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## The Social Status of the Social Rehabilitation Pedagogue in Qualitative Ethnographic Research Methodological and Ethical Dilemmas in a “Difficult Field”

*Place is pedagogical*

M. Mendel (2006)

**Abstract:** The aim of this article is to show certain ethical difficulties and problems, as well as moral dilemmas that the qualitative researcher encounters in field studies. The issues raised are the author’s own reflections after conducting ethnographic research in the city from the perspective of social rehabilitation pedagogy.

**Key words:** ethnographic research, qualitative research, social rehabilitation educator, urban researcher, difficult research field, moral and ethical dilemmas.

Publications presenting the results of research on social rehabilitation pedagogy raise issues relating to social maladjustment, exclusion and crime in terms of several perspectives. However, descriptions, comments and research based on the use of quantitative methodology prevail, where in the presentation of these phenomena statistical data and certain regularities and numerical dependencies are

used, and on their basis conclusions are drawn related to the improvement of social life. In the case of using quantitative tools “interpretation of facts has a clear, functional, and cause and effect character” (Zięba-Kołodziej 2010, p. 353–354). However, it is needed to explore the reality of socially maladjusted and excluded people, going beyond the quantitative plane, which can be exposed with the help of ethnography based on direct contact of the researcher with the subject of studies and their being in the field. This enables the observation and description of particular fragments of reality elusive to quantitative methods, where excluded and socially maladjusted people live. It also gives the researcher the opportunity to enter the social worlds of the studied people. The area in qualitative research in social rehabilitation pedagogy can be both a facility and institution or the open environment, such as urban spaces.

The following article highlights the specifics of qualitative research of the open environment and focuses on local communities in the city and the activities of juveniles, *street children* and members of youth gangs. It especially concerns qualitative research, which allows to bring closer the conditions and processes that are elements of *street children* being in marginalized areas, connected even with the process of socialization to youth street gangs or certain identity activities, centered around acts of vandalism – *graffiti*. Attention is drawn to the social location of the researcher – the social rehabilitation pedagogue and certain moral and methodological problems and dilemmas associated with it. Their specificity becomes particularly clear when a researcher enters the so-called “difficult field”.

There are certain places in the city: ghettos of poverty, blocks of flats, transition zones and other excluded areas, which deserve special research attention. The qualitative plane enables to look at the dynamics of social maladjustment, exclusion or criminality in the environmental context and from different perspectives. The social rehabilitation perspective in this light is still little noticeable. In existing literature on *street children* and juveniles in local communities and the phenomena of social exclusion there is a gap in this area. While such sciences as sociology, economics, geography or even psychology include *Urban Studies* in their research scope, then in pedagogy it is still a neglected area. This is probably due to the difficulty in getting to reliable data, which are based on a complicated and lengthy process of the researcher being in the field.

Most associations related to social rehabilitation pedagogy concern institutional activities. Pedagogical activities focused on local communities and specific environments in the city seem to be the domain of mainly organizers of culture or social educators. However, I think that the problem of *street children* in all its complexity and associated environmental context is an interdisciplinary phenomenon and should be considered as such. There is a thought in social rehabilitation pedagogy that focuses on an open environment, both in terms of activities related to the prevention of risky behaviors and the prevention of crime (Urban 2007; Urban, Konopczyński 2012; Ambrozik 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2010a,

2010b; Nowak 2014; Michel 2013), as well as on the integration of ex-criminals with the local community (Bałandynowicz 2010, 2011). Although pedagogical activities on the street in Poland have their strong and deep roots, for some reason social rehabilitation pedagogy avoids identifying itself with city and street spaces.

