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## **What is the counseling *field* and how to examine it?**

In the article, the author presents his own interpretation of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of social *field* research. At the beginning, he introduces the general field theory and then presents the counselling practice as a manifestation of the counselling *field* operation. Subsequently, he presents methodological aspects of the field's *effects* examination, makes the conceptualization of the main analytical categories and at the same time observable social phenomena, in particular *doxa*, *illusio*, generative structures of field's divisions and classifications or counseling game *stakes*. In summary, he draws attention to the potential and limitations of field theory.

**Keywords:** field theory, Pierre Bourdieu, counselling field, field's effects, methodology

### **Introduction**

The goal of this article is to present my own interpretation of Pierre Bourdieu's conception of how to examine the social *field*. This seemingly signifies a completely abstract being, derived from the theory of the French scholar, but in my opinion, it ceases to be abstract through its appropriate conceptualization. The practice of examining social *field* (including counselling *field* as one of its specific types) thereby becomes a project that can and should be implemented. My choice to apply field theory to counselling studies stems from a fundamental assumption about reality, adopted in this conception and shared by me. It is the assumption that there is "something more" than only determining social structures on the one hand and operating autonomous individuals on the other. This division turns out to be artificial and unreal from the Bourdieu's theory point of view. What is real are the relations connecting both of these aspects and constituting the social field. Bourdieu stresses that "The real is the relational. What exist in the social world are relations—not interactions between agents or intersubjective ties between individuals, but objective relations which exist 'independently of individual consciousness and will', as Marx said" (Bourdieu, Wacquant, 1992, p. 97). Thus, the main subject of social science has become to recognize relations. In order to deal with this epistemological

challenge, of how to examine such a complex and immaterial issue as relations, Bourdieu outlined his notion of *field*.

At the same time, it should be noted that from this point of view, the individual, of course, does exist, but only in a biological or physical sense. In social, psychological and cultural terms, the individual is an abstraction with no existence outside the social context, which s/he co-constitutes with other individuals, but never autonomously and single-handedly. It seems that if in pedagogy and in counselling studies the traditional division into structure and agency has already been abolished (for example in Savickas' *career construction theory* underpinned by social constructionism), the traditional Aristotelian substantialism – with its emphasis on individual consciousness, motivation and intentions – still thrives and prevails, which I attempt to show in my publications (see e.g. Mielczarek 2015). From the relational perspective, *agency* thus resides neither in the social structures nor in individuals (even if acting within the structures), but rather in relations among them – in “the third level of social reality,” the individual-structural field (Sztompka 2007, p. 530), which is the agentive mediating factor. “It is nowhere else but at the level of everyday life that the individual and the social, a separate individual and an interconnected, relational network among individuals, turn out to be inextricably bound aspects of the constantly changing individual-social field, distinguishable only by analytical procedures” (Sztompka, Bogunia-Borowska 2008, p. 32).

In the present article, I would like to offer my remarks regarding the intriguing topic called the *field*. I will begin with a discussion of the concept of field in general, and more specifically, the counseling field. Then I will turn to more particular aspects concerning the methodology of this research.

### *Field theory*

The sociologist John Levi Martin (2003) has elaborated an exclusively valuable and helpful attempt to systematize and legitimize *field* theory as a coherent and complete research concept, which connects the achievements of both natural and social sciences. In what follows, I will employ mainly his propositions and findings.

