

The Capacity to Care for the Other in Helping Professionals' Training

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ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the research of the phenomenon of care in connection with the search for the ecological validity of methods of training and professional selection of specialists in the area of psychological help aimed at creating a safe, healthy, positive (developing) environment. The projective technique created on the basis of the achievement motivation test by H. Heckhausen, as modified by M.Sh. Magomed-Eminov and TAT to identify the characteristics of the ability to care for the Other and its change in the course of students' professional development, was approbated on university students. Trial subjects were 80 persons (31 men and 49 women). There were four comparison groups. The trials showed significant difference in manifestation of aspects of care between psychology students and students of other specialties. Differences in the instrumental activity, imagination, involvement in the situation have been identified between the first-year and graduate psychologists ($d < 0.01$). Based on professional training as a result of cultural-activity work of personality on mastering experience of psychological science and practice the care-giving capacity is transformed from the status of emotional distress into actionable, active forms of professional help and personal professional competence.

KEYWORDS

cultural and activity-oriented work of personality, psychological counseling, care of the Self and the Other

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Introduction

The support practices involve developing special competencies in helping professionals (health workers, psychologists, social workers, etc.), among which special attention should be given to capacity to care for the other, including creation and restoration of the client's care of the Self and the Other (Magomed-Eminov, 1998; 2007). The mechanism

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of its development is the internalization of care of the Other, in the process of which care goes into an internal plan of taking care of the Self, and through the care of the Self – to taking care of the Other same as of own self. A helping professional is a person responsible for the process of restoration of care in the Other and has to master a special capacity to care of the Other as a competency based not only on life experience, wisdom, but also assumes targeted professional training.

The phenomenon of care for the Other is only theoretically studied in the psychological science. At the same time the needs of psychological practice require urgent development of scientific methods of identification and development of capacity to care in helping professionals. The trends observed over the past decade in the transformation of ecologically-valid psychological practice towards the attitudes to consume more integrative products (a combination of medical technologies with behavioral pattern changes, the achievement of a new quality of life, lifestyle, well-being, etc.), on the one hand, to increase multicultural variety of clients (American Psychological Association, 2008; 2012), on the other hand, as well as the introduction of new information and business technologies (Magomed-Eminov, 1987) in creation of a psychological alliance to achieve the required changes (incorporation of new groups of clients, introduction of new forms of process and result recording, data logging, distancing the process of contact establishment and development, cheapening of services, etc.) – all these factors are not diminishing, but rather strengthening the role of capacity to care, support, cooperate, empathize for improving competitiveness, effectiveness of psychological work and client satisfaction.

To solve the tasks of professional training in the area of psychological practice in general and psychological help in particular, at the Extreme Psychology and Psychological Helping Department of Lomonosov Moscow State University new approaches and methods of professional training have been approbated since 2004. Standards and programs are being developed that are aimed not only at the knowledge and skills acquisition, training in conducting diagnostic procedures, psychological counseling, group and individual work, prevention and forecasting, but also at the development of a wide range of personal competencies, including character education, professional identity formation. The training takes into account the ethical principles and norms in psychological work contributing to the strengthening of morality, the development of spiritual and general cultural needs, creativity, social adaptation, communicative skills, persistence in achieving goals, self-reliance and responsibility, mental health, psychological stability in stressful and extreme conditions of professional activity, tolerance, care of people, endurance and physical training. The personality work is focused on the ability to come into contact (including, for example, with a person in a vegetative crisis, etc.), deployment and completion of the therapeutic alliance; establishing and maintaining rapport in direct and indirect contact (for example, through technical means – phone, the Internet, etc.), empathic listening; reaching an understanding, building trust relationships;

verbal competence; writing competency – the ability to write reports, issue opinions on the cases, written recommendations, prescription of care scheme, writing a psychological portrait and characterization; text reviewing; the ability to negotiate (with parents, children, in an emergency situation – with terrorists); promotion and motivation of people for personal growth; the ability to maintain contact and communication in the team.