The street does not always smell nice, it is sometimes brutal and ruthless. The street is dirty and dangerous, it is the stage for “street crime”. The street has a shape, smell, taste, climate. The street overpowers, seduces and consumes. It demands a visual halt. A pedagogue-street and urban space researcher, especially of excluded areas, is in an exceptional situation, both ethically and in terms of own safety. The street also commits a social rehabilitation pedagogue due to the fact of a certain tradition of criminological studies, located in the Chicago School, whose activity was focused among other things on the study of juvenile delinquency and youth gangs in city spaces. Also concepts such as CPTED (*Crime Prevention Thought Environmental Design*) (Jeffery 1971, 1977, 1990) and *Broken Windows Theory* (Wilson, Kelling 1982; Kelling, Coles 2000; Bratton, Knobler 2002) refer to urban spaces in the study of determinants of crime and its prevention (Czapska, Krupiarz 1999; Czapska 2012).

The choice of the presented issue determines the social status of the researcher in the so-called “difficult field” and defines his identity. It frequently puts him in opposition to the dominant trends and methodological paradigms. In describing the social reality and worlds of the studied subjects, the qualitative researcher focuses on the processes, emphasizing their interaction contexts, and locates his research process in an interpretative paradigm. The social rehabilitation pedagogue undertaking qualitative research, already at the stage of deciding this, should be aware of the difficulties and problems that he may encounter throughout the research process. The researcher who decide to go into the field, whether he wants it or not, bears the consequences of simultaneous functioning in two worlds, sometimes very distant from each other, for example, in the academic world and the world of ghettos of poverty, slums and the street.

A qualitative researcher in the field often faces the necessity to reconcile two or more identities, which raises certain moral obligations towards oneself and the people living in the studied areas. The moral burden is due to the fact of hiding the truth about oneself, which is especially necessary in conducting covert participating observation. During the research process, ethical dilemmas also arise. Piotr Chomczyński creates a kind of taxonomy of such dilemmas, namely:

- changing the status of the people observed in the eyes of the researcher;
- the problem of trust based on the “joint” definition of the situation – “instrumental trust”;
- the problem of mutual “confidence” and its ethical implications;
- the researcher’s attitude towards a conflict and the problem of commitment;
- the moment of completion of the study and disclosing “true identity” (Chomczyński 2006).

Due to the nature, content and subject of research and the area in which they are carried out, these dilemmas are likely to be different in different researchers, although similar. Emerging problems require reasonable solutions, speed and smoothness in making certain decisions on a regular basis, but also consolidated knowledge so that some of them can be addressed in advance. The social rehabilitation pedagogue, as a qualitative researcher being in the field, cannot always rely on ready guidelines concerning ethics of their work<sup>1</sup>, for he enters an environment that is unfamiliar to him, often difficult and dangerous. Also, the specificity of studied people and groups is particular. They are often people living on the borderline of the law or who break this law, guided by incomprehensible rules and patterns of behavior drawn from a criminal subculture, ruled by the law of the street, acting in the convention of resistance and introducing their governing regimes to the second city life. These are groups that have their own language, rituals, hierarchy of norms and values. Thus, the cognitive patterns, scenarios and heuristics known to the researcher fail. Moral dilemmas appear concerning differences in systems of value and priorities. Added to this are problems associated with a certain schizophrenia of undertaken roles in the field, liminality of locations and identity problems.

The researcher-social rehabilitation pedagogue, when undertaking qualitative research should be aware of the role of the space he is studying, but also what status he has in the studies. He becomes part of a “community of the space” he is studying, i.e. a community of people created by it and creating it. In fact, he studies but is also studied himself in the place of his activities. At the first stage of qualitative research, the researcher assumes the role of a “passive stranger”, however, as this process deepens, it becomes an “interactive stranger”, and even an “active stranger”. According to Eileen Barker, who described the role of the “stranger” based on her own participating studies, it consists in observing the subjects from a distance and learning them without establishing relationships and interactions (Barker 1980). In contrast, a researcher joining the group of studied subjects entails certain consequences like having to use their language and adjusting one’s appearance accordingly. Skillful use of language may cause that the researcher is not recognized as a researcher, but identified as a participant of the world of the subjects. This stage of entering the subjects’ world is defined by the author as the role of the “interactive stranger”. The last element of involvement of the researcher in the studied world is the role of the “active stranger”, when the researcher begins to intervene in the course of interactions