Mechanistic materialism undervalued the importance of the environment (background, field) and limited itself to separate substantial objects and subjects entering into a relation with each other, that is, directly interacting with each other. “A body is never moved naturally, except by another body which touches it and pushes it” (Leibniz, quoted by Martin 2003, p. 9). *Field* theory does not assume the necessity of unambiguous existence of such a substantial carrier of motion or change, as in the case of gravitational, magnetic, and electrical interactions. There is something more, an immaterial and invisible force that sets reality in motion, a force of endogenous character, that is something which is called *field* precisely because of this. *Field* theory tries to unravel the situation of change of endogenous,

not of exogenous nature, thus it seems to pay attention to previously neglected dimension of reality. This is in contradiction with the typical understanding of causality and the standard principle of explanation which we can define as follows: "Elements have attributes, mutually exclusive attributes often being considered instances of a 'variable.' Relations between elements are interpreted as by-products of relations between variables, and causality is said to exist when a change in state in one variable produced by external manipulation would impel a change in state in another variable" (Martin 2003, p. 4). As Martin goes on: "Field theory posits an enveloping gravitational field that we can neither see nor measure except via its effects, and instead of trying to maximize explained variance, proceeds by assuming in principle a perfectly simple determination. As Ernst Cassirer said, 'Galileo did not discover the law of falling bodies by collecting arbitrary observations of sensuously real bodies, but by defining hypothetically the concept of uniform acceleration'" (Martin 2010, p. 5–6). We can add: it is of constant magnitude, and for that reason invisible for us.

We can call the *field* theory "total" in the sense that it has a complex approach to reality and explains it in this way. The theory took its form as a result of the development of three scientific currents: the Gestalt theory, the field theory of Kurt Lewin, and the conception of Pierre Bourdieu. What connects all of them is primarily the subjectivisation of the field, i.e. its treatment as a causative subject (which can have serious significance for counselogy and counseling, because counseling is seen as a social "game" realized through the cooperation of partners in economic, political, social, and cultural context). The task of science (more precisely, counselogy) is to explore this sphere. As Martin points out, in all these traditions the metaphor of the *game* comes to the foreground, as it reflects the specificity of the logic of relations within dynamic fields. The field possesses an internal force that drives objects within it by itself (dynamics comes from the field itself). This force can be described in various ways; in most cases, researchers speak about vectors (for instance, Bourdieu writes about tendencies) which affect the state of things themselves (push them in certain directions or repel them). With this approach, one can explain e.g. professional or educational career development, by referring to the fact that nothing else can be subjected to change. Such an explanation is, as I already mentioned, unfamiliar to the tendencies dominating the social sciences. Generally, we are used to the way of thinking that perceives change as always caused by something, for example by an internal stimulus; nothing happens without a cause, by itself. We do not take into account the fact that we often experience situations when one's career simply runs, or freely "floats," almost naturally, in accordance with the expectations of all people regarding a person taking a certain position – and this takes place until the moment when nothing else is going on. Any change in the state of things is brought about by the interaction of this state and the field in which a given thing is located. It is that simple. This is possible because these things possess the appropriate properties. As Martin remarks, "There is no field known to physics that

affects all particles; similarly, the mere existence of some class of persons who are not susceptible to a social field effect does not disprove the claims regarding the existence of the field. However, it must be possible to specify *a priori* which types of persons will be susceptible, just as we can say in advance that some substances will and others will not be affected by a magnetic field” (Martin 2003, p. 7). Due to the fact that the field is organized and differential, “the field serves as some sort of representation for those overarching social regularities that may also be visualized (by competing theoretical orientations) as quasi-organisms, systems, or structures” (Martin 2003, p. 8). In my opinion, here we encounter one of the most frustrating problems of social sciences, namely, the situation in which our mechanistic theories are applied only partially, i.e. they can never be applied to all people. We always encounter exceptions which spoil our general picture. We often say that this is typical of social sciences, that there are no laws here, that there are only regularities, that the exception only proves the rule, etc. It is easy, however, to see the impracticality of our conception. It seems that field theory allows us to transgress these problematic limitations, due to the thesis of certain properties possessed by objects. According to this approach, the matter is simple: a given principle is valid only as applied to certain people – it cannot be applied to anyone else. Bourdieu presents habitus<sup>1</sup> as a property of this type: if it is located in the appropriate field which can influence it, then everything will work, everything will be fine. Therefore, the task of social sciences would be to examine the correspondence between a field and the properties possessed by its elements. Doing so would allow us to strengthen the practical value of our theories.