In the process of training it becomes appropriate to foster moral qualities of help professional's personality: leniency, tolerance for the representatives of different cultures, layers, religious communities; ability to influence individuals and groups, produce facilitative effect (including subliminal); and systematic thinking; developed intuition; ability to predict; ability to decentration, delegation of tasks to another person; personal maturity; psychological health; high resistance to stress; flexibility, ability to learn and to perceive the new; organizational skills and ability to create social support networks.

Thus, an empirical study of the phenomenon of care, its operationalization, development and approbation of methods to identify the capacity to care for the Self and the Other is topical. Analysis of changes in the students' manifestation of care in the course of professional training in the area of psychological help should be noted as an independent research task. This article presents the results of approbation of the projective technique aimed at determining the capacity to care. These results were obtained in the pilot study which involved first-year and graduate students of psychological and other (economic, technical, etc.) specialties.

The Present State of the Problem

The practice of Care of the Other is one of the basic mechanisms in a situation of psychological helping; it is not just an interaction product, but the panhuman factor emanating from the very laws of human evolution, penetrating into the essence of a human from the very first touch of a person caring for him. According to P.A. Kropotkin, manifestation of care, help among animals and humans is not just one of the types of behavior, but the fundamental law of survival and evolution of the mankind (Kropotkin, 2007). The feeling of solidarity and collectivism is innate to human, incorporated in the very essence of his nature; the true morality and justice are precisely rooted in solidarity.

Consideration of the care problematics begins in antique thought (Aristotle, Cicero), continues in the religious beliefs, classical philosophy, and is most revealed in the works of M. Heidegger, in postmodern philosophy, by Michel Foucault (1998; 2007) in particular, as well as in feminist concepts of S. Ruddick (1998), K. Gilligan (1993), N. Noddings (1984), L. Blume (1992). In their thinking about the care they associate it with problems of virtue, justice, freedom, truth – the basic philosophical categories that are fundamental, and put it in the base of these formative concepts. According to Heidegger, care is a holistic structure which means “being-always-already-ahead-of-oneself-in-the-world-as-being-with-omnipresent” (Heidegger, 1993). The phenomenon of care consists of three modes of time: “being-in-the-world”

is a mode of the past; “being ahead” is a mode of the future and “being-with” is a mode of the present. Starting out of the ancient idea that “in the culture the requirement of care of the Self preceded, was the premise of self-knowledge” (Magomed-Eminov, 2007,), M.Foucault describes the principle of care of the Self as exemplified in marriage practices, in relation to own body, etc., asserting that the care of the Self is associated with the transition from ignorance to knowledge, from an inability to manage the Self and the Other to the presence of such a capability, from evil to good, in general, from “childhood to adulthood” (Foucault, 1998). Thus, such a transition can be described as a change, transformation of the human personality.

Traditionally, psychology examines the concept of care in connection with the study and description of interpersonal interactions in matters of child-rearing and family life, without extending it to a wider range of phenomena (Bowlby, 2004; Eliot and Mackie, 2007). Only nowadays the view on the phenomenon of care is taking a shape of a fundamental principle of the psyche (Magomed-Eminov, 2007; 2009; 2011; 2013); the universal significance of this phenomenon originating in the laws of the evolution of mankind (Cicero, 1995) and penetrating into the mere human essence is being asserted.

In general, we can state the fact of insufficient development of the concept of care for the Other in science, as well as the common disregard for this category as a criterion for achievement of professional maturity by a helping professional (Magomed-Eminov, 2007; 2009; Fouad et al., 2009; Kropotkin, 2007, Savina, 2011; Smirnov, 2003; Hatcher, 2013; Lear, 2014; Neimeyer, 2012), which allows making a conclusion about the need to improve educational programs and technologies as well as the study of parameters of development and manifestation of care as a psychological phenomenon (Magomed-Eminov et al., 2013).