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<sup>1</sup> Pedagogues do not have a professional code of ethics, so they use the Code of Ethics of the Sociologist (Polish Sociological Association on 25 March 2012). This document defines relationships with research participants, resolves doubts in the case of confidential studies by defining terms such as: anonymity, privacy or confidentiality of the research process (<http://www.pts.org.pl/public/upload/kodeks.pdf>, download date: 1.09.2015).

and can become the factor of change (Gulczyńska 2013). This is particularly important in qualitative pedagogical studies of *action research* nature, where it is clear that the researcher in involved studies becomes less and less a researcher and is increasingly a participant of the studied world.

Overlapping identities of the researcher and social rehabilitation pedagogue in conducted field studies is extremely important and requires reflection. The main problem here is that the perspective of the pedagogue may become a crucial factor distorting or deforming the research results, and certainly generating many dilemmas of the methodological and ethical nature. I think that a sociologist can only afford to be guided by cognitive curiosity and describing the studied reality in accordance with certain standards and canons of the research methodology. The pedagogue, due to the represented discipline, profession and ethical and moral sensitivity<sup>2</sup>, is in many situations forced by their inner imperative to undertake, for example, assistance actions or omit actions that are harmful to the health of others. Such a situation, which is often indicated by the already cited Anita Gulczyńska, can cause even the modification of originally formulated research intentions (Gulczyńska 2013). I am also of the opinion that in extreme cases it can result in the suspension or abandonment of research.

Here a certain phenomenon should be noted, namely the so-called “dilemma of false identity”, which generates many ethical problems in the study. It happens quite often that the status of the researcher in the studied world is not precisely defined and varies in relation to different situations and stages. The dilemma of “false identity” (Shaughnessy et al. 2002) is probably dominant and raises many ethical controversies and internal problems in the researcher. He is the one to generate the majority of other ethical dilemmas, which is expressed in numerous theoretical studies (Doktór 1964; Konecki 2000; Chomczyński 2006, 2014). “False identity” is linked to the role that the researcher imposes upon himself in the eyes of others and through which he wants to be perceived. A “complete participant” of the study, for the entire duration of observations, is forced to play his role in relation to other social actors, and always care for the image created for research needs (Konecki 2000). This can be burdensome due to having to continuously remember the role currently played. There is also the danger of unmasking oneself in a moment of forgetfulness, showing oneself as a researcher or culturally “foreign” person, because one used a different language or seemingly insignificant gesture.

There are moments when situationally the researcher is forced to reveal his identity – be it research or pedagogical. Often this is connected with ensuring

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<sup>2</sup> I do not claim that the researcher-sociologist does not have moral and ethical sensibility, but I believe that the pedagogue, due to education and profession, has a specific approach to human harm and is taught to intervene in difficult situations and ones that are hazardous to human health and life.

their own security, which the act of unmasking the research identity to the natives guarantees. Indeed, seeing a stranger, easily identifiable due to the nature of the excluded space, which is dominated by the characteristics of the local society and community (*communitas*), the inhabitants start a process of guessing and asking the researcher who he is. It happens that they identify him with the journalist, which causes an openness and willingness to talk. Then the local's stories become sensational and colored by improbable events. Sometimes, however, the researcher identified with a social worker, a probation officer or someone from the police. Representatives of these institutions are not welcome in the studied urban spaces with the stigma of poverty and deviance. Hence the failure to disclose the research identity would risk adverse reactions or even explicit aggression towards the researcher.

