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## Field research in a social rehabilitation facility. Possibilities and limitations

**Abstract:** The text aims to describe and analyze institutional field research as a way of collecting information and generating knowledge about social rehabilitation interactions in the institutional dimension. Particular attention was paid to the characteristics of the ethnographic research carried out so far in social rehabilitation institutions, the specificity of social rehabilitation institutions as an area of field research, the roles taken over by field researchers, and the practical premises resulting from the conducted research. In addition, the text specifies typical problems and challenges that field research implementers must face. The summary indicates recommendations relevant to this type of research that would be carried out in social rehabilitation institutions

**Key words:** institutional rehabilitation, field research, insider/outsider, research ethics.

### Introduction

The second half of the twentieth century marked an important stage in the development of the social sciences in which learning about the reality of social rehabilitation through the use of quantitative research began to be questioned. According to critics, the creation of a picture of institutional social rehabilitation based on survey questionnaires and statistical methods of data analysis has been carried out at the expense of little undertaken (and thus little noticed in scientific discourse) field research (Rhodes, 2009; Ricciardelli, 2022a; Watson,

2015). Considering the peculiar phenomenon of total institutions, their specificity and distinctiveness, the number of staff and people referred to them or the methodological solutions implemented, such an approach seems questionable. According to Martin Hammersley (2014), research on social rehabilitation that fits into the positivist paradigm “dehumanizes the people involved by turning them into aggregates for statistical analysis. It is also typical of research on the effectiveness of a given system to ask whether a given structure works (e.g., effectively) which should also be seen as a threat to understanding the specificity of human activities in a given space.” (Hammersley, 2014, s. 170). According to him, this problem manifests itself in the study of social rehabilitation institutions in three aspects. First, it ignores what actually happens in them, and this is the result of an excessive focus on the implementation of research in near-laboratory conditions, in which the researcher controls and, in effect, determines the substance of the empirical material collected using repetitive methods, techniques or questionnaire tools. Second, questionnaire research in social rehabilitation institutions carries the risk of data quantification leading to a loss of meaning of concepts due to reduction to the measurement procedures previously assumed by the researchers. Third, the implementation of research according to the positivist paradigm carries with it the possibility of ignoring the multicontextuality of human life and behavior in isolation as a result of schematic analysis of variables (according to previously accepted hypotheses). As a result, one can therefore raise the question of what kind of reality is actually learned by using questionnaire surveys in social rehabilitation research (Hammersley, 2014). The purpose of this article is to look at the possibilities of learning about the reality of social rehabilitation facilities using field research. In addition to providing an overview of the social rehabilitation field research carried out in Poland and abroad, it aims to present the methods of implementation, the organizational solutions used but also the limitations faced by those who prefer it. This will enable future field researchers to more effectively tackle the immense exploratory challenge posed by the analyzed research approach.

There are many social methods for studying institutions. As part of their monograph, one can use document analysis, networks of relationships between members, observation of daily behavior or surveys. The ethnographic approach is a special approach because it provides an opportunity to present a real picture of the organization’s functioning through its in situ description (Drake et al., 2015; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2000). It also provides an opportunity to record more than just formal interpersonal relationships or the content generated within them. This methodological perspective provides a picture not only of the apparent, formal operation of an institution, but additionally, through observation or interviews, allows one to show the full (formal and informal) dimension of its functioning. Moreover, it allows capturing atypical situations that impact the functioning of an organization but would not be captured by standard questionnaire methods. This

is a particular phenomenon of being field researchers in the role of co-participants in everyday practices, observing them, conducting conversations, and interviews with staff and isolated individuals, which methods enable the generation of an authentic, comprehensive, and real image of the institution. It is also a feature of the ethnographic approach to enter the research field with a ready-made research question or issue. However, it is first and foremost a starting point, while during the daily activity researchers subject them to verification, modification, sometimes they have to reject them and formulate them anew.