Based on the ideas of cultural-historical (Vygotsky, 1982) and activity approaches (Leontev, 2005; Magomed-Eminov, 2009) we develop the concept of care as a basic phenomenon which manifests itself in the interactions of the individual at different levels all over the stage of its existence (Magomed -Eminov 2007, 2009, 2011, Magomed-Eminov, Kvasova, Savina, 2013). In general, care can be described as an active, initiative, energetic, and interested attitude towards the Other which is aimed at helping him achieve his benefits. Indifference, selfish, manipulative attitude and hostility are opposed to this phenomenon. Openness and trust are important characteristics of care, it is always striving outward, aiming at the Other, at the benefit of the Other. This implies that the caring person should not manifest care only as a means to achieve his own ambitions and desires, but he should sacrifice his situational needs, interests and so on.

Consideration of the phenomenon of care for the Other in the horizon of defining relationship between the psychologist and the client in the course of their interaction shows the importance of studying this category for the future specialist’s identity. The study of this topic makes it possible to uncover new factors that influence both the choice of profession of a psychologist and the success and efficiency of his/her professional development. The designed methodological apparatus can

be used both in selection of enrollees of the Department of Psychology and as a means for measuring the total professional preparedness of graduate psychology students.

In this approach, care is regarded as an important formative phenomenon in the professional activity, as a component which determines the development of a professional, not only the success of his/her practice, but also his/her capacity to master the profession in general

Method

The subject of the study is the capacity to care for the Other in the process of professional development of a helping professional (as exemplified by psychologists). Hypotheses of the study are: 1) in the process of professional development of helping professionals manifestation of care for the Other is transformed from its emotional status into an operational one; 2) there are differences in the manifestation of care for the Other among the future experts in the area of psychological help (psychologists, health workers) and students of other specialties.

The trial subjects were 80 people, including 31 men and 49 women. 40 trial subjects are students trained in the area of helping professions (psychology students), 20 of them are first year students (average age of 17.5); and 20 are graduate students (average age of 22.5). The rest 40 are students trained in other specialties (students of the faculties of economics, information technologies, etc.), 20 of them are first year students (average age of 18.5); and the other 20 are graduate students (average age of 23).

Methods of research included the expert group method, the projective techniques to determine the capacity to care for the Other, compiled on the basis of achievement motivation test by H. Hechhausen as modified by Magomed-Eminov (Magomed-Eminov, 1987) and the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), where the subject is also invited to make up a story based on the picture having an indefinite plot. Data processing was performed using the Mann-Whitney U Test for small samples in SPSS 18 (2009), and the content analysis. Categories of the content analysis were formulated with the help of expert evaluation.

Results

An empirical study of the pilot nature was aimed at creating and testing methods to identify the characteristics of capacity to care for the Other and its transformation in the course of students' professional development. Seven categories aimed at recording of manifestation of care have been identified.

1. **Instrumental Activity (InA):** direct actions or operations aimed at care for the Other (empirical referents: "*I jumped up and quickly gathered my team, cleverly arranged all the onlookers and we put out the house fire together*").

2. **Expectation of care (EC):** reference to the need for care, its usefulness, but no specific action is taken ("*They want firemen to come and put out the fire*").

3. **Positive emotional state (E+):** the presence of joyful, positive



forecasts regarding the completion of the story (*“the movie had a happy ending, Boris and Anna got married and had kids”*) or general emotional background of the story is life-affirming, positive, or of a humorous nature (*“in the morning all laughed at him, because it turned out to be his friend Gosha disguised as a girl”*).

4. **Negative emotional state (E-):** pessimistic attitude to what is happening, negative forecasts regarding the completion, sharp negative statements (e.g., *“He will continue to beg until death”*).

5. **Avoidance of care (AC):** sidestepping, ignoring or escaping the situation, which implies the provision of care (*“I don’t feel pity for this young veteran. I know for sure that the disabled are given a very good pension, and I think he should stay at home with his family.” “I would not help him”*).