In conversations with the locals, an interactive dimension of a research presence is revealed, and the role of the researcher slowly becomes being an "interactive stranger". The fluidity of the line between interaction and activity is revealed in situations of exposing one's pedagogical identity. Then another problem appears: the inhabitants of the excluded spaces may see in the researcher a person having ready solutions to their difficult life situation and expect help. The researcher is then often harassed for help, which mainly concerns the substantive matters, such as asking for money to buy food or "take care of" social benefits for them. In the case of *street children* these are often requests for cigarettes and sweets. Another ethical dilemma arises here concerning the issue of "bribery" and "acquisition" of people for the studies, forced by the subjects themselves. Cigarettes and sweets very often in working with *street children* become a bargaining chip and "pass" into their social world. For ethical reasons it is worth stopping here and deepening reflection. On the other hand, abandoning any behavior and actions related to "exchange" repeatedly causes that the researcher limits, closes contact with the subjects or loses access to their places and space.

A qualitative researcher in the field often has to deal with so-called sensitive data, which for discerning recipients, in a situation such as an interview using photographs, could be unmasked (by the police, social worker, probation officer, someone from school or by an enemy of an antagonistic gang), identified and expose the researcher or subjects to problems. All the more that – which should always be remembered when studying groups within interactions of a social rehabilitation pedagogue = their members are especially touchy on the issue of "selling" information and highly value confidentiality, loyalty and trust. In examining hermetic groups, such as criminal groups, members of various organizations or activities of youth street gangs, an ethical issue can become confidentiality and secrecy of the information that a researcher obtains intentionally or through mere participation in their social world. Another important dilemma which is worth mentioning here is related to the participation of the researcher in the drama of the worlds of the subjects living on the fringes of the law. He is often a witness to violations of the law. These are situations like destruction of property, vandalism,

dealing in drugs or the exploitation of children for activities related to criminal activities or begging. The question arises whether the researcher should or should not react, and if so, how and as who?

The social status of the researcher in conducted research also changes depending on the research method used. When, for example, using visual techniques like a camera, the researcher is usually a “passive stranger”. However, when conducting participating observation there is a certain fluidity between interactive and active attitudes. This is also the case during interviews and meetings with *gatekeepers*<sup>3</sup>. They are aware from the beginning of the cognitive objective and often allow themselves to be accompanied in different places and situations. Thus it is done, which Kathy Charmaz describes as a situation, when “research participants allow you to see their world and the activities within it” (Charmaz 2009, p. 33).

Researchers-social rehabilitation pedagogues becoming aware of their role and place is important as it allows and helps to better assess the value of the collected data and possible deformations of perceptions of the studied reality. What is important is the fact that the position of the researcher-participant of the observed community determines its field of observation and perception (Vidich 1955; Becker 1953). It should be noted that the researcher’s approach to the social structure is defined by his position in this structure. This is not only about the position “here and now”, but also past contexts related to his experiences, lifestyle and even origin. After all, a person for whom the studied environment is known, for instance, from childhood, will look at the situation differently than a person who comes from a completely different social class or culture. We are not able, as researchers, to distance ourselves from everything, because it is impossible to change our past.

One can venture to say that all qualitative research is *quasi-autobiographical*. These determinants, not all conscious, overlap like a mosaic, creating different levels of the study – from the moment of fascination and becoming aware of the topic or interest in a problem to placing a dots after the last conclusion. This means that the “neutral attitude” of the researcher is a myth and a certain ideal. Every human attitude is a form of relationship, reaction and interaction. Be it a comment, silence, reaction, as well as its omission. Therefore, especially in field research – whether it is a school, prison or city and specific places in them – one cannot lose sight of the fact that their climate affects the researcher similarly as the subjects, generating certain behaviors<sup>4</sup>. In the case of research

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<sup>3</sup> Key informant, the selector of information, the competent judge. A person usually originating from the studied environment and/or knowing it well, whose task is to explain meaning ambiguities of the studied culture and social world, who is a gateway to the worlds of the subjects.

<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting some concepts, popular in social rehabilitation pedagogy, social prevention and criminology, derived from environmental psychology, such as Crime Prevention Through Environmental

carried out by the social rehabilitation pedagogue in a so-called difficult field these may be behaviors and reactions like: aversion, rejection, discouragement, fear or aggression.

