# Agency and Young People's Moral Self-Understanding in Early Intervention for Psychosis (EIP) Services

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## Background

Early Intervention in Psychosis (EIP) aims to implement early detection and intervention for people experiencing a First Episode of Psychosis (FEP), or who are defined as being at high-risk for developing a psychotic disorder (At-Risk Mental State - ARMS). A majority of "at-risk" people enrolled in EIP have an absence of sustained/impairing symptoms, and do not convert to a psychiatric diagnosis (Broome & Fusar-Poli, 2012; Apelbaum, 2015). Therefore, researchers have explored ethical dimensions in EIP services: e.g. Appelbaum considered stigma, privacy, and the associated concerns attached to an "at-risk" label.

## Aim

This study attempted to bridge the disciplinary divide in the literature, by linking empirical research on moral self-understandings within EIP services with normative accounts of self-concept and personal agency. A primary aim in this work is to achieve a substantive understanding of the ways in which EIP services could positively support a young person's self-concept and sense of agency.

## Theoretical Framework

### Dewey's Pragmatism
- A "protest" against principlism and foundationalism
- Values embodied in institutions, cultures and politics
- Identifying moral issues at stake in a particular context

### Methodological Contributions
- Logical "scientific" approach to moral problem solving
- Identify "felt difficulty" and it's location and definition
- Suggest possible solutions
- Develop by reasoning of consequences of the suggestion
- Further observe and experiment, lead to its acceptance or rejection

## Methods

Forty-two young people aged 16-24 were recruited from four National Health Service (NHS) sites in England. This includes young people referred to an NHS EIP service at risk of developing psychosis or with a diagnosis of First Episode Psychosis (FEP). Individual semi-structured interviews with participants were conducted. Interviews lasted for approximately one hour.

## Data Analysis

Grounded Theory Approach: An iterative process of moving back and forth between empirical data and normative theorising. We followed this process to theoretical saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), with three coders reaching 80% inter-rater reliability.

## Findings

### Moral Attributes of Service Users
We found four "habits of thoughts, feeling and action" that inhere in the context of EIP services. These include collaboration, honesty, kindness/compassion, and hope. Engaging in these beneficial habits was one way for young people to feel more like "experts," and by becoming an "expert" young people experienced increased agency. The process of gaining expertise included the input of "good" clinicians, and the process of gaining practical wisdom to make "good" choices to act well. This practical wisdom helps the person differentiate between motivational qualities.



Moral Attributes of Service Users: Collaboration, Honesty, Kindness/ Compassion, Hope

Moral Attributes of Clinicians: Competence, Empathy, Empower, Promote Engagement

Ethical Requirements of Service Delivery: Appropriate Intervention, Effective Service, Patient/Family Centred

Barriers to Treatment: Service Based, Service User Based, Clinician Based