6. **Involvement in the situation (IS):** statements which reflect persons’ involvement in the situation and express their attitude to what is happening (e.g. *“I am also a close friend of him. I help him to move”*).

7. **Imagination, looking into the symbolic reality (I):** If the story is made unusual or have unusual situational parameters, is full of additional details, artistic techniques, fanciful names, for example, giving names to the characters and putting them in unusual situations (*“At the film shootings Alex was a guest cinema star”*).

As a result of category frequency counting, the following data were obtained. They are given in the table as summary quantitative values for the trial groups for each criterion:

Table 1. Percentage of responses by categories of care in the trial groups

Trial subjects	N -number of statements	Categories of care (responses, %)						
		Instrumental Activity (InA)	Imagination (I)	Expectation of care (EC)	Positive emotional state (E+)	Negative emotional state (E-)	Avoidance of care (AC)	Involvement in the situation (IS)
First-year psychology students	198	13	8	13	27	1	7	27
First-year students of other specialties	171	10	15	9	14	17	13	21
Graduate psychology students	259	26	1	20	14	5	4	31
Graduate students of other specialties	213	12	14	12	21	9	16	16

Quantitative analysis of the statements shows that among psychology students who have just started their training, in comparison with other groups

of subjects, the category of “Positive emotional state” and “Involvement in the situation” is mostly expressed; the category of “Negative emotional state”, on the contrary, is minimally expressed as compared to other trial subjects. Such categories as “Instrumental activities aimed at care”, “Expectation of care”, “Imagination”, “Avoidance of care” have moderate values. Among the first-year students of other specialties, the category of “Negative emotional state” has the greatest value of indicators; such categories as “Involvement in the situation”, “Imagination”, “Avoidance of care”, “Positive emotional state” are moderately expressed. In comparison with other groups of subjects such categories as “Expectation of care”, “Instrumental activities aimed at care” are characterized by the lowest manifestation.

Among graduate psychology students as compared to all other trial groups the most pronounced are the categories of “Involvement in the situation”, “Instrumental activities aimed at care”, “Expectation of care”. In terms of number of statements the category of “Positive emotional state” takes the average position. The categories of “Negative emotional state”, “Avoidance of care” and “Imagination” are quite low pronounced, the latter two having low values among other categories both within the group and among other trial subjects. Among graduate students of other specialties in comparison with other groups of subjects most pronounced are such categories as “Imagination” and “Avoidance of care”. Relatively high figures are revealed in the categories of “Positive emotional state”, “Instrumental activities aimed at care”, “Expectation of care”. The category of “Negative emotional state” is moderately expressed. “Involvement in the situation” is expressed lower than among the other trial subjects. Statistical analysis of the significance of differences between sample groups was performed using the Mann-Whitney U-test.

Table 2. Statistically significant differences in values by categories of care in the trial groups

Categories/ Comparison groups	U	U	U	U	U	U	U
	InA	I	EC	E+	E-	AC	IS
First-year psychology students - First-year students of other specialties				10.5 **	18*		13.5**
Graduate psychology students - Graduate students of other specialties	6.5* *	19*	8**			18*	9**
Graduate psychology students - First-year psychology students	2**		17.5 *				11**

** d<0.01

* d<0.05

Comparative analysis has shown that differences in the emotional sphere are significant in the groups of first-year students, and that psychologists have peculiar optimistic view of the situation, belief in its positive resolution, and the pessimistic mood, focus on the negative outcome is not characteristic of them, while it is more inherent in



students of other specialties. Differences in the level of involvement in the situation also proved to be significant, which shows a high level of joint participation and presence among psychologists and neglect, abandonment of involvement in the situation among the first-year students of other specialties. However, the differences by other categories are not significant, which indicates a similar level of the immediate manifestation and expectation of care.

The graduate students' groups are differentiated by almost all categories, except for emotions. Significant differences included also indicators of the level of involvement in the situation, expectation of care, instrumental activity aimed at care that are significantly more prevalent in psychology students, while imagination and avoidance of care are typical of graduates of other specialties.