It is similar with the problem of maintaining distance to the subject of the study. Undoubtedly, this fact requires some thought, because it is a difficult task to solve by the qualitative researcher. This especially concerns exploring the excluded worlds, where one encounters human injustice, poorness in many dimensions, disease, suffering, poverty but also with unimaginable deviations on a daily basis. In the sensitive researcher it awakens a sense of injustice, arouses feelings of compassion, willingness to help, rescue, repair the existing and studied world. It also gives a sense of omnipotence and the syndrome of the master having the authority to fix the encountered reality. Qualitative research puts the researcher-social rehabilitation pedagogue before these types of personally difficult situations and dilemmas which constitute a valuable experience from the perspective of the researcher on the one hand, and on the other they may deform the research process by leading to artifacts. For example, Krzysztof Konecki writes about this in an interesting way, who in his studies (although studying completely different spaces – workplaces and organizations) knowingly accepted the role of an employee and emotionally identified with it (Konecki 2000). A similar experience accompanied research carried out at a factory, described by Chomczyński (Chomczyński 2006). Similar dilemmas also accompanied Howard S. Becker, whose research content should be closer to social rehabilitation pedagogues. His attitude, as a researcher, is often a model for others who study areas of deviation. In his book *Outsiders. Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* he described his participation in the subculture of contemporary jazz musicians and marijuana smokers (Becker 1963; 2009). He described in it a character of the titular outsider-deviant, a person recognized as a threat to social order through his eccentricity and violations of the law. More recently, Gulczyńska writes about her research status in the study “boys from the suburbs” (Gulczyńska 2013). It is a description of a long-term participant observation of a pedagogue in an urban environment, who in adopting the role of an anthropologist searches for the truth about the life of the studied boys. This study is interesting, because the author somehow “plays” with roles, often appearing in a double or even triple role of both a researcher, pedagogue or neighbor. It gives an interesting view of the uncertainty of the researcher’s role in qualitative research, it shows many potential possibilities, but also the dangers, mainly concerning the clarity of the borders of adopted roles.

Ethical controversies in the light of the considered issue also raises the matter of the researcher’s neutrality, who by growing more and more into the situational context, establishes a personal relationship with the environment.

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Design or Broken Windows Theory, whose foundations are assumptions about the spatial determination of human behaviour.

He becomes a creator of social activities, in which he participates, and the subject of activities of social actors. The studied subject address at him specific content and activities (Chomczyński 2006). The researcher makes his new identity a reality, builds relationships within the group, participates in interaction. Thereby making his feelings and emotions real in relation to other social actors. At this point, questions arise about whether he has the right to do so? Another problem is the emotional involvement of the researcher in performing tasks, which Florian Znaniecki already wrote about, noting the importance of the so-called “humanistic coefficient” (Znaniecki 2008).

Of course, the ideal characteristic, constituting the researcher in the field should be neutrality, both emotional and behavioral. This characteristic is emphasized in all textbooks on qualitative research. However, the postulate of neutrality, which is strongly highlighted in theoretical studies, is not as difficult as even impossible to implement (Doktor 1964; Konecki 2000). Neutrality, for example, emotional, would probably have to be based on the total domination of the researcher’s identity in his consciousness, thereby pushing the “developed identity” produced for own use in the group to the marginal position (Goffman 2008). In practice, this could cause a shortage of empathetic reasoning. In contrast, behavioral neutrality is intentional behavior, translating into diminishing contacts with subjects to the most indifferent form, which indicates a low degree of shown identification of the researcher with the subjects. It can be assumed that the consequence of such neutrality is the isolation of the researcher; on the other hand, lack of contact with others will result in a failure to meet research objectives. Chomczyński proposes an almost nonchalant rejection of both neutralities, which consequently results in a number of moral and ethical dilemmas.