As Martin observes: “Field theory elegantly handles as fundamentally the same two social phenomena usually considered to be antithetical, namely the feeling that there is some social force which constrains individuals externally and the feeling that we act on the basis of our motivations” (Martin 2003, p. 37). Its approach assumes neither “philosophical” freedom (free will), nor internal force that is independent from the acting individual. Both melt into one. Only the particular field exists for real and possesses effective subjectivity. It is always dependent on the relations of given (and not other) elements existing within it (in social field these are human beings possessing habitus). The specific combination of relations between these elements constitutes one unique whole, and exactly this combination makes it such. The field elements are what they are, and are nothing else, because they are

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<sup>1</sup> The habitus is a person’s “socially constituted nature” and belongs to the realm of “the cultural unconscious.” As Bourdieu puts it: “The habitus fulfils the function which another philosophy consigns to transcendental conscience: it is a socialized body, a structured body, a body which has incorporated the immanent structures of the world or of a particular sector of that world – a field – and which structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world (...) And when the embodied structures and the objective structures are in agreement, when perception is constructed according to the structures of what is perceived, everything seems obvious and goes without saying” (Bourdieu 1998, p. 81).

located in this particular field and create a structure of relations; and a field is what it is and nothing else, because these elements connected with each other in a special way are located in it. The mutually inseparable dependence in this emerging triad: field – relations – elements (positions – habitus), is the fundamental principle of the epistemological field theory.

As regards the social field, this leads us to the conclusion that everything which is in human beings (which is “subjective”) is also social (“objective”), and vice versa – there is no way to separate them. Social sciences often call this phenomenon intersubjectivity (see Berger, Luckmann 2010), but what distinguishes field theory in this context is the strong emphasis on the aspect of following certain patterns and the lack of randomness of that intersubjectivity (evidently, within the field structures, and exactly because the field exists) – contrary to symbolic interactionism, which seemingly assumes the full freedom of its formation (and which does not take into account anything like the structuring field). The abolition of the antinomy between the subjective and the objective has important methodological ramifications. The successful analysis– as Kurt Lewin wrote already in 1936 – “depends upon keeping in mind that general validity of the law and concreteness of the individual case are not antitheses, and that reference to the totality of the concrete whole situation must take place of reference to the largest possible historical collection of frequent repetitions” (quoted by Martin 2003, p. 35). This directs us toward a comprehensive analysis of *the particular*. In the context of available research on the social field, we can say that by knowing the person we also know the world, and *vice versa* – it is impossible to separate these two planes of reality during the research process, because they have to be analyzed together. Therefore, the priority should be given to the most comprehensive case study – at the expense of an insightful but partial analysis, as well as general but shallow identification (focused on the most frequent tendencies, e.g. statistical ones). As Martin points out: “Most sociological analysts tend to assume that examining one concrete case in detail requires a progressive attenuation in importance of ‘law-like’ characteristics and increasing attention to the ‘unique,’ ‘historical,’ or ‘accidental’ features. (...) Field theory, in contrast, emphasizes that regularity comes at the level of the situation and that the further one goes into a particular case, the more revealing it will be of general principles. (...) Concreteness, or attention to the particularities of this case, far from being assumed to lead to a ‘small picture’ is inseparable from the field theorists’ emphasis on totality and synthesis” (ibid., p. 35). The deeper the complete analysis of the case, the greater our knowledge of the general principle. The deeper we go into the counselling relation as a definite situation, or in the functioning of a counselling institution as an organized unit operating in a given environment, or in the construction of counselling networks in a given region or country, the better we know the principles governing these phenomena. However, as Martin remarks, we have to admit that there is a certain danger which can emerge in this context, and which should

be avoided. It involves the possibility to fall into excessive meticulousness and formalism connected with it.

