

A Pilot Study of Culturally-Informed Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Puerto Rican Veterans with Fibromyalgia

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this pilot study is to examine the potential utility of an 8-week culturally-informed ACT group therapy for Puerto Rican veterans with Fibromyalgia (FM). 32 men and women who participated in the ACT group completed questionnaires on psychological flexibility, pain acceptance and valued living pre-and post-treatment. Results indicated significant changes in measures of psychological flexibility and pain acceptance pre- and post treatment. There were no significant changes in valued living.

OBJECTIVES

- To describe the demographic data of participants of culturally-informed ACT group therapy for veterans with FM.
- To compare pre-treatment and outcome measures of relevant psychological variables.
- To explore and discuss the potential utility of culturally-informed ACT group therapy for Puerto Rican veterans with FM.

INTRODUCTION

- There is a strong research base supporting the effectiveness of ACT for chronic pain (Vowles, Wetherell, & Sorrell, 2009; Wetherell et al., 2011).
- A number of individuals seeking treatment for chronic pain are diagnosed with Fibromyalgia (FM). FM is characterized by chronic diffuse pain, sensitivity to pressure in specific areas of the body, fatigue and disrupted sleep (Taylor, Friedberg & Jason, 2001).
- There are a handful of studies that have demonstrated efficacy of ACT for FM (Wicksell et al., 2013; Steiner, Bogusch, & Bigatti, 2013).
- Despite ACT's success, culturally diverse populations continue to be underrepresented in the ACT treatment literature (Woidneck, Pratt, Gundy, Nelson, & Twohig, 2012), and little is known on how ACT can be culturally adapted and implemented for use with Puerto Rican adults.
- The aim of this pilot study is to compare pre-treatment and outcome measures of relevant psychological variables to examine the potential utility of culturally-informed ACT group therapy for Puerto Rican veterans with FM.

GROUP DESCRIPTION

"*Morivivi*" is an 8-session ACT group therapy created by the primary author and trainees for Puerto Rican veterans with FM. It was based on the book *Living Beyond Your Pain: Using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy to Ease Chronic Pain* workbook by Dahl, Lundgren, Hayes (2006). Efforts to link cultural knowledge to the ACT intervention were performed, as a result a Spanish culturally-informed protocol was created, including Spanish translated materials and new metaphors (Colon, Berrios, Navas & Abreu, 2011). The group was named by the initial group members. *Morivivi* is a strong and resilient herb that grows abundantly in Puerto Rico. The curious aspect of the *Morivivi* plant (also known as: *Mimosa Púdica*) is the way the leaves protectively fold inward when touched and later reopen.



HYPOTHESES

Participants in ACT group therapy will show improvements in key variables from pre- to post-treatment.

- Scores on the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire- 2 (AAQ-2) will demonstrate significant increases in psychological flexibility from pre- to post-treatment.
- Scores on the Chronic Pain Acceptance Questionnaire (CPAQ) will demonstrate significant increases in pain acceptance from pre- to post-treatment.
- Scores on the Valued Living Questionnaire (VLQ) will demonstrate significant increases in living according to one's values from pre- to post-treatment.

METHOD

- Data from five different groups held between October 2012 and March 2014 were analyzed.
- As part of standard service delivery self-assessment measures were administered on the first and final days of the group. Spanish translations of all self-assessment measures were administered.
- All group meetings have been held in the San Juan VA Medical Center, located on the island of Puerto Rico, a commonwealth of the United States.

PARTICIPANTS

- Groups varied in size from 3 to 15 participants.
- Ages ranged from 32 to 69 years old ($M = 49.41$).



Gender

N = 32

- 44% Males
- 56% Females

PROCEDURE

A retrospective record review was conducted to extract participant demographic variables and for data quality assurance. Data obtained from previously administered questionnaires measuring psychological flexibility, pain acceptance and valued living were analyzed

