

Using a ‘Capabilities Approach’ to understand how positive AOD trajectories happen for young people

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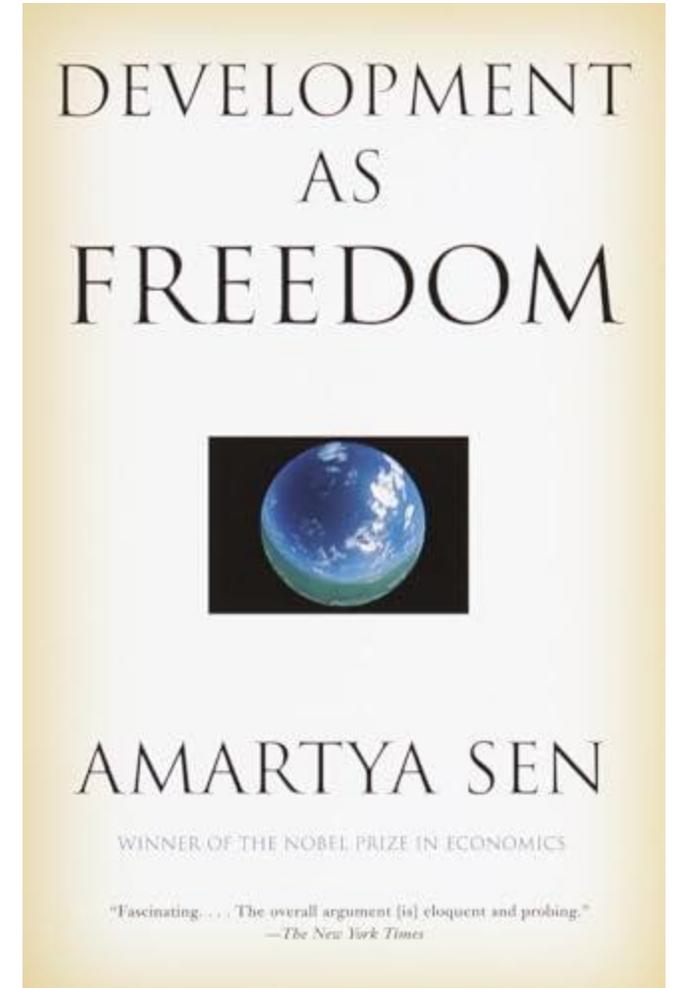
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The approach: 'Capabilities'

Policy and intervention developed based on three linked concepts:

- Aspirations: 'the good life'
- Capabilities: the real opportunities to achieve aspirations
- Capability expansion: using policy to reconfigure resources and opportunities to support people's aspirations



Capabilities-inspired questions

1. What is the meaning of a 'good life' for young people in AOD treatment? In other words, what kinds of lives do they aspire to?
2. What is their capability or real opportunity to achieve these lives of value?
3. What shifts in policy and practice would support 'capability expansion' for young people in AOD?

Method



ate 15: *Nobody*. Edgar, June, 2023.

- In-depth modified life history interviews
- N=17 young people in NSW and Victoria
- Outreach clients
- ‘Work back’ method – identify successes and work back to describe opportunities and supports that enabled these

Features of 'the good life'

Participation

- Paid work with opportunity for responsibility and progress
- Education with practical purpose

Safety and security

- Safe and secure long-term home

Recognition

- Feel included, respected, wanted
- Be seen as responsible

Balance

- Have a healthy body and mind, manage substance use well



Plate 17: Untitled. Carrot, October, 2021.

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Paid work: pathway to the good life

- Sense of belonging and social contribution
- Provided routine and distraction from substance use
- Enabled a secure and stable future that could be passed on

Managing [drug] use? I would have to find something to do. like work... like I find that I don't have much energy after work, so probably I just stay home, you know, instead of going out.
Participant 13

I'll have money to live off like be able to set my life up and for when I have kids they'll be financially stable. it's all just about setting yourself up, really. **Participant 5**

Real opportunities for steady paid work

Narrow options created by:

- Needing money to survive
- Criminal record
- Centrelink obligation to take anything available
- Build a track record
- Lack appropriate skill set
- Lack knowledge about their options

Do not expand opportunity to pursue the kind of work they value

*Centrelink sucks, you know?
They don't help you to where
you wanna go. Like you tell
them you wanna study and
stuff and, like me, like I had big
dreams and they don't, care.
They just wanna send you to
some shitty factory job that just
makes you more depressed.*
Participant 11

'Care work' as a valued and accessible

'Care work' (Tronto, 1993) – youth work, alcohol and drug services, aged care, disability work

- Work that is purposeful, morally good, aligned with lived experience
- Reflect what is valued and attainable
- Typically involves forms of work that are lower paid and require less education

*I have so much experience in life and all my workers have always told me they think I should be a worker, you know, like someone that works with troubled youth. **Participant 14***

*I always looked at the workers there and thought that they had pretty interesting but good jobs. So, I'd like to go and work for a place like that one day. **Participant 3***

Conclusion

Expanding capabilities for paid work:

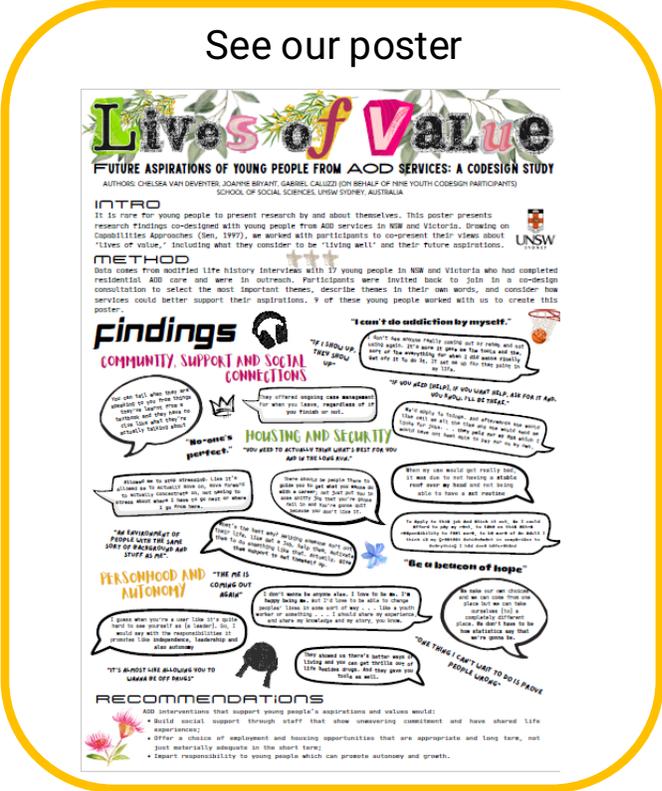
- Integrate employment pathway within AOD care: this is not outside scope
- Work options that are meaningful and morally good
- Broaden options for care work
- Purposely teach skills to succeed in professional environments
- Assist with knowing what and where to work



Plate 7: *Lost in Colour*. Star, September, 2023.



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