Bourdieu planned, but did not manage before his death, to write his *opus magnum*, the book dedicated to a general *field* theory, a great work summarizing and synthesizing his legacy. Fortunately, it is possible to reconstruct his idea on the basis of his other publications. I will now try to briefly present the concept of the social field in Bourdieu's approach, remembering that – as Jerzy Szacki (2007, p. 893) rightly underlines – “basically speaking, Bourdieu does not posit a contradiction of a subject (individual) and an object (society), but rather a juxtaposition of two forms of the social within and outside the individual”. According to Bourdieu, “the individual – even the personal and the subjective – is at the same time the social and the collective” (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992, p. 113), and as such, I will add, it is to a considerable degree independent of individual consciousness and will. “These forms are rendered in the most important of Bourdieu's sociological notions – *habitus* and *field*” (Szacki 2007, p. 893). Agreeing completely with Szacki, I want to add that these notions are permanently interconnected and that they define each other – each functions only in relation with the other; if isolated, they become meaningless. The key to understanding Bourdieu's field theory is the fundamental principle of the correspondence between social and mental structures – positions and dispositions. The former are seen as a field, the second as a habitus.

Bourdieu writes: “In analytic terms, a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.)” (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992, p. 97). One can compare a field to a game “although, unlike the latter, a field is not the product of a deliberate act of creation, and it follows rules or, better, regularities, that are not explicit and codified. Thus, we have *stakes* which are for the most part the product of the competition between players. We have an investment in the game, *illusio* (from *ludus*, the game): players are taken in by the game, they oppose one another, sometimes with ferocity, only to the extent that they concur in their belief (*doxa*) in the game and its stakes; they grant these a recognition that escapes questioning. Players agree, by the mere fact of playing, and not by way of a ‘contract’ that the game is worth playing, that it is ‘worth the candle,’ and this collusion is the very basis of their competition” (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992, p. 98). The counselling situation is affected by unwritten rules connected with age, sex, appearance, knowledge and bodily posture of the counsellor and the counselee, as well as with the intended function and character of the space in which guidance provision takes place, etc. “We may think of a field as a space within which an effect of field is exercised, so that what happens

to any object that traverses this space cannot be explained solely by the intrinsic properties of the object in question. The limits of the field are situated at the point where the effects of the field cease” (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992, p. 100). A field – as, emphatically, opposed to the system – is not only complex, but also dynamic and fluid. “The notion of field reminds us that the true object of social science is not the individual, even though one cannot construct a field if not through individuals, since the information necessary for statistical analysis is generally attached to individuals or institutions. It is the field which is primary and must be the focus of the research operations. This does not imply that individuals are mere ‘illusions,’ that they do not exist: they exist as *agents*—and not as biological individuals, actors, or subjects—who are socially constituted as active and acting in the field under consideration by the fact that they possess the necessary properties to be effective, to produce effects, in this field” (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992, p. 107). Social field is, by analogy to physical field, the timespace, where different forces are conflicting with each other, for example human habits, dispositions, desires or interests. “As a space of potential and active forces, the field is also a *field of struggles* aimed at preserving or transforming the configuration of these forces. (...) The strategies of agents depend on their position in the field, that is, in the distribution of the specific capital, and on the perception that they have of the field depending on the point of view they take *on* the field as a view taken from a point *in* the field” (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992, p. 101).

In summary, by referring to Martin’s conception, we can apply to the research in the field of counselling the following five features of field theory:

- “1. It purports to explain changes in the states of some elements (e.g., a static field induces motion in a charged particle) but need not appeal to changes in states of other elements (i.e., „causes”) <As regards counselling, this is about developing the reflexivity of the counselee or the counsellor, without producing additional external stimuli, in the form of trainings, psychotherapeutic workshops, supervision sessions, etc.><sup>2</sup>.
2. These changes in state involve an interaction between the field and the existing states of the elements (e.g. a particle of positive charge