Application of Positive and Virtue Psychology to the Understanding of Psychosocial Adaptation to Chronic Illness and Disability

Jeong Han Kim, Ph.D., CRC
Virginia Commonwealth University

Who Am I?
• Heavy Metal
• Military Service (1996 – 1997)
• Injuries ...... and Surgeries .......
• Rehabilitation
• Ph.D. in Rehabilitation Psychology

VERITAS: Becoming Resilient Han

Positive Psychology & Psychosocial Adaptation
• Positive Emotion
• Positive Traits: Virtue & Character Strengths
• Positive Institution

Virtue
• Virtue: is a learned disposition developed through the constant practice of personally valued characteristics to promote individuals’ well-being (e.g., wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, transcendence......)
Character Strengths

Virtue reflects an individual’s value system and his or her pursuit in life.

Character strengths, on the other hand, represent the essence of a person and what it amounts to in totality.

In this regard, an individual’s character strengths serve as a behavioral indicator to measure the overall quality of a person’s life; thus virtue and character strengths are prominent areas of study in relation to resilience, posttraumatic growth, coping ability, vocational success, and ability to thrive with disabilities.

Virtue
& Psychosocial Adaptation

Can virtue ethics really give us guidance in concrete situations like disability?

Measures of Positive Traits: Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS)

- 240 items, 30-40 minutes
- 6 Subscales and 24 Character Strengths
- All scales have satisfactory alphas (> .70).
- Test-retest correlations for all scales over a 4-month period are substantial (> .70).
- Marlow-Crowne social desirability scores do not significantly correlate with scale scores, with the exception of prudence (r = .44) and spirituality (r = .30).

Virtue Classification

- http://www.viacharacter.org/www/

Applicability of VIA-IS

- The definitions of virtue and character strengths may be inherently different meaning of disability
- Too strenuous
- Lack of empirical evidence regarding the factor structure

Measures of Positive Traits: Adapted Virtue Inventory of Strengths (AVIS)

- 46 items, 5-10 minutes
- 5 Subscales (Synergetic Transcendence, Wisdom as Openness, Integrity, Courageousness, Pursuit of Excellence)
- Alpha(s): .84, .78, .78, .77, & .78 respectively
- 1st validation study: 268 students with disabilities
- Correlation to CD-RISC: .618, .368, .372, .494, .689
- Still under development
Research Evidence: Virtue and Psychosocial Adaptation to CID
• 268 students with disabilities were grouped based on their level of psychosocial adaptation defined in terms of combination of satisfaction with life, sense of well-being, and resilience.
• 3 groups: high adaptation, intermediate adaptation, low adaptation

Research Evidence: Virtue and Psychosocial Adaptation to CID
• Is it possible to discriminate among psychosocial adaptation clusters of participants with CID in terms of underlying virtues comprised of character strengths? If so what kind of account of a human being’s psychosocial adaptation to CID can we give based on virtue and character strengths?

Research Evidence: Discriminant Analysis
• The analysis produced evidence of significant differentiation between clusters for the first discriminant function
  \[ \lambda = .408, \chi^2 (df = 10, N = 256) = 224.813, p = .000. \]
• Correlation between Virtue Factors and Discriminant Function
  • .835* (Pursuit of Excellence), .585* (Synergetic Transcendence), .351* (Wisdom as Openness), .452 (Courageousness), .318 (Integrity)

Discussion
• The three clusters consistently had either low, intermediate, and high scores relative to one another.
• No significant difference between intermediate and low adaptation group in terms of financial well-being.
• Discriminant function does exist.
• Pursuit of excellence, synergetic transcendence, and wisdom as open-mindedness may play more important role in helping people with CIDs deal not only with their CID but also with new challenges and life situations.

Discussion
• Items under AVIS Pursuit of Excellence includes: Persistent, hardworking, persevering, interested, appreciating excellence, scholarly, & self-disciplined.
• Items under AVIS Synergetic Transcendence includes: Loving, optimistic, believing life has meaning, thankful, affectionate, caring, grateful, enthusiastic, forgiving, energetic, spiritual, admiring beauty
• Items under AVIS Wisdom as Open-mindedness includes: open-mindedness, inventive, light-hearted, funny, valuing equality, creative, playful, receptive to new idea, curious, unbiased, humorous.
Summary

- Love of learning, perseverance, appreciation of beauty and excellence, curiosity, self-reflection, kindness, love, gratitude, zest, spirituality, forgiveness, hope, humor, openmindedness, fairness, and creativity.

Applications to Minority Study

- Culturally Values Strengths
- (Culturally Valued) Strengths Based Intervention
- Virtue/Strengths and LGBT Study