## **Field research in social rehabilitation – general characteristics**

Field research has a relatively long history and constitutes a methodological approach to understand the perspective of the subjects and also to observe their daily activities (Drake i in., 2015). In particular, it is a method applied to the study of indigenous cultures that allows generating detailed accounts of people, the communities they form and the social processes or rituals occurring between them (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2000) – and, therefore, those elements which also constitute, to a large extent, the everyday life of social rehabilitation institutions (Drake at al., 2015). Despite such a long history, the use of this method in the study of juvenile or prison facilities is not very common, which makes it all the more worthwhile to highlight some significant activities in this area.

An example of one of the first such studies in the area of broadly defined social rehabilitation (in this case, penitentiary) is the work of Donald Clemmer (1940), in which the author described how time in solitary confinement correlates with the problem of recidivism. This is an elementary work on one of the key concepts in the field of penitentiary science, i.e., prisonization – which is the term used to describe the socialization of incarcerated persons into prison conditions, the correct assimilation of the rules of functioning in conditions of solitary confinement, being a “good prisoner”; however, it does not correspond to the acquisition of social skills and competencies that enable readaptation and social reintegration. According to Clemmer, those experiencing the problem of prisonization are those like the librarian from the “The Shawshank Redemption” movie who, having assimilated the rules of coexistence in a group of isolated individuals, cannot fit into an open environment.

The late 1950s saw the publication of Gresham Sykes’ work “The Society of Captives” (2007) which was the result of a three-year study at a maximum security prison in New Jersey. In his work, the author describes how the restrictive nature of the prison environment and the oppressive model of relations between inmates and prison staff shapes the culture of the place and the daily behavior of the inmates. The author begins his work with a description of the organizational

structure of the prison, the appearance of the various rooms for staff and inmates. He also introduces the work opportunities available in the institution, the functional duties available to inmates or the regulatory procedures that apply to inmates as well as staff. Another theme described is the issue of total power. The author presents these issues as a multifaceted construct, manifested in the general rules of the facility, the organization of the various rooms up to the relationship between inmates and staff (with particular emphasis on the regulatory application of sanctions to inmates). A consequence of this state of affairs is the “pain of imprisonment” included in the title of the next chapter – resulting from deprivation of needs, prisoners’ limited access to goods and services or intimate contacts. The author also draws attention to the phenomenon of prison subculture – the non-formal organization and daily activities of prisoners that regulate the rules of coexistence, dependence and hegemony, and stratification. The peculiarities of relations between prisoners and staff marked by the characteristics of a total institution contribute to grassroots manifestations of prisoner rebellion, which is the subject of the next chapter. Based on an analysis of documents and interviews with inmates and staff, the author reconstructed the course of such situations by describing the initiating events, the actions taken by staff and the consequences of such situations. In the last, empirical, chapter, the author presents the conclusions of the research, which are a set of proposals for changes and modifications to the functioning of the institution.

Referring to the qualitative picture of social rehabilitation institutions, it is impossible to ignore the work of Irving Goffman, known for his concept of the total institution (2011). In his 1961 work, the author undertook a study of the social situation of prisoners in a perspective cognitively in line with the achievements of Sykes (Sykes, 2007). According to the author, the base for analysis is the institution as a complementary whole, which consists of two internal and alien worlds: those subjected to detention and the staff, and is a cognitively relevant area of research.

An interesting example of contemporary studies that were based on field research is the work of Michelle Inderbitzin (2006). Her work is the result of fifteen months of exploration at the “Blue Cottage” maximum security correctional facility. In it, the author described the location and appearance of the facility, grappled with the description of daily life from the perspective of minors and staff or the specifics of relationships. The author also paid attention to the readaptation process, analyzing (based on interviews with staff, juveniles and conducted observations) the return of its inmates to the open environment.

Referring to the experience of Polish researchers, it is important to note the issue highlighted in the literature of the overrepresentation of quantitative research on the basis of which the picture of Polish social rehabilitation is built. Despite this problem, it is worth pointing out valuable qualitative projects carried out in social rehabilitation facilities. Research by Renata Szczepanik (2015), Maciej

Muskała (2016) or Sławomir Przybyliński (Przybyliński, 2012) are works that are based on interviews conducted with people placed in penitentiary institutions. The same methodological solution was used by Krzysztof Sawicki (Sawicki, 2018) in his research involving minors placed in correctional institutions.

