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The Family Probation Officer as a Multifaceted Pedagogue Family Probation Officer's Work in the Field as Reflective Educational Practice

Abstract: The main purpose of the article is to illustrate the general model of work of family probation officers working in the center of big city. In the text, I focus not only on methodical aspects, but also on reflexivity and the approach to the relationship that the probation officer builds with the ward. For this purpose, I adopted a theoretical perspective, referred to as "pedagogy" in the scientific literature. The collected data, on the basis of which I developed the presented results, comes from qualitative research conducted in two districts of Łódź – Śródmieście and Bałuty (Stare Bałuty). The theoretical inspiration was the assumptions of symbolic interactionism. I used ethnography, and the course of analysis of the acquired data was determined by the procedures of grounded theory methodology. As a result, I identified various forms of actions of a family probation officer in the field, which include waiting, reaching out, concern for subjective treatment, taking risks, remaining vigilant, and acting flexibly.
Key words: pedagogy, family probation officer, ethnography.

Introduction

In the article, I show that the operations of the family probation officer in the field involve not only outcome-oriented strategies but also a reflective component regarding the relationship. In order to emphasize the reflexivity of probation of-

ficers and their approach to relationships, I adopted the perspective of pedagogy. It is contained in the general model of the probation officer's work that I have analyzed. It encompasses the practical dimension of educational interactions, and highlights their sources rooted in both scientific and common knowledge (Śliwerski 2012). Pedagogy constituted the most important category in this article, aiming to present the general approach of family probation officers to the performance of their professional duties in a metropolitan center area. I tried to answer the question of what dominant activities formed the model of family probation officers' work in the field, which includes the metropolitan center area.

I first discussed what pedagogy is and how it is defined by researchers. Next, I outlined the specifics of the work of family probation officers. Then, I introduced the theoretical and methodological assumptions of my own research, and showed the peculiarities of the terrain in which I carried out the research. I went on to present the general model of the family probation officer's work that I analyzed, which includes flexible operation, anticipation, reaching out, concern for subjectivity, taking risks and remaining vigilant. The most important of these is acting flexibly, which stands out and reveals itself in the others. It provides a kind of cornerstone of the field work of the family probation officer.

Pedagogy as Action and Reflection Thereon

A useful theoretical context for my analysis turned out to be pedagogy, as I wanted to show the activities of a family probation officer, emphasizing not only the work model itself, including the methodology and strategies undertaken by them but exposing the "element" related to their relationality and reflexivity. According to Witold Starnawski (2008, p. 153), pedagogy is "the theoretical-practical skill of directing education, based on the self-awareness and reflection of the educator, concerning the subject, goal, and methods of conducted educational activities, carried out with the practical intention of improving the student." The same author wrote that pedagogy is "an intuitively captured and practically oriented concept of education accompanying educational activities" (Starnawski 2008, p. 27). Pedagogy is therefore not only action but also reflection on it. Other researchers also shared this view. Zbigniew Kwieciński (1990, p. 9) defined pedagogy as "the total area of reflection on education and educational practice at the same time." Subsequently, Teresa Hejnicka-Bezwińska (2008, p. 493), wrote, among other things, that pedagogy is "a relatively coherent and enduring set of educational practices," but also "a kind of pedagogical doctrine, educational ideology or hidden agenda." In turn, Ewa Rodziewicz (1993, p. 23) defined pedagogy as "the formal reflection and practice of education that people undertake in socialized as well as private ways of *being – in – the world*."

At this point it is also important to point out the difference between pedagogy and education studies. Kazimierz Sośnicki (1949, p. 7) was the first to point out that education studies include the theory of education, while pedagogy includes the performance of education activities, based on the reflections that form its foundation (cf. Rodziewicz 1993). Bogusław Śliwerski (2012, p. 19) similarly outlined the difference between pedagogy and education studies: "Education studies is a term reserved in science to denote the distinctiveness of a scientific discipline (or field of knowledge) concerning educational processes; the task of education studies is to produce knowledge about the totality of practice and past and present educational theory." Pedagogy, in turn, according to Śliwerski (2012, pp. 19–20), "is a social educational practice grounded in reflection, biographical experience, and therefore common, but also partly scientific, knowledge."

