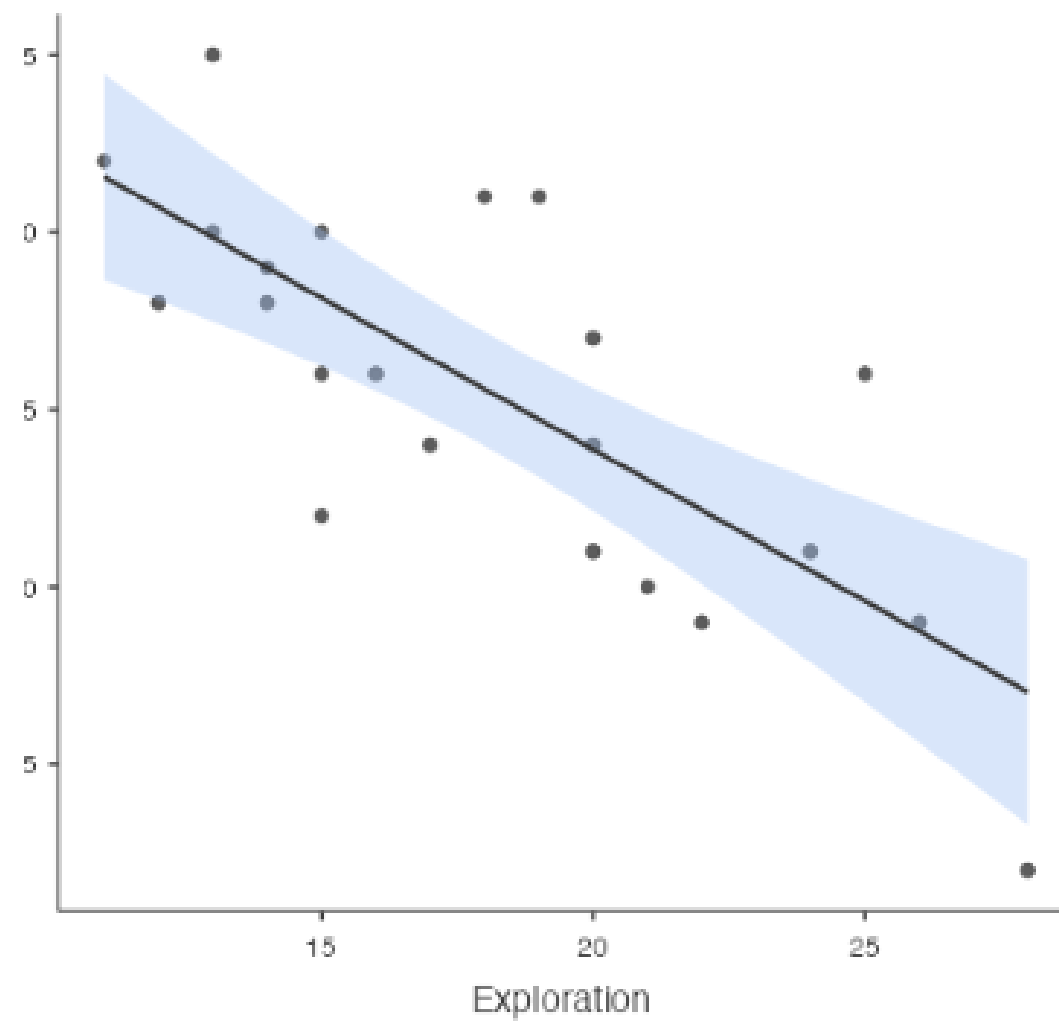
- Commitment = high
(M = 35.5)

Identity Styles



Commitment Vs Exploration Results







Psychological Wellbeing Scale (PWS)



(Ryff and Keys, 1989)



Self Acceptance (SA)



Positive relations with others (PRO)



Autonomy (A)



Environmental Mastery (EM)



Personal Growth (PG)



Purpose in Life (PL)

2: Quantitative Findings (PWS)

- Highest = Personal Growth

- 
- Lowest = Environmental Mastery

- 
- Variation: some thriving, others struggling severely

Interview Themes

1. Early commitment
2. External validation
3. Role overidentification
4. Struggles with self-worth

Participant 9



“I was always either noodling or practicing... like it did take a lot of my time yeah”

“Even as musicians now, we still fantasise and dream about big gigs don’t we”

I’m definitely a musician”

“I don’t know what was more detrimental to my health, thinking that no one likes me... Or the thing I spent half my life working towards, I’m still not good enough”

Participant 19



“(My Auntie) was performing on the West End and stuff so I was like, that’s what I want to do”

“Because I progressed, I think that made me love it more”

“I felt like that was my only identity, kind of what made me from like, a nobody”

“If I didn’t do music, I’d be that person that people don’t remember”

Participant 22



“I didn’t need to learn it, I just absorbed it”

“My musical career IS my mental health”

“Musician is me as a person”

“Work is the thing that I do to pay the bills”

Discussion

Evidence of foreclosure in adolescent musicians



External + parental influence
reinforced early commitment



Identity foreclosure linked to burnout
and mental health vulnerabilities

Conclusion & Implications

MUSICANS IN THIS STUDY SHOWED
SIGNS OF FORECLOSURE

ENCOURAGE WIDER IDENTITY
EXPLORATION

COACHING = RESILIENCE & WELLBEING

POLICY: MORE FOCUS ON MUSICIAN
BURNOUT

FUTURE RESEARCH: LONGITUDINAL
STUDIES



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Thank You /
Questions

