

# “Mi Amiga Dolores”: Culturally Informed Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Puerto Rican adults with Fibromyalgia

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this poster is to describe efforts to culturally adapt Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) for the treatment of Fibromyalgia (FMS) with Puerto Rican adults. The hope is to contribute discussions related to the cultural adaptation of ACT and foster fertile ground for feasibility and efficacy studies of culturally informed ACT for FMS.

## PURPOSE

We will describe an eight week ACT intervention for Puerto Rican veterans and portray:  
1) efforts to link cultural knowledge to ACT techniques  
2) benefits and limitations of cultural adaptation  
3) Recommendations and future directions.

## INTRODUCTION

ACT is an evidenced based model with proven effectiveness in the treatment of chronic pain. Despite ACT's success, minorities continue to be underrepresented in the general ACT treatment literature (Woidneck, Pratt, Gundy, Nelson & Twhig, 2012). Moreover, little is known on how ACT has been culturally-adapted and implemented for use with Puerto Rican adults. Hayes and colleagues (2011), suggest that cultural modifications *may* make ACT more effective. In addition, there is a general call for evidence based treatments to be adjusted to better meet the needs of cultural groups (Sue, Zane, Hall & Berger, 2009) and for these adaptations to be reported (Bernal, Jiménez-Chafey, & Dómenech-Rodríguez, 2009). However, there is a lack of agreement on what modifications to make and consistency in describing the process of cultural adaptation.

### Cultural Adaptation Defined

•“The systematic modification of an evidenced-based treatment or intervention protocol to consider language, culture, and context in such a way that it is compatible with the client’s cultural patterns, meaning and values” (Bernal, Jiménez-Chafey, & Dómenech-Rodríguez, 2009).

•“...Considers mental health treatment tailored to clients’ cultural beliefs and values, provided in a setting considered “safe” by the client, and conducted in the clients’ preferred language” (Smith, Dómenech-Rodríguez, Bernal, 2010).

### Puerto Rican Context

Puerto Rico (P.R.) is an unincorporated territory or commonwealth of the United States. P.R. culture is a blend of Spanish, African, Taíno Indian and white American influences. P. R. culture promotes collective values. Other values that are important in P.R. society include familism, allocentrism, *simpatía*, *personalismo*, respect, and spiritualism/religion (Bernal, Cumba-Aviles & Sáez-Santiago, 2006).



### The VA Caribbean Healthcare System

The VA Caribbean Healthcare System (VACHS) is currently considered part of the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 8, the Sunshine Healthcare Network.

## METHOD

### Participants

3 male and 16 female Puerto Rican veterans; ages ranged from 37 to 59 years old.

### Group Description

**Morivivi** is a Psychotherapeutic group for the treatment of FMS. FMS is a condition characterized by chronic, generalized muscle pain, particular sensitivity to pressure in specific areas of the body, fatigue and disrupted sleep (Taylor, Friedberg & Jason, 2001). Beginning in 2010, the *Morivivi* group was co-lead by Psychology Interns and/or Fellows under the supervision of Dr. Yarí Colon-Torres. 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.



### Procedures

#### Intervention

Three cohorts of eight-sessions that met for 1 ½ hours during 2011-2012. Flexible protocol that evolved from Dahl, & Lundgren’s (2006) Self Help Workbook *Living Beyond your Pain* and other protocols (e.g., Life with Chronic Pain; Vowles & Sorrell, 2007). Bi-Weekly supervision /didactic meetings (duration 1.5 hours) during a ten month period in which cultural relevance was a central theme.

#### Measures

Acceptance and Action Questionnaire II(AAQ-2;Patrón-Espinosa, 2010) and Valued Living Questionnaire Spanish Version (VLQ;Wilson, Kitchens, & Roberts,2010) were administered for clinical purposes.

## EFFORTS TO LINK CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE TO ACT

### Elements of cultural adaptation for Latinos

(Bernal & Sáez –Santiago, 2006)

### LANGUAGE

- Culturally syntonic translation of material. (e.g., Values → Use of the phrase “what is important to you” instead of the term *Valores*, which is most often understood as a dichotomous and moral concept in Puerto Rican culture).
- Incorporated use of “Spanglish”
- Developed a Spanish language protocol with sample scripts for therapists.