Specifics of the Work of Family Probation Officers in Poland

The work of family probation officers in the field is multidimensional. It depends on the type of supervision they carry out and the life situation of the person under probationary supervision[1] (see Chmielewska 2014; Wojnarska, Korona 2020).

In my research, I decided to analyze the activities of probation officers from a single division, given the differences between probation officers for adults and family matters (see Jedynak, Stasiak 2018).[2] Family probation in Poland serves as the executive body of the family court. Family probation officers carry out supervision under the Family and Guardianship Code (Journal of Laws of 1964, No. 9, item 59), the Act on Support and Social Rehabilitation of Minors (Journal of Laws of 2022, item 1700),[3] as well as the Code of Civil Procedure (Journal of Laws of 1964 No. 43, item 296). However, the most important document for probation officers (not only family probation officers, but also probation officers for adult and social matters), which defines the formal, legal and organizational structure of the profession, is the Act of 27 July 2001 on Probation Officers (Journal of Laws of 2001 No. 98, item 1071). This is the document that states that probation officers perform tasks of an educational and social rehabilitation, diagnostic, preventive and control nature (Art.1 thereof).

[1] For the purposes of this article, I am using the term „ward," as used by probation officers. At the same time, I am aware that this term is stigmatizing. However, it is a specific *in vivo* code, so I will continue to use it in the further part of the work.

[2] In Poland, professional probation officers operate within two divisions – criminal and family (Dz. Laws of 2001 No. 98, item 1071).

[3] I carried out the research while the Act on Proceedings in Juvenile Matters of 26 October 1982 was in effect (Journal of Laws of 1982 No. 35, item 228).

A family probation officer carries out various types of supervision. These include: guardianship supervision, in which parental responsibility or custody is under supervision (see Andrzejewski 2019); supervision of minors, in which the supervised is a person between the ages of 10 and 18[4] (Journal of Laws of 2022, item 1700); supervision of persons who have been court-ordered to undergo drug treatment (Journal of Laws of 1982 No. 35, item 230). As part of their duties in the field, a family probation officer conducts community interviews, carries out supervision, participates in court contacts between parents and children, and may also work in a probation center, interdisciplinary teams, or working groups (Jedynak, Stasiak 2018). My research primarily involved observing supervision and community interviews, and I focused my attention on these field activities.

In the subject literature, several models of court probation are distinguished in Poland. Two models, standing at two opposite poles, are most often mentioned: the educational model and the control-repressive model (see Kępka 2006; Chmielewska 2014; Zinkiewicz 2015; Stróżewski 2019; Babicka-Wirkus 2019). In the first model, the probation officer supports the ward and accompanies them in their daily life, creating a friendly relationship (see Kępka 2006; Chmielewska 2014; Babicka-Wirkus 2019; Stróżewski 2019). In the second model, the probation officer focuses on exercising control over the ward's actions, applying formal consequences in the process (see Kępka 2006; Chmielewska 2014; Babicka-Wirkus 2019).[5] The diversity of models, developed based on the analysis of probation officers' activities, illustrates the multidimensionality of their work.

Theoretical and Methodological Assumptions of own Research

The focus of my analysis was the family probation officer's field work and its interactive dimension. I focused on the ways in which the probation officers organize their work, including building relationships with the wards and other social actors present during my research (people living with the wards, their neighbors, other representatives of formal control institutions).

Erving Goffman's dramaturgical approach (2000), particularly the theory of interactional rituals (Goffman, 2006), proved to be helpful. This approach posits that social actors engage in actions to show respect to the environment with which they interact and to demonstrate the respect they deserve. Goffman (2006)

[4] I conducted my own research with the participation of family probation officers when the Act on Proceedings in Juvenile Matters was in effect (Journal of Laws of 1982, No. 35, item 228), which did not provide for a lower age limit for juveniles.

[5] I am aware that other models of curatorial work are also mentioned in the literature, but due to the volume limitations of the text, I have decided to focus on the most common ones.

pointed out that participants in interactions put on faces to maintain the boundaries set during conversations. The face is "a positive social value attributed to a person in a given encounter Bebinka when others assume that the person adheres to a specific role" (Goffman, 2006, p. 5). The face is supposed to allow the actor to remain in-character. Roles are not chosen by the actor playing them but are negotiated with other interaction participants (Goffman 2006). This theory allowed to reveal that the probation officer is an actor with many faces, helping them play various professional roles.