Referring to the ethnographic context of research carried out in social rehabilitation institutions, in turn, the work of Kamil Miszewski should be pointed out (2015) as an important example of analysis of the problem of adaptation to isolation in the spirit of the studies by Clemmer (1940) or Sykes cited above. (2007) In turn, Piotr Chomczyński (2014) studied the specifics of interaction between inmates of correctional institutions and juvenile shelters. Another interesting example is the work edited by K. Sawicki and U. Markowska-Manista (2022) which is the result of a study conducted at the Correctional Institution in Białystok, in which the institution was analyzed as a complementary whole and this was done in the spirit of community-based participatory research (McCracken, 2019a; Minkler, 2005a). It is a method that relies on collaboration between individuals (or the community of an organization) and researchers. Its essence is the juxtaposition of two perspectives: those carrying out the research (academics) and those being researched (community members) with the aim of providing a monographic description of the space under study. According to this approach, when entering the research area, there is a shift away from external expertise (based on developed assumptions) to joint engagement and relationship development. The research model adopted by the research team is also close to the project carried out by Michelle Inderbitzin (2006) and was aimed at presenting the treatment of minors in the studied institution which (due to the specificity of the identified symptoms of maladaptation) are a cognitively important combination of social rehabilitation and therapeutic interventions).

## **Social rehabilitation facility as a field research area**

When specifying the possibilities of conducting field research in correctional institutions, it is necessary to refer to their phenomenon, describing the essence of the goals pursued within them, the interventions undertaken, and the wide spectrum of individuals studied, who are subjected to isolation in the total institution, including adults and minors. With regard to minors, Otto Lipkowski (1980) noted that the prevention of social maladjustment (understood as manifestations of demoralization and the commission of criminal acts, which are the starting point for the application of institutional social rehabilitation interventions) should boil down to several aspects. In broad terms, it is the protection of minors from the impact of negative conditions of physical, mental and moral-social development. More narrowly, it is the protection of society from the consequences of demoralization and criminal acts. In the narrowest sense, it

is about protecting children and young people from reverting to these behaviors. In the case of adults, the last two approaches are the essence of the perception of interventions inherent to social rehabilitation (Machel, 2013).

Ensuring a sense of security in society is undeniably a right that requires special attention and care in this regard, and is also related to resolving the dilemmas involved in answering the question of when this security is compromised to such a degree and extent that the person posing a threat should be subjected to isolation. Also linked to this decision is the determination of the duration of isolation and the forms and methods of social rehabilitation interventions carried out as part of it. In addition, it is also a question about the effects of these impacts, of which the return rate is an important indicator.

Social rehabilitation facilities are institutions that were established to work with people who fit into this area. According to J. Bentham's idea of the panopticon, they are defined as places of isolation that provide opportunities for the utilitarian execution of court decisions. The use of restrictions in the form of bars between separate parts of the institution or extensive monitoring, the presence of security personnel are elements of *genius loci* not found in publicly accessible institutions, inherent in the phenomenon of total institutions. It is also a place of education and apprenticeship (or professional activity in the case of penitentiary institutions) but also of residence or leisure. First and foremost, they are institutions aimed at implementing social rehabilitation interventions that enable isolated persons to return to functioning in the open environment.

Referring to the possibility of implementing field research in social rehabilitation facilities, John and Lyn Lofland (1995) emphasize that the inherent relational nature of learning about reality provides an opportunity to explore social areas for which the use of field research is particularly recommended. These are simple human interactions, but also the connections between roles and positions in practices, behaviors, and relationships within social groups, organizations, or subcultural groups. According to the author's thesis, these are spaces that are difficult to capture through survey research and other quantitative methods. For field researchers, they are areas that constitute in particular the main subject of exploration. In turn, Simon I. Singer (1998) stated that by opening the doors of such institutions, we enter a world that can provide us with the opportunity to gain knowledge about their functioning, true nature, and the actual arrangement of relationships that exist between the individuals placed there, as well as their relationships with the staff, from a Simmel's worm's-eye perspective. In addition, it allows observation and analysis of the informal functioning of the facility – in other words, learning about the real picture of pursuing the goals and objectives of social rehabilitation. In result, such thorough explorations allow for the accumulation of knowledge enabling comprehensive and more adequate actions in the field of social prevention and social rehabilitation (Singer, 1998).