### PERSONS

- Therapist and client match was discussed throughout implementation of treatment.

### METAPHORS

- Use of metaphors, *cuENTOS* (stories), and *dichos* (sayings) is common in Puerto Rican culture.
- Modification of ACT metaphors:
  - **Mi Amiga Dolores** (analogous to “Joe the Bum” metaphor): Its English translation could be “My friend, Ms. Payne”. Along with being a name, Dolores means “pain” in Spanish. Helps explain acceptance.
  - **Ocean Current Metaphor** (analogous to “Quicksand” metaphor): Swimming with the current instead of against it. Helps explain control as the problem.
  - **La Guagua Aérea** (analogous to the “Bus” or “Rearview mirror” metaphor): Reference to a scene in well known movie based on a book by Luis Rafael Sanchez, Puerto Rican author. The movie takes place in a plane depicting Puerto Rican migration to the U.S. In this scene, crabs are accidentally let loose on the plane causing both travelers and the plane’s staff to frantically try to catch them. Helps explain acceptance.
- Addition of *Dichos*:
  - “*El que no quiere caldo le dan tres tazas*”: Its literal translation, “He who does not want stew, will get three cups”, is consonant with the ACT idea of “If you don’t want it, you’ve got it”, representing experiential avoidance.
  - “*Sarna con gusto no pica*”: Its literal translation, “Scabies with enjoyment don’t itch”, is consonant with the ACT idea of willingness.

### CONTENT

- Values such as collectivism, respect, familism, and *personalismo* were honored and incorporated.
- Flexible use of protocol and time to discuss gender roles, as well as experiences of discrimination and oppression due to minority status.
- Greater emphasis on discussion of the impact of fibromyalgia on family system, military and civilian roles.

### CONCEPTS

- Concepts were framed within Puerto Rico’s cultural context (e.g., Mindfulness was presented as “here and now meditation” taking into consideration cultural and religious preconceptions about Buddhism).

### GOALS

- No adaptation was made.

### METHODS

- Time was allotted for initial “chit-chat” consistent with the value of *personalismo*.
- Family members were invited to participate in group sessions, consistent with collectivist value of familism.

### CONTEXT

- Cultural, socio-historic and political context was taken into account in adaptations (e.g., acknowledgment of the interrelatedness of military culture, and Puerto Rican culture on how pain and values are defined).

## OUTCOMES

- ❖ Spanish culturally-informed protocol
- ❖ Spanish translated materials
- ❖ New metaphors



## DISCUSSION

This is the first effort to explore the implementation of ACT with Puerto Rican veterans and document cultural adaptations. Our efforts have proven to be qualitatively successful in broadening the discussion regarding the cultural adaptation of ACT. Efficacy is yet to be tested; however, we offer a useful contribution to those interested in cultural modifications of evidence based interventions.

### Benefits and limitations of our cultural adaptation

#### Benefits

- ❖ Utilized therapists’ and clients’ cultural knowledge to better fit therapy to client’s needs.
- ❖ Emphasized the importance of developing culturally informed psychotherapy.
- ❖ Increased therapist awareness of contextual factors that may play a role in presentation of client problems. As a result, providers cultural competency increased.

#### Limitations

- ❖ Process of cultural adaptation was not systematic.
- ❖ Efficacy of intervention was not statistically measured.
- ❖ Measures used have not been validated for Puerto Ricans

### Recommendations and Future Directions

#### Research

- ❖ Begin quantitative and qualitative research exploring effectiveness of ACT with Puerto Ricans with FMS
- ❖ Measure cultural adaptations, as well as explore their impacted on client outcomes (e.g., retention, working alliance, participation,).
- ❖ Begin validation of translated measures such as AAQ-II and VLQ

#### Practice

- ❖ Develop a culturally diverse consultation team
- ❖ Identify adaptation model and document adaptation process.