AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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TITLE: PREDICTION OF CLINICAL SYMPTOMS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY USING A NOVEL VALUES CARD SORT ACTIVITY

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Values are directly relevant in a number of theoretical orientations in psychology, including Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). In ACT, clarification of one’s personal values is paramount. The present study examined the ability to predict clinical symptoms and psychological flexibility using variables derived from one’s performance on the ACT Values Card Sort (ACT-VCS), a novel values clarification exercise. The independent variables, obtained from the ACT-VCS, included 1) the number of values endorsed as very important in the initial sort (i.e., valuing propensity), 2) the number of values domains represented in the final sort (i.e., values diversity), and 3) the extent to which one’s values were oriented toward uncontrollable experiences (i.e., control agenda endorsement). Three hierarchical regressions were conducted to examine the extent to which these three predictors accounted for the variance in scores of a) depression, anxiety, and stress, b) psychological flexibility, and c) psychological inflexibility. The psychological flexibility model was significant ($\Delta R^2 = .25$ ($F$ (3, 69) = 12.20, $p < .001$) with valuing propensity ($r_{yi,jk}^2 = .13$, $p < .001$) and control agenda endorsement ($r_{yi,jk}^2 = .05$, $p < .01$), but not values diversity, independently accounting for a significant portion of the variance. Prior therapy experience moderated some of these relationships. These findings provide preliminary evidence for using performance variables from the ACT-VCS to predict clinical variables.

Keywords: values, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, card sort, psychological flexibility.