A term associated with neutrality is the already mentioned distance. In qualitative research it is not clearly defined and flexible. The explored spaces are usually involved in the discourse of the authorities and community at the same time, hence the researcher is accompanied here by a constant distance resulting from a sense of alienation of these spaces, often also due to fear mixed with curiosity, from cognitive dissonance associated with the occurrence of alternative systems of values and priorities of inhabitants, with the change in the sense of time. A feature of ghettos of poverty or the street is that often their residents do not work, they constantly have free time “sitting aimlessly”<sup>5</sup> and “losing” time, children do not go to school. Excessive detachment from the subject of study during participant observation could, however, lead to alienation of the researcher-participant in the community it is studying, and this would certainly not be indifferent when assessing the legitimacy of applications. On the other hand, losing distance would risk too much involvement in the studied reality.

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<sup>5</sup> This claim is quite arbitrary and evaluative, because maybe they attribute to prison time some goal unknown to the observer.

However, in the course of writing the log of observations, generating categories or creating theoretical notes, one can try to attain and recover the cognitive distance. This makes it possible to determine meanings, however, the researcher constantly confronts the studied spaces and their images with each other, and usually comes from the socially “better” standards. This stigma accompanies him constantly and determines his status in the field, both physical and mental.

Qualitative research sets before the researcher a requirement for a high level of self-awareness, which provides a kind of ability to freely enter various roles and accept different perspectives. For example, Konecki writes that while becoming fully involved in the life of the subjects enabled him to better understand the conditions of their work, their cognitive perspectives and problems, then in itself it brought certain problems. They mainly concerned the identification of the researcher’s role and his relation to the role of participant of the observed reality and the emotions accompanying that relationship. Often during the study strong feeling and emotions are experienced in difficult situations, for example a conflict or injustice. Certainly the inability to disclose their identity or emotions themselves gives one a sense of loneliness and isolation, but also fear, uncertainty in situations that are difficult, incomprehensible, a threat. The researcher can also be an uncomfortable witness of events such as: violence, risking someone’s health or even life, or dealing drugs. He participates in breaking moral and legal norms. Sometimes he feels a dilemma: what to do, stick to the role of researcher, or adopt the role of a citizen for a moment and report a crime? Every decision has consequences. Undoubtedly, he should know one thing: he is a guest in the field and only for a while.

The cited author is of the opinion that a good researcher-observer tries to include emerging emotions and feelings in the analysis and interpretation of phenomena and processes which he studies. He assumes that it is highly probable that he feels what other participants of the interaction feel (Konecki 2000). Through involvement in the process of building conclusions on the studied reality, the researcher can, however, fall into the trap of perceiving phenomena from the perspective relevant only to him, and not of the observed entities. This point of view of the researcher with the entire emotional context provides classification categories to what is relevant or irrelevant, rational or irrational (Chomczyński 2014). Also, Alfred Schutz’s phenomenological principle of translatability of prospects, which is used to increase the researcher’s chance at understanding the world of the subjects is not always enough (Chomczyński 2014, p. 74). It can merely bring a soothing but false belief about understanding the studied phenomenon. Therefore, it is important to show in the research what is fact, and distinguish between what the subjects say. It should be remembered that story is processed by us, as researchers and by subjects, as participants of the studied world through confabulation, cognitive distortions, mental filters. The method of *sympathetic introspection* developed by Charles Cooley can also be

helpful here, which bases on drawing from one's own experiences in order to adopt the perspective of "another" (Chomczyński 2014, p. 75). The problem of sympathetic introspection is also raised by Stanisław Ossowski, who identifies sympathy with inner experience that determines the function of the researcher's "empathy" (Ossowski 1967, p. 271–272).