Measures

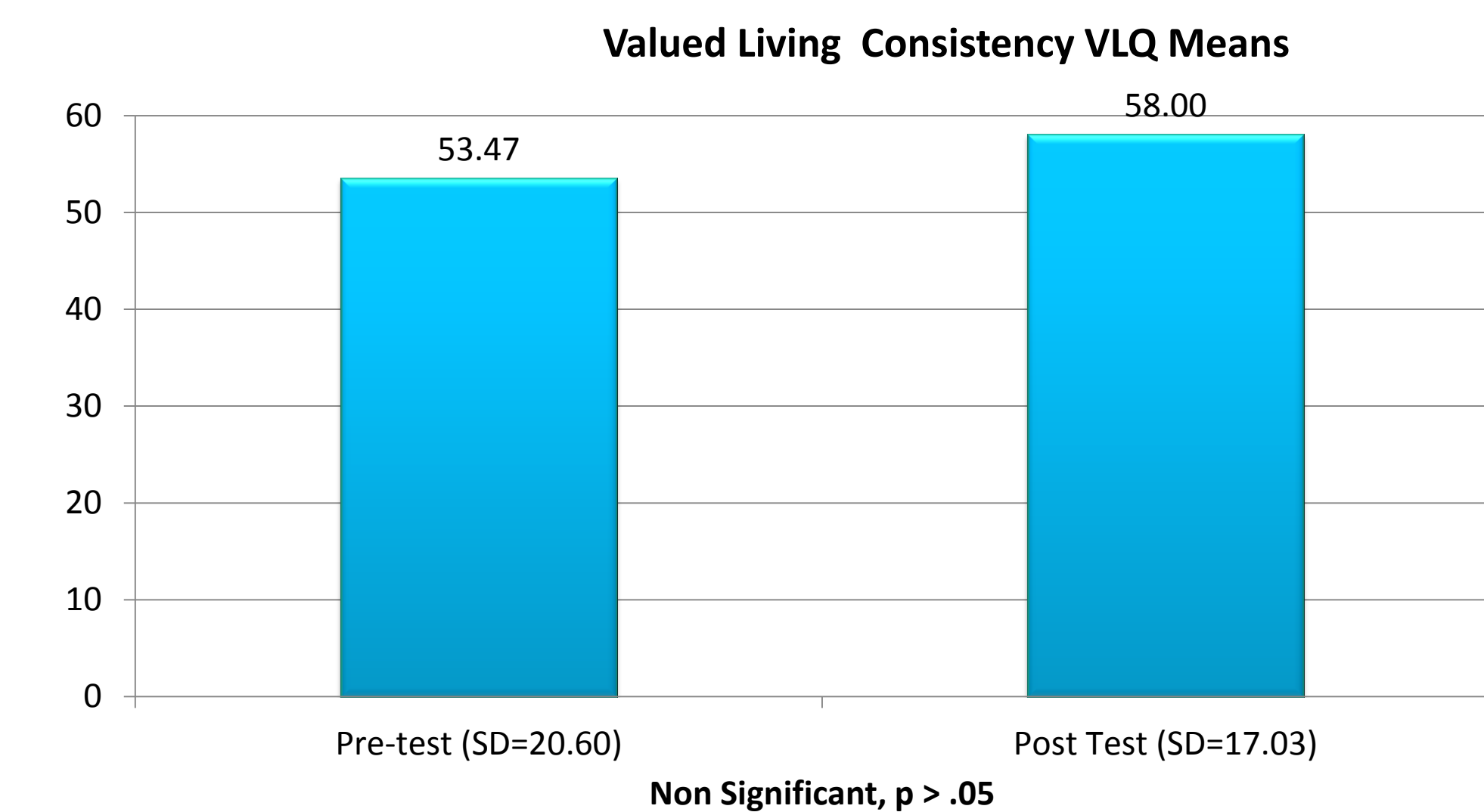
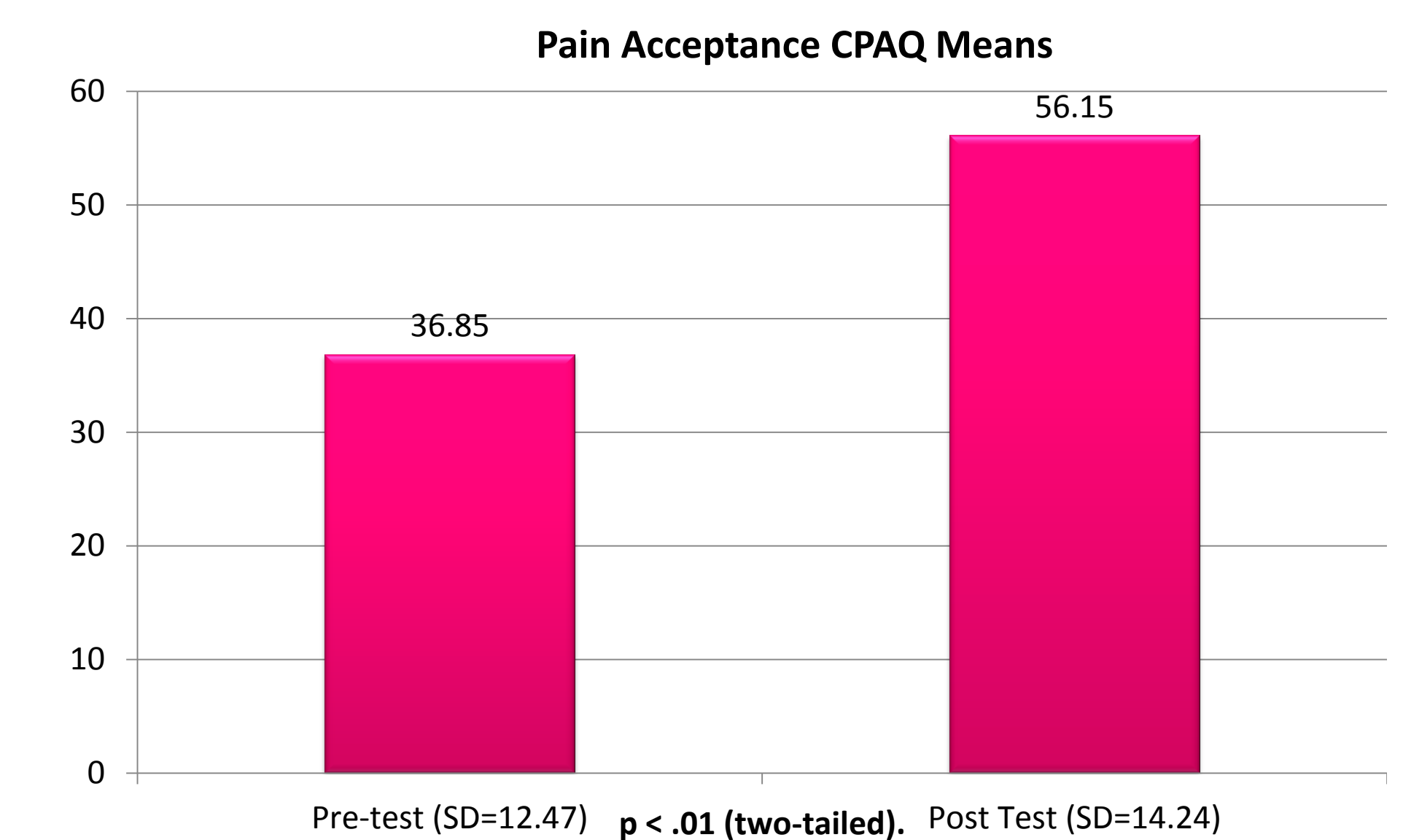
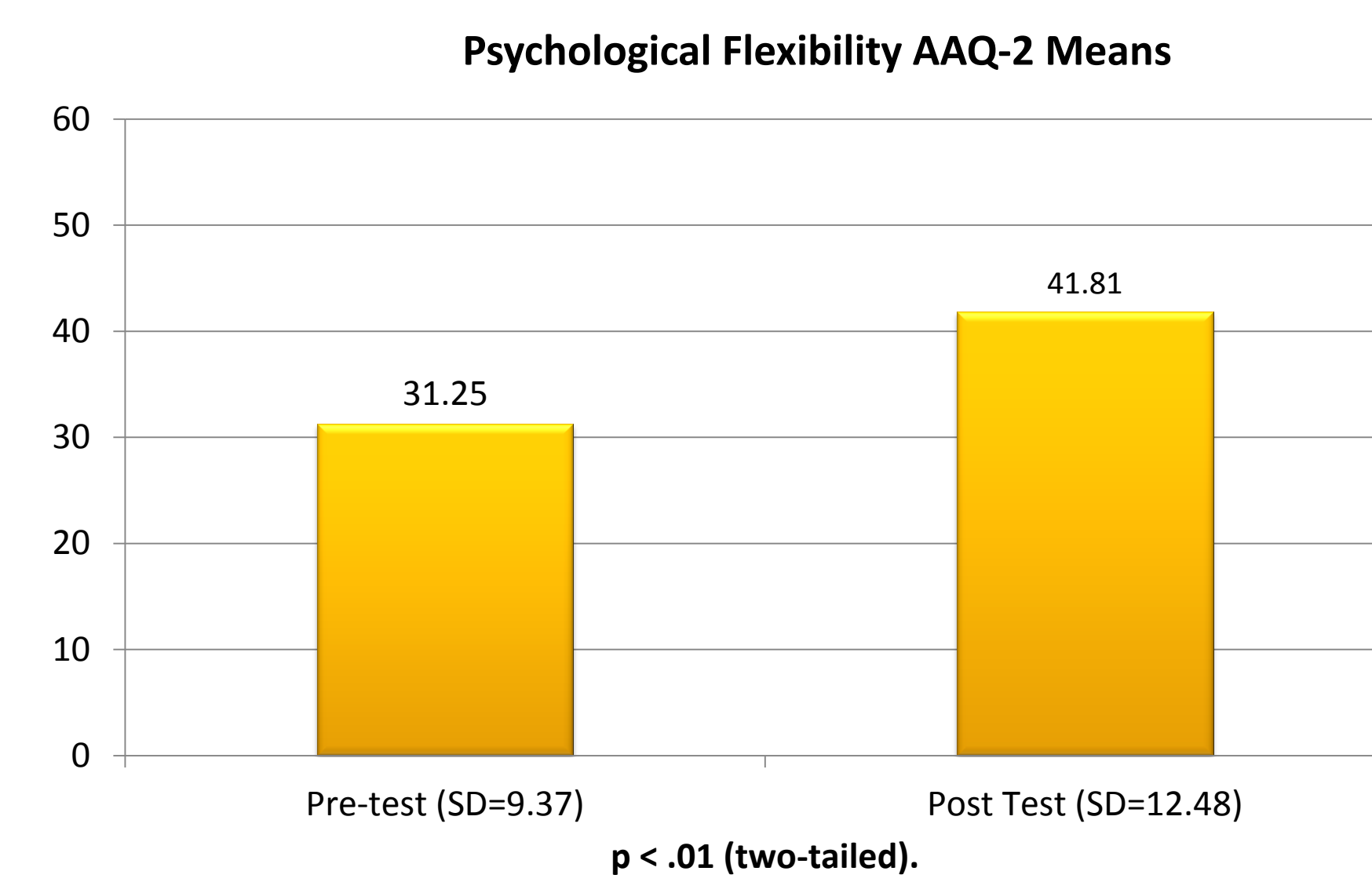
Demographics: Data concerning participants' gender, age, and ethnicity was collected from patient records.