I will also point out that the concept of dirty work was significant in my research (Hughes 1962; Ashworth, Kreiner 1999). A family probation officer in the field faces physical, social, moral, and emotional "dirt." Therefore, they represent „dirty professions" that are necessary for society but involve experiencing social stigma by their practitioners (Strauss et al. 1997).

My own research was grounded in the theoretical and methodological tradition of the Chicago School, which involves the researcher immersing themselves in the field (Czekaj 2007). Representatives of this school focused on studying the city from a social perspective, employing ethnography of the city as the leading research method (Czekaj 2007; Michel 2016). Since my research concerns the work of a family probation officer in the urban center, I decided to follow the footsteps of the Chicago School researchers, whose focus was also the city. Following their recommendations, I decided to use ethnography (Angrosino 2007; Hammersley, Atkinson 2007) as a research method for my project. I aimed to minimize mediation as much as possible and believed that this could be achieved by going into the field with the probation officer. I employed overt participant observation (Hammersley, Atkinson 2007), as well as ethnographic (Angrosino 2007), informal (conversational) (Konecki 2000), and free-form interviews (Hammersley, Atkinson 2007) to gather data. The research was conducted over five months spanning 2018 and 2019.

In analyzing the data, I applied grounded theory methodology procedure (Czarniawska 2021), which helped organize the material and set directions for further actions. These procedures helped me capture the categories and identify their most important properties.

The research was conducted in two adjacent districts in the center of Łódź-Śródmieście and Bałuty (Stare Bałuty). Their peculiarity follows a long-standing tradition of bearing the label of dangerous and unfriendly neighborhoods (Wolaniuk 1997; Marcińczak, Siejkowska 2003; cf. Gulczyńska, Granosik 2022). This is mainly due to the historically high crime rates in these parts of the city (Marcińczak, Siejkowska 2003), as well as the residents being stigmatized as „disadvantaged urban communities" (Gulczyńska, Granosik 2022, p. 57; c.f. Warzywoda-Kruszyńska 1998; Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, Jankowski 2010; Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, Jankowski 2013). Wielisława Warzywoda-Kruszyńska (1998) demonstrated in the 1990s that many families experiencing poverty and utiliz-

ing social support live in these districts. Her research paved the way for subsequent studies conducted in later years (Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, Jankowski 2010; Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, Jankowski 2013). These conclusions are also confirmed by the revitalization process applied to these urban areas. According to the Act of 9 October 2015 on Revitalization, it pertains to places where phenomena such as poverty, unemployment, crime, low education, low involvement in public and cultural life, and specific needs of residents (Journal of Laws 2015 item 1777). It is also worth mentioning that revitalization raises another problem that intensifies the peculiarities of Łódź's city center – gentrification. It is gentrification, which involves actions consisting of relocating disadvantaged communities from neglected parts of the city (usually the center). Subsequently, after their renovation, residents with higher social status are introduced into them (see Drozda 2017). This exacerbates social polarization in the central areas of Łódź, as they undergo revitalization in a fragmented manner (see Wolaniuk 1997; Świerczewska-Pietras 2009; Michel 2016; Gulczyńska, Granosik 2022).

In my research, I decided to observe the work of a probation officer in Stare Bałuty and Śródmieście areas, since they are placed in the center of a large city (see Szukalski 2019) with an unfavorable „reputation." The probation officer working in the field is a „guest by necessity," so I was interested in how they cope with the burdens of this specific area. I want to emphasize that this article includes a fragment of the results of a broader research project.[6] I felt that the findings of my research could contribute to enriching the picture of family probation work in the metropolitan center area.

Results of own Research and Discussion

Observations have shown that family probation officers adapt to the conditions of the field, which include not only streets and buildings but, above all, the residents. Both my own research and the literature showed that they utilize various ways of creating educational situations in interactions with their wards (see Konopczyński 2010; Bębas 2014; Zinkiewicz 2015; Konaszewski, Kwadrans 2019; Muskała 2019; Wojnarska, Korona 2020). Probation officers employ strategies and techniques that help them maintain their face and that of other participants in the interaction, while simultaneously revealing reflexivity about their relationship with their wards. I put forward the thesis that the emerging strategies and approaches to work have been developed by family probation officers in response to the characteristics of the field in which they operate and constitute constant impact.