Ethnographic exploration of a place involves the role the researcher takes on. In this context, Hammersley (2015) uses the term “ethnographic imperative” according to which an understanding of a social phenomenon is possible through direct contact with it or through participant observation, which is of considerable importance in the case of research on social rehabilitation facilities. Their total character and the resulting forms of relations between staff and those subjected to isolation, the whole set of interactions, rituals and behaviors inherent in the formal or, even more so, informal life of an institution, are just a few of the phenomena that characterize such places – phenomena that are impossible to capture using typical quantitative research methods and based on their inherent ways of analyzing the empirical material collected. In this vein, Hammersley states: “It simply is not possible to do research that will tell you much about prisons without getting out into the field. No amount of theorizing or reading in an office can substitute for the hands-on experience of spending your time in prison.” (Hammersley, 2015, s. 22).

Understanding social worlds also arises from how the researcher is situated within them, positioned in the field of study, and the role they consequently assume. In this context, P. Adler (1998) pointed out the oscillation between commitment and distancing. These are the extremes determined by experiencing the studied reality and the imperative of the researcher’s objective stance and adherence to the resulting rules. Between the extremes indicated, several other attitudes adopted by field researchers can be identified.

One proposal points to the duality of roles assumed by researchers due to their degree of involvement in the data collection process (Ricciardelli, 2022). According to it, the peripheral model is the least engaging form of presence in the area of research being conducted. The researcher has daily (or almost daily) contact with the studied environment, but is primarily an observer who maintains a distance from the studied place and people. In the active model, on the other hand, the researcher is a person not only observing but also involved in the life of the community or institution under study. This active engagement is carried out with an awareness of the researcher’s role and constant self-reflection that allows for objective, neutral positioning on the research site and in interpersonal relationships.

The literature also points out the roles that the researcher takes on in relation to the members of the community under study, as insider or outsider (Bucerus, 2013). The former boils down to being in the role of a member of a community, while a field outsider is a researcher defined in terms that place the researcher outside the community. This is an important form of defining researchers which is particularly reflected in the context of building the confidence of subjects (Ricciardelli, 2022).

Importantly, the indicated roles, when taken in their pure forms, present implementation difficulties, and adhering strictly to their conventional perception can result in susceptibility to essentialism (Jewkes, 2012a). The reality of the

communities and social structures under study brings with it the need for a fluid and flexible oscillation between insider and outsider. Given the distinctiveness of the world of total institutions from the social universe around them, it is necessary to adopt Wacquant's thesis (2002), according to which maintaining a distance between the researcher and the subjects is a priority when taking into account that the purpose of research is to analyze and explain the social mechanisms and meanings that determine the activities of social groups, and their strategies of action (Wacquant, 2002, s. 1470). This is an important boundary condition for an outsider researcher in a social rehabilitation institution.

On the other hand, excessive distancing can be a significant obstacle to learning about the ethnographically studied reality. After all, field research is a model of exploration that enables "empathetic perception of social worlds by allowing the researcher to understand how members of those worlds behave, think and act." (Ricciardelli, 2022, s. 15). Sandra Bucerius (2013) reinforces this view by stating that in a field study, one should strive for "trusted outsider" status because it is essential for gaining in-depth information, being rooted in the research field; ultimately, one should at least avoid being an outsider. In her opinion, the field researcher should at least be someone whom the subjects can trust and give access to the essence of the functioning of their community (Bucerius, 2013, s. 69)

This is particularly important in social rehabilitation facilities, when conducting interviews in the field gives those subjected to isolation an opportunity to go beyond routine contacts with group members or staff, in addition, it is an opportunity to talk freely with the researcher, that is, a person who listens but does not enter the role of a moralizing judge (Jewkes, 2012). By building relationships based on confidentiality, the field researchers make it possible to discuss topics that are not discussed in everyday conversations among those housed in a total institution. The role of the close outsider thus provides an opportunity to build trust among respondents and freely share information that would be difficult to obtain using other research strategies (Gomes & Granja, 2021).