Psychological flexibility: A Spanish version of the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire – II (AAQ-II; Patrón-Espinosa, 2010) will be utilized. The AAQ-II is a 10-item questionnaire that measures acceptance, experiential avoidance and psychological flexibility, and is internally consistent and valid.

Pain acceptance: The Spanish version of the *Chronic Pain Acceptance Questionnaire* (CPAQ; Gonzalez-Menéndez et al., 2010) was utilized. The CPAQ is a 20-item questionnaire that is divided into two subscales: Activity Engagement and Pain Willingness. The Activity Engagement subscale measures the extent to which a person participates in activities, regardless of their pain. The Pain Willingness subscale measures the extent to which a person believes that controlling pain is an effective strategy.

Valued living: The Spanish adaptation of the Valued Living Questionnaire (VLQ; Wilson & Luciano, 2002) was utilized. The VLQ is a 20-item questionnaire that measures the importance of 10 valued-life areas, as well as the consistency by which individuals live a life based on the importance of these valued-life areas. Only the consistency scale was utilized for this study.

RESULTS



DISCUSSION

- Results are consistent with existing research that points to changes in both psychological flexibility and chronic pain acceptance after psychological intervention (e.g., Alonso, Lopez, Losada & Gonzalez, 2013)
- While a slight increase in living according to ones values was noted, this change was not significant contrary to what was expected. A possible reason may be that the composite score was not utilized. Authors of the VLQ scale recommend the use of this score when conducting research (Wilson, Sandoz, Kitchens, & Roberts, in press).
- This is the first effort to explore changes in relevant variables targeted by culturally-informed ACT with Puerto Rican veterans. While we are not able to attribute changes in participant's scores to the intervention, results provide fertile ground for future studies.

BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS

Benefits:

- Study results provide initial support for the potential utility of culturally-informed ACT intervention for Puerto Rican Veterans.
- Information obtained from this pilot study contributes to the discussion of prospective efficacy and feasibility studies.

Limitations:

- This is a retrospective study.
- Study has a limited sample size.
- Measures are not validated with Puerto Rican population.

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[1] The contents of this Poster Presentation do not represent the views of the VA Caribbean Healthcare System, the Department of Veterans Affairs or the United States Government