[6] Katarzyna Miśkiewicz, Kurator rodzinny w terenie. Rytuały interakcyjne odgrywane w roli zawodowej [Family probation officer in the field. Interaction rituals played in professional roles]. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Łódź, Łódź, 2023.

Acting Flexibly

The foundation of the pedagogy of the family probation officers involved in my research was acting flexibly. It involves the probation officer using competencies that go beyond the scope of their formal role. They draw on their life experience, common knowledge, personal observations, and personal resources. They leverage their private socio-cultural capital and knowledge that extends beyond the formal requirements imposed on individuals working in this profession. It is worth citing Rodziewicz (1993) and Śliwerski (2012), who wrote that pedagogy is based on the personal experience of the educator, which aligns with the actions of the probation officers in my study.

The observations I conducted revealed that the probation officer must utilize knowledge spanning various areas, including law and the interdependencies, as well as system tools, encompassing different aspects of life. They then provide this knowledge to their wards. If it is insufficient, the probation officer tries to guide the ward on where to seek help. In my research, probation officers tried to offer suggestions for actions, never leaving their wards without a concept for problem resolution. They assumed the face of "experts on difficult issues" (regardless of the nature of those issues). If, at a given moment, they had no idea how to navigate a situation, they endeavored to prepare for the next meeting (at the ward's home, during court duty, or through a phone call). They searched through various resources (not just professional ones) to find ways for their wards to cope with the challenges they faced. They encouraged their wards to consider adopting different strategies for dealing with everyday struggles, from the most mundane to significant life dilemmas. They motivated and inspired their wards to take action. Below are observation notes illustrating the probation officer as an expert regardless of the situation:

> The probation officer stopped writing, reached for a math exercise book that was lying on the table and said: "show me an example you can't solve," after which she and her ward leaned over the book. [NzO34][7]

Acting flexibly means that the probation officer, in a way, follows the ward. This corresponds to Marek Konopczyński's standpoint (2019, p. 13) on the „principle of flexibility in pedagogical attitudes." Although Konopczyński referred to the concept of creative rehabilitation, his findings align with my observations and are useful from the perspective of my research. Flexibility in the actions of family probation officers manifested as openness to the diversity of wards (their characters,

[7] The „NzO" abbreviation stands for „observation note," and the number next to it is the observation number assigned to it.

identities, experiences, and their consequences) and the life situations they find themselves in. This is consistent with what Konopczyński wrote. Probation officers, however, were not focused on searching for and developing creative potential in their wards (which is one of the primary goals of creative social rehabilitation). Their actions were oriented towards meeting the needs of the wards and solving their problems. In this aspect, the probation officer acted comprehensively. They were creative in finding ways out of the situation. They provided their wards with possible solutions that not only met their needs, but also helped achieve the formal goals of supervision. Thus, it can be concluded that the probation officer stops at an early stage in the process of striving to develop creative potential in the wards.

An expression of flexible action was also the fact that family probation officers presented many faces. This was not only related to the supervised individuals who were in incomparable life situations. Another dimension of the plurality of faces of probation officers and their flexibility was the fulfillment of a heterogeneous professional role. The probation officer is indeed a representative of formal control agendas, and at the same time, they enter into relationships with wards in their natural living environment, in conditions that are everyday and private for the supervised individuals.

It should also be emphasized that acting flexibly is an overarching category over the other strategies and approaches of the family probation officers participating in my research, which I have identified and listed below. Each of them represents, in a way, the manifestation of the flexibility of a family probation officer in the field.

Waiting

Waiting in the work of a probation officers involves allocating additional time for various activities, both for themselves and, most importantly, for the wards, and sometimes for other household members (such as family members, partners, or roommates of the wards). This manifested in the probation officer waiting for events that represented the goals set by them. Waiting was accompanied by more frequent visits to the wards and reminders about pending matters.

Probation officers employed waiting in various types of interactions with the supervised individuals, which also demonstrated their flexibility. First, when the probation officer was deceived and knew about it but employed strategies and techniques that required more time than an immediate confrontation with the ward's lie. Second, when contact with the wards was difficult (for example, because they were under the influence of alcohol) and the probation officer had to spend more time interacting with them. Additionally, when the wards did not comply with the court's instructions or the plan prepared by the probation officer. An example of this is the following description:

> The probation officer approached the gate she mentioned earlier. She pointed to a window covered with foil and said: „this is the window that was broken by the woman's alcoholic husband, and the other by her alcoholic son and has been unrepaired since the middle of last winter" (…). The probation officer asked about the window. The woman assured that it would be repaired the next day and expressed the belief that the probation officer would come to see it then. [NzO76]

The waiting did not always produce the intended results, but it gave the probation officer the opportunity to strengthen activities oriented toward creating educational situations, including supporting the wards in dealing with everyday problems.