Comparison of the first-year students with graduate psychologists has revealed significant differences in the manifestation of instrumental care for the Other, expectation of care and involvement in the situation, which are direct indicators of the degree of care, while the other categories are either insignificant or remain in the zone of uncertainty. Our data suggest that graduate psychologists demonstrate a relatively high focus on direct manifestation of care for the Other, personal responsibility and active participation in the situation, with high verbalization of attitudes of help and care. In this group, the most frequent are answers regarding their own key participation in the story: *"I'm a fireman and now getting ready to put out the house fire"*. Thus, it can be assumed that this group of subjects has intentional focus on the situations in which their help may be needed; in this case, for them the emotional disposition to a positive outcome is not so important, as the activity itself to provide care for the Other. In the stories they mostly describe the chains of actions aimed at care manifestation. The final outcome is often emotionless: *"the child will calm down"*, *"though the house will be burnt down, they will get a good insurance pay"*. The category of "Imagination" is comparatively less represented among graduate psychologists; there is no embellishment or superfluous details distracting attention from the situation of help. They are realistic and abstracted from indicating names and titles; an averaged hero usually acts in these stories: *"forest dweller"*, *"young people"*, etc.

Thus, the study has revealed specific differences in the character of manifestation of care for the Other at different stages of professional development of helping professionals. It has been found that there is a specific difference in the manifestation of care for the Other in the psychology enrollees as compared to the students of other specialties which is expressed in the form of empathy for the story heroes, emotional involvement, focus on the positive outcome, as opposed to focus on the negative outcome, the general pessimistic mood, in conjunction with the absence of the hypothetical options to resolve the situation. In the course of psychologists' training the transition from emotional to the operational manifestation of care for the Other is observed. It is characterized by the predominance of the instrumental,

activity component, and abstracting from the emotional plane.

Conclusion

Special significance of the capacity to care for the Other in a psychologist while providing psychological help has been justified from the standpoint of meaning-activity approach. The projective technique to determine the capacity to care for the Other has been developed and approbated for empirical research. Hypotheses about the presence of qualitative differences in the capacity to care for the Other in students of helping professions (including psychologists) and in students of other disciplines have been proved; transformation of the capacity to care for the Other in the course of psychologists' professional development and its dependence on professional training have been discovered.

The fundamental care-giving capacity of a person may be subjected to transformation, become more mature in its human manifestations, and from the status of emotional experience turn into actionable, active forms of professional assistance, personal professional competence. The discovered transformation does not occur spontaneously, but on the basis of professional training of psychology students, as a result of cultural-activity work of personality on mastering the experience of psychological science and practice. Undoubtedly, the development and approbation of technique and the data identified are only the first step in the approval of a specific instrument for the empirical study of the capacity to care for the Other and require retesting on an expanded sample of subjects, equal in the relevant characteristics, which will show the level of reliability and validity of the data obtained. More in-depth development of this method may be useful both as guidance in choosing a profession, and for the diagnosis of the successful completion of the psychologist's professional training.

The concept of care for the Other is a key one for the postmodern philosophy and methodology of science. The need to consider the principle of connection between the reality and the simulation of life situations during training puts the solution of this issue in one row with the other important tasks of modern practical and theoretical psychology.

The counseling psychology and, therefore, particular psychology transcends the descriptive and explanatory psychology – the psychologist becomes a participant in the Other's life, that is, enters into the human situation of "co-being", "co-existence". The psychologist as a person joins in another human's existence and, therefore, joins in his/her own existence. The situation of aid is a situation of existence of the psychologist himself/herself. When coming into contact with a specific person, the psychologist becomes converted into a specific person. The situation of the subject and the object disappears, the situation of human and human – Homo-duplex (Vigotsky, 1982) – appears. To provide psychological help the psychologist must transcend academic "psychological field", go beyond it and enter the human situation of helping, which is the situation of care. In its most general sense care can be understood as the unity of mutual transition of care for the Self and for the Other.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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