## Practical considerations

Functioning in the role of a field researcher requires the implementation in daily practice of a number of recommendations and guidelines that facilitate not only the establishment of contact with the studied environment, but also translate into the quality of exploratory daily life and the resulting relationship with the subjects and, as a result, the collected empirical material. In this context, several leading areas of activity can be identified.

The first is the preparatory phase of the study. This is the moment to gain as much knowledge as possible about the research site and its specifics. This is

not only general knowledge, related to getting acquainted with the objectives of the operation of the studied institution, but also about the people referred to it (especially the reasons for placing them in a particular institution), the staff employed (with particular attention to the specialized activities carried out by the staff). It is also important to become familiar with the state of research on a given institutional form (in general) or facility (in particular); this is the starting point for clarifying one's own research assumptions, enabling one not only to apply proven practices but also to avoid solutions that would be difficult to apply.

When preparing for a visit in a facility, it is important to thoroughly understand the rules of the facility. This is due not only to the need to comply with the procedures or safety rules in force therein, but also to respect the people for whom the study area is a place of residence or work and for whom the presence of the researcher should be as little inconvenient as possible. One should be aware that when entering an institution, one is in part an intruder, at best a visitor. This is pointed out by Michael G. Vaughn et al., who compare the situation of a field researcher to cooking a meal in the kitchen of an unknown house and in the presence of an unknown host (Vaughn et al., 2012a, s. 7–8). The key here, therefore, is to stay safe and follow the rules of the institution.

By preparing for the study in the most comprehensive way possible, the current state of knowledge about the institution and its rules minimizes (but does not exclude) the risk of unforeseen events and circumstances. Therefore, it is necessary to be prepared for unforeseen events and situations, and to think about what alternative models of activity and measures the researcher can apply in daily exploratory practice, to assimilate flexible models of response and behavior appropriate to the events experienced.

Before entering the research site, care should be taken to provide context with someone from the facility's staff who will assist the researcher in collecting material (Sutton, 2011a). This is especially true when it comes to organizational issues, being in specific places and on specific times to optimally record daily activities. In addition, any total institution has a defined and largely bureaucratic division of labor which can contribute to complicating the resolution of even minor problems. Working with a staff person allows procedural impediments to be resolved efficiently.

In light of the roles described in the previous section that a field researcher may enter into, it is important to think about the form that the researcher will prefer when making contact with subjects (Bucerius, 2013; Sutton, 2011a). When introducing oneself, it is worth using an affiliation that will not create distance. It is necessary to present oneself as a person "from outside the institution" who is not on either side, and not to allow those in the institution to think of a researcher as a henchman or opponent. It is therefore worthwhile to take care a neutral self-presentation that minimizes (especially in inmates) the risk of being associated with the social rehabilitation system or the justice system, since such identifications

can be a source of prejudice and distance building. When reporting on activity, it is advisable to avoid the term research and instead using the phrase “collecting material for a book (or article) describing the facility”; “talking about being in the facility” is a safer phrase than “conducting interviews”. It is worth remembering that the seemingly obvious wording may, in people subjected to isolation, evoke negative associations related to the operational activities of uniformed officers, diagnostic procedures or judicial proceedings (Hammersley, 2015).

When building relationships with the subjects, care should be taken to make them aware of the benefits to all parties of the project (Vaughn et al., 2012a). To this end, it is useful to ask people from the facility what information is useful to them, what in particular they would like to know, what knowledge in particular is important to them. In addition, this may be (in accordance with the participatory model of field research) based on a community narrative, from which it follows that mutual support in the process of collecting research material will allow the fullest possible approximation of the operation of the facility and the people staying there (McCracken, 2019; Minkler, 2005). In informing those taking part in the research, it is important not to omit to make them clearly aware that the information collected will be compiled in an anonymous manner. This is a special aspect of the implementation of ethnography in a social rehabilitation facility. One should assure research participants of confidentiality, that their data will not be disclosed and that the information provided will be used only for research purposes (Hammersley, 2015).