Reaching out

Another clear action in the fieldwork of family probation officers, which I observed and a manifestation of their flexibility, was reaching out. This involves the probation officer repeatedly setting unachieved educational goals for the ward. It is essential to emphasize that this does not indicate inconsistency in the probation officer's work. Instead, it allows for the fulfillment of educational goals by reminding the ward of them in conversations. means that the probation officer consistently returns to their proposals during contact with the ward. During each visit or phone conversation, the probation officer addresses an unresolved issue. This is independent of the model of work characterized by their actions. Kępka 2006; Chmielewska 2014; Zinkiewicz 2015; Stróżewski 2019; Babicka-Wirkus 2019).

Reaching out was used when the ward did not comply with court orders. If it did not pose a threat to the life and health of the supervised individual and their close ones, the probation officer enabled the supervised individual to reattempt the required tasks. In such situations, the probation officer more frequently visited families, spoke with them, reminded them of the consequences of their decisions, provided space for the supervised individual to speak freely, and listened to them. The probation officer „reached out" when the educational goals they set for the ward were difficult to achieve, or at least within the specified timeframe. Perhaps they saw qualities in their ward that they defined as enabling the ward to achieve the educational goals set.

Reaching out is related to waiting and may occur when the supervised individual ultimately fails to meet their tasks. By reaching out, the probation officer enables the ward to take them up again. However, waiting covers a broader range of situations than reaching out: it also occurs when a probation officer waits for a ward to admit to dishonesty. Waiting and the reaching out differ in their goals. Reaching out is giving the supervised individual additional chances to achieve the goals set by the probation officer, while waiting also involves the probation officer persisting in their decisions. This is presented in the following example, in which a probation officer once again tried to persuade a ward that was abusing alcohol to undergo detoxification:

> The probation officer asked why the man did not want to go to the place they had discussed earlier. He replied that he would not go anywhere, sat down on the steps in front of the door, and the probation officer leaned over him. She said that she was not asking him to go to the hospital for a few days, only to undergo detoxification („three days drip and that's it"). The man insisted that he would not go anywhere to sit around „these junkies." The probation officer said that there are no junkies, only alcohol addicts, in a facility she suggests. The man still insisted that he would not go, at one point resting his elbows on his knees and hiding his face in his hands. [NzO90]

Thus, one may notice that reaching out occurs together with waiting, but the two actions take slightly different directions.

Concern for Subjective Treatment

In the general model of work of family probation officers, I also identified a concern for the respectful treatment of wards. This involves respecting the autonomy of the wards and their families, regardless of whether the probation officer shares the meanings attributed by the supervised individuals or their definitions differ. They listen to what the wards have to say, and take into account their stated needs. The concern indicates that the probation officer does not always succeed in achieving this. During my observations, this occurred when the actions of the wards exceeded the legal norms, and the probation officer could not support the decisions of those under supervision. The probation officer, however, tried to strive for subjective treatment of the wards regardless of how the interaction unfolded.

The probation officer faces the challenge of creating a friendly relationship with those who are forced to interact with them. It is a relationship marked by asymmetry, which the probation officer must manage in such a way that the ward wants to be involved and trusts the probation officer. The concern for subjective treatment supports these actions. My observations revealed that, in order to establish a relationship with the ward, the probation officer presented themselves as an ally, someone who wants to help them, considers their opinion, acts for their good (defined in this way by the probation officer), and cares about the fate of the supervised individual. Furthermore, the probation officer emphasized that they take into account the opinions, needs, and desires declared by the supervised individuals. This was mainly evident when the probation officer's actions aligned with the framework of the educational model. Kępka 2006; Chmielewska 2014; Babicka-Wirkus 2019; Stróżewski 2019). The following example illustrates how the probation officer tried to be a support for the ward:

> The girl asked: „what is supposed to save me from this Youth Educational Center? The probation officer replied: "Not what, but who. Ask [name of another ward], I work miracles. Besides, you can save yourself from this by your own behavior." [NzO34]

Relationship-based supervisions express the model of educative probation advocated in the literature (see Kępka 2006; Chmielewska 2014), in which subjective treatment forms the basis of the probation officer's actions (see: Kępka 2006). It is also worth noting that probation officer, through their actions, supports their wards in building relationships. Therefore, the subjective treatment of partners in interactions has consequences in the lives of the wards beyond contacts with the probation officer.

