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UNDERSTANDING PROFESSIONAL CARE FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF CARE RECEIVERS AND CARE GIVERS – THE NECESSITY OF A SPECIAL CARE RATIONALITY

The paper looks into the question, what helps whom, when care is needed and how this need is defined by care givers and care receivers in the context of professional care. The goal is to comprehend requirements of a subject oriented understanding of care in long lasting processes in different fields of social work and nursing. Structural and action oriented facets of care will be analyzed via a new qualitative research study at the University of Applied Sciences in Frankfurt/ Main, Germany and interpreted in the context of the gender theoretical international care debate. Ways of understanding care by the involved actors in the fields of psychiatric ill, physically handicapped and dependent elderly people will be described in order to grasp the various dimensions of care concerning activities, hopes and structural frames. Because of human vulnerability and human mortality care is existential for mankind and its life long individual and societal relevance is difficult to cover merely by an abstract term and therefore has to be supplemented and adjusted by an every day life oriented approach. Only then the full scope of needs will reveal itself and it can be seen that linking care to pre defined narrowly terminated and abstractly formulated purposes does not suffice. Taking the viewpoints of care receivers and care givers into consideration four central dimensions of care in professional contexts can be shown: the institutional frame, capability of action including relationship building, ethical norms and self care. The results of this analysis are understood as a proof of the relevance of a care term on the basis of "care rationality" (Kari Waerness) including sufficient institutional support and possibility of self-determined action. Process oriented empathy, negotiation and capability, are important aspects of care. That means it is necessary to take the specific context of the respective care processes into account in order to respect the needs of care givers and care receivers - opposing neo liberal intentions of rationalization.