Despite building relationships based on openness and cooperation, the day-to-day activities of a field researcher carry a number of significant challenges due to their role and position. According to the postulate of oscillating between being an outsider and an insider, one should strive to maintain a position that prevents one from being qualified as an inmate or staff member, to be “in between” (Liebling, 2001). It should also be expected that some people will ignore the researchers, and that in the course of the research one will experience not only a lot of kindness but also resentment. Despite efforts, the presence of a researcher can disrupt the daily rhythm at the institution, so it is important to strive to establish positive relationships and at the same time be patient, as some of the researcher’s behavior can be annoying to those at the institution. Patience and kindness are qualities allowing one to deal with these problems.

When visiting a facility, it is useful to keep in mind the accepted role and avoid behavior outside that role. In particular, one should avoid adopting the attitude of an expert, as it does not encourage staff and inmates to cooperate in the research and significantly complicates the implementation of activities to collect research material (Vaughn et al., 2012). On the other hand, it is worth being thoughtful, striving to maintain the dynamic nature of the relationship, going beyond the assumptions. This will make it possible to see and record many more regularities and events than assumed in the preparatory phase (Sutton,

2011). In addition, it is advisable to maintain during the research a broad perspective as possible when viewing the study area and thus avoid selective perceptions of situations or behaviors.

A field researcher's presence in a social rehabilitation facility is always an intrusion into the daily rhythm of the people staying there. For inmates, this is an opportunity to change the usually predictable rhythm of the day, so they show considerable interest in new people which may disrupt interviews or observations. It is worth developing ways to direct their attention and respond to the dispositions that the researcher has developed for data recording. In addition, it should be remembered that once inmates start to trust a researcher, they can ask the researcher for all sorts of favors. It is necessary to demonstrate an understanding of the situation and avoid entering into this type of relationship, because despite the most sincere intentions of a researcher, it is not only going beyond their assigned roles; it may also indirectly contribute to actions contrary to the implemented social rehabilitation and therapeutic program of the institution (Vaughn et al., 2012).

When implementing field research projects, it is worth taking care of their participatory dimension even after the data collection is completed (McCracken, 2019). Dissemination of the results of exploration carried out in cooperation with people from the institution represents not only a formal dimension of cooperation. This is additionally an important basis for further development of cooperation in the future, facilitating the realization of other forms of cooperation between people from the institution and academic community also on a broader scale.

## Problems and challenges

Conducting research in a rehabilitation facility presents special challenges (Hammersley, 2015; Vaughn et al., 2012). The isolationism policy of such institutions directs the field researcher's activity towards two categories of people: juvenile inmates and staff, which, in light of the characteristics of total institutions (and correctional facilities should be considered as such), makes the researcher face special challenges. The implementation of research in detention conditions brings with it specific difficulties not found in other spaces for the implementation of qualitative research projects.

A key regularity of field studies of social rehabilitation institutions is that, for the most part, the ethnographies of such institutions are created by people who have not been subjected to isolation and who can leave the institution at any time and return to their daily activities. As a result, the implementation of research in a social rehabilitation facility by outsiders carries a number of limitations. Because researchers are visitors in the explored area, they are referred to as "quasi-ethnography" (Crewe, 2006). Studying the lives of those subjected to isolation is

a special challenge. A researcher enters the role of observer or questioner based on the interview dispositions and reports on the daily experiences of people in the institution based on them.

Ethnographic research of a social rehabilitation facility presents a number of difficulties, especially when subject of research is the lives of those subjected to isolation. In this situation, researchers rarely enter the world of an observer or even assumes the role of a member of such a structure, they are rather a person sharing the daily experiences of people from the social rehabilitation institution.

A particular challenge associated with the characterized model of research is the implementation of cooperation and partnership – a rule crucial for ethnographic research in social rehabilitation institutions (McCracken, 2019; Vaughn et al., 2012). This is important because of potential limitations. Facility staff are not always interested in the presence of field researchers observing their daily practices. It should be assumed that from a subjective point of view, such a presence may be perceived as an additional workload. In addition, the research may lead to revealing facts or information showing the activities carried out or the subjects in an unfavorable light. However, it should be borne in mind that the research is an opportunity to evaluate the activities of the institution and the activities undertaken in it, allows an objective insight into the institution's system of interactions and provides an important starting point for potential modifications and changes in operation. The implementation of the research is also a kind of benefit for current and future inmates. Familiarizing them with the results of the research makes them realize that their voice has been heard and can be an important point for increasing trust, a sense of responsibility or activating them to participate in participatory practices.