In the concern for the subjective treatment of the wards, the flexibility of the probation officer was revealed, as the wards did not always show a willingness to cooperate. In such situations, the probation officer concealed their real attitude towards the person with whom they interacted, with the intention of subjectively treating the interlocutor. It is challenging to build relationships with someone who we dislike or who shows resentment towards whoever is trying to do so. Although the work of a probation officer, like that of a therapist, is based on building relationships, the probation officer cannot independently decide with whom to establish that relationship, unlike a therapist. Therefore, concern for the subjective treatment of the ward reveals the multiple faces of the probation officer. It emerges when the probation officer established relationships with the ward, yet simultaneously did not expose their real attitude towards them. This is illustrated by a situation in which an irritated probation officer visited the parents of children who she referred to a family home because she learned that they did not visit or contact the children. During the visit to the wards' homes, she calmly discussed the existing problem with them, listened to them – they declared their desire to regain custody of the children but showed no interest in them. Additionally, the living conditions were neglected and unsuitable for the children's needs, and the parents themselves struggled with problematic alcohol consumption and the use of other psychoactive substances Together with the probation officer, they determined what needed to change for the children to return to them. Upon leaving the family, the probation officer firmly stated that, under such circumstances, there was no possibility for the children to return to their parents.

Risk-taking

Risk-taking is the next action included in the presented model of work by family probation officers. Risk-taking involves the probation officer acting spontaneously in the face of unplanned events, consciously taking risks by undertaking actions with a specific purpose and subjectively anticipating their consequences. This corresponds with Goffman's position (2006, p. 162), who wrote that in everyday situations there is a "subjective probability." The spontaneity in the probation officer's actions suggests that the probation officer somewhat improvises during meetings with the wards. Improvisation is one of the key competencies of a probation officer, revealing itself in risk-taking. It involves deliberate actions based

on knowledge, skills, and experience. Improvisation is associated with a musical *jam session*, which, contrary to appearances, requires skill in using instruments or voice. A broad technical background is necessary to improvise skillfully (see: Pinheiro 2011). The same is true of the work of probation officers, who use their resources in unpredictable situations. Their actions are based on knowledge and experience, but also on intuition, which defines pedagogy (see Starnawski 2008).

Risk-taking indicates probation officer's flexibility, juggling strategies and tactics in the interactions they participate in. During my research, their choice depended on the circumstances that the probation officer found when meeting with the wards. They had various solutions up their sleeve, but they could not plan which ones they would ultimately use, and they could not definitively predict whether they would achieve the intended effects. This was clearly evident when there was a need to make decisions based on fragmentary data, which often happened because those under supervision were not always honest with the probation officer.

The probation officer also risked the fate of the families, as evidenced by the moral burden, and simultaneously their own professional career, if it turns out, for example, that not taking certain steps posed a threat to the life or health of members of the supervised families. Furthermore, risk-taking manifested itself in waiting and giving chances, as the probation officer was uncertain whether they would ultimately achieve their set goals or if the ward would seize the new chance. They could only anticipate. In my observations, this was especially the case during visits in which events unexpected by the probation officer occurred.

By creating educational situations in interactions with the wards, the probation officer also risked the emergence of conflict and the deterioration of the relationship between them and the ward. This usually occurred when the probation officer motivated the supervised individuals to undertake valuable (in the probation officer's opinion) actions. The following example from observations illustrates this:

> The probation officer began by saying that she had called the Voluntary Labor Corps in connection with what the boy had said recently (that he wants to become a painter). (…) The probation officer wrote on a notebook page what the boy should take and where to go. She asked when the boy would go there. The teenager replied that he would go when he works off the mandated hours. The probation officer then asked why he could not handle both matters. She stated that it was a waste of time to wait because next year the boy turns 18, and it will be too late. The teenager, hitherto calm, raised his voice and said he would work off the hours first and then deal with the apprenticeship. [NzO94]

It is worth noting at this point that a lack of understanding between the probation officer and the ward was not an uncommon situation. During my observations, probation officers often faced a lack of cooperation from their wards. This is mainly due to the coercion that characterizes the interactions of probation officers with those under supervision.