An interesting issue in qualitative field research is the language of the researcher. Depending on the situation, it can be "intellectual", colloquial or dialect-slang, "field language". The linguistic sphere is probably one of the most important in qualitative research, due to the category of "understanding". Hence, among other things, Becker and Blanche Geer raise the aspect of the researcher's verbal skills. According to Becker, learning the language in the first stage of research and subsequently using it, provides the foundation to active presence of the researcher in the penetrated world (Barker 1980; Gulczyńska 2013). It is imperative that the researcher gains the necessary qualifications in the field of linguistics, to thereby minimize problems in understanding the elements of the explored reality. By this the researcher adds credibility to his research, meeting the next problem, namely the veracity of the results.

The credibility of qualitative research results is obtained by the possibility to repeat and come to similar, valid findings by other researchers (Schwandt 2007; Lewis, 2009). "Universal" for all qualitative research is the problem of objectivity. I will not get into a discussion on accusations generally addressed at qualitative researchers, and on the lack of objectivity of research. The problem of objectivity may affect the perspective imposed on subjects and a specificity of the overview of the studied spaces or the specifics of looking at fragments of reality, "passed" by emotions and beliefs relating to social policy and educational perspective of looking at the excluded. All the more so that in a situation of a norm and pathology we have to deal with the liquidity of borders and with different criteria, through which we define these phenomena classified as normal or not fitting in these norms. It's enough to mention the medical, sociological, statistical and legal determinants (Rosenhan, Selligman 1994).

Norman K. Denzin in a similar situation, on the example of studies of the phenomenon of deviation, refers to the concept of the so-called *fallacy of objectivism*. This fallacy is related to the researcher's replacement of the real perspective of the subject – the scientific perspective (Denzin 1978). Explanations of the studied reality may result from the assumed "perceptual matrix", which fills the gaps, especially in terms of what is not entirely clear or what the researcher for various reasons cannot get to (Ossowski 1967; Chomczyński 2014). This situation is very likely when a researcher enters the field and begins to collect data in unfamiliar space. Because they conceal secrets, they are inaccessible to an outsider, if only by the fact that he is not able to entirely decipher the hidden meanings behind the symbols and messages, often gaining the character of nuances. Objectivity is compromised even if certain norms and ethical values

represented by the researcher differ from those which are represented by persons staying in the studied areas. Situations such as: verbal or physical violence, enforcing certain behaviors and imposing sanctions for failing to perform them, methods of communication, situations related to fraud, drug trafficking, threats to health and sometimes life – can cause fallacy of objectivism. The consequence of this is that extremely important is the attitude of humility of the researcher towards the studied space and principles prevailing there. It seems all the more important that the researcher has the maximum ability to control his emotions, to refrain from “pedagogization” and lecturing. In contrast, from the methodological perspective it will concern the maximum limiting of preconceptualization of the analyzed problem and a very reflective perception and conscious refraining from concluding and generalizing its results (Konecki 2000; Hughes, Sharrock 2007; Chomczyński 2014).

The above selected methodological and ethical problems related in particular to qualitative ethnographic research and those that are associated with the researcher-social rehabilitation pedagogue entering the local space and using observation and visual techniques. Apart from ethical issues, important for the qualitative researcher are dilemmas of the humanistic and methodological nature concerning the studied worlds. One of the problems of ethnography in general is disclosing or not disclosing the exact context of the place where studies are conducted, mainly due to the possibility of identifying the observed people. In social rehabilitation pedagogy, this takes on special significance, because it concerns correctional and penitentiary facilities, psychiatric institutions and drug rehabilitation facilities, shelters for the homeless, marginalized urban spaces, ghettos of poverty. Critics of ethnography raise the ethical issue as one of the primary issues. Awareness of limitations and emotions, the scripts and cognitive distortions, stereotypes and world outlook significantly affects the course of research in the field. Also, probably every researcher creates and has certain strategies for coping with difficulties resulting from field studies. A social rehabilitation pedagogue experiencing particularly many dissonances of cognitive and moral dilemmas when confronted with the studied reality, the more he is aware of his role and identity, the fewer unpleasant surprises he encounters in the field.

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