Another dilemma related to the implementation of field research in a social rehabilitation facility is the role that the researcher assumes, as emphasized in this text. Each ethnographer of an institution approaches their activities with personal perspectives shaped by different theoretical and empirical positions that to some extent weigh on the quality of the relationship. Hammersley (2015) states that in the case of field research of social rehabilitation institutions, their key task is to “give a voice” to the people of these institutions, allowing them to be heard by the public; however, this results in further challenges and problems: who to include in the research, or will it be the job of the ethnographer to present different views as equally valid and valuable? Such approaches are rarely used, while the ethnographer plays the role of making the final decision on which of the aforementioned “voices” will be presented (...) any hope of building a complete identity for the researcher and the researched is a delusion. Each of us has many different qualities and predispositions and their combination makes us unique individuals. Moreover, while there may be obstacles to understanding due to social characteristics and the location of the researcher, it is difficult to say which ones will be crucial in a particular situation (Hammersley, 2015, s. 23).

## Summary

The article describes the daily practices and experiences of those conducting field research in social rehabilitation facilities. The reflections presented are intended to provide an insight into the issue for researchers who intend to carry out similar endeavors in the future. It should be borne in mind that although there are many similarities between the various institutions (even if only due to a top-down specificity or organizational structure), in practice they can be very different from one another. Those investigating incarcerated minors, adults or women in prison face unique challenges. Therefore, the experiences described in this text should be taken as a starting point for developing individual research strategies that take into account the specifics of the study area.

Social rehabilitation facilities are a special area for field research. According to George Marcus (1998) the traditional sites of ethnography which were small communities or peripheral villages are nowadays disappearing and, as a result, researchers should focus their attention on the relationship between the center and the periphery. According to him, traditional forms of knowledge are increasingly influenced by global content while typical forms of media are increasingly supported and even replaced by digital media. People are increasingly mobile, often leaving the periphery going to the city center, moving not only between communities but also countries and even continents. Despite these changes in civilization, there are spaces in which ethnography can be practiced according to its original assumptions, focusing attention on the human being who creates culture (Harper, 2018, s. 101). It must be said that rehabilitation facilities are a place for practicing ethnography in its original form, however, the increasing digitization and globalization of culture makes this element an increasingly important part of the daily life of those in the facility, both staff and those subjected to isolation.

Another context relevant when implementing field research in the social rehabilitation space is its participatory dimension. By definition, total institutions are places where the division between isolated persons and staff is a rule written into their bloodstream. Such a division provides a basis for building social distance between the two structures, which can reduce the quality of social rehabilitation interventions. Meanwhile, the participatory model gives isolated people the opportunity to have their voices heard and, as a result, minimize the effects of isolation. A special form in such a model may be to conduct their own ethnographies (Jewkes, 2012). However, the choice of such a solution implies the need to specify the implementation of the solution due to the specifics of the research site.

Although the text deals with the implementation of field research, it involuntarily prompts reflection on the limits of implementing quantitative

research in social rehabilitation facilities. Researchers preferring this model treat issues related to the organization and conduct of the research in a marginal way, focusing on the implementation of the empirical assumptions and the analysis of the collected data. They make little use of the knowledge provided by the experience of staying in the research site, its deeper understanding through the experience of staying, moreover, often such experience is completely alien to such researchers (Hammersley, 2014; Sutton, 2011). Meanwhile, field research in social rehabilitation institutions enables redefinition of schematically generated knowledge, provides insight into institutional processes, cultural specificity of the place or ways of constructing and experiencing social worlds. The experience of field research in which one goes through the research process together with the subjects (rather than conducting surveys) provides a unique opportunity to reflect on the current condition of the social rehabilitation system, methodological solutions applied, which by their quality go beyond legislative and procedural organizational aspects, where formalism overshadows authentic relations between individuals. This is a particular strength of the research approach presented in the article, which (hopefully) will be increasingly recognized and, above all, implemented to explore the everyday life of social rehabilitation facilities.

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