The probation officer's risk-taking also corresponds with the aforementioned concept of "dirty work" (see Hughes 1962; Strauss et al. 1997; Ashforth, Kreiner 1999). The probation officer risked exposure to the field, dealing with the physical dirt present in it. They did not always avoid contamination (whether intentionally or unintentionally), thus risking direct contact with it and consequently exposing themselves to its unpleasant consequences. Additionally, the probation officer's risk was evident in interactions with social burdens, especially when engaging with individuals whose behavior was violent and unpredictable.

Maintaining Vigilance

Maintaining vigilance is the final action of family probation officers that I have identified from the empirical material. It involves the probation officer being attentive until convinced that they can trust the wards, other household members, and, above all, newly encountered individuals. At the core of vigilance lies not only the probation officer's adherence to the law and procedures but also the concern for the safety and well-being of their wards. When taking risks, the probation officer must have a (subjective) certainty that their wards (especially children) are not in danger. Moreover, even if probation officers "wait" or "reach out" they exercise caution until they are convinced that the educational goal has been achieved.

In my research, probation officers' vigilance waned when evidence they recognized emerged, which ultimately allowed the probation officer to consider the goal achieved. Often, probation officers verified information in conversations with neighbors. These conversations were conducted in a manner I defined as discreet, with the probation officer often going a floor up or down from where the supervised individuals lived and speaking in a hushed voice. At that time, they assumed the face of an "investigative detective." Checking information also occurred with the presence of a social worker during the probation officer's visit. The social worker asked the same questions as the professional probation officer, but at a different point in the conversation and with slightly different framing. In addition, the probation officer verified information in conversations with representatives of other institutions (such as neighborhood police officers or school employees). This does not mean that the probation officer constantly suspected the wards of being dishonest, but rather drew from their own experiences. If the wards deceived the probation officer or engaged in actions deemed risky by the probation officer, the officer became less trusting of them. This was particularly evident when the probation officer was concerned about the safety of the wards.

Like the previously described dominant activities in the work of a probation officer, maintaining vigilance is based on the intuition and experience, as expressed in pedagogy (see Starnawski 2008). The following example captures the essence of the probation officer's vigilance:

> The older man began to say that he wanted to file an application for the girl's mother to regain parental rights. The probation officer replied that nothing could be done at that time because the courts were on strike, and the cases had been postponed until April. She asked why the hurry. Then the girl's mother joined in, saying that she was the child's mother and wanted parental rights. (…) The probation officer, after speaking with the girl's mother, left, but outside the apartment door she spoke for a while with the older man's grandson. She told the boy that she had suspicions about the girl's mother, who, according to her, wanted to escape (…). [NzO102]

Maintaining vigilance was necessary not only towards other social actors but also towards the material "dirt" of the field, which portrays the work of the probation officer as "dirty work" (see Hughes 1962; Ashforth, Kreiner 1999). When moving around the terrain, the probation officer had to be mindful of its shortcomings arising from the presence of physical debris or defects. Sometimes, the probation officer even checked if it was safe to take a step, to avoid stepping into animal waste or not to catch a wobbling stair railing. The buildings in the surveyed area were sometimes in poor technical condition, requiring special caution when navigating through them.

Conclusions

The described general model of probation officers' work, or as Hejnicka-Bezwińska (2008, p. 493) called it, the "hidden agenda," consists of strategies and approaches that interrelate, and their common foundation and, at the same time, the element that connects all the others is acting flexibly. It reveals the multifaceted nature of the roles played by probation officers. The analysis and interpretation presented in the article show the probation officer as an educator making a great effort to establish a relationship with the ward, which is burdened by coercion. It requires probation officers to be reflective, and to draw on their personal experiences. Thus, it can be hypothesized that the profession of a probation officer requires engagement that goes beyond formal frameworks and the utilization of the socio-cultural capital of individuals performing it.

The study participants worked in the urban center, defining the context in which probation officers carried out their actions towards the wards. I am aware that this refers to a specific segment of the social reality of Łódź in the years 2018–2019. Social, cultural, political, economic changes may lead to the emergence of a different picture of the work of family probation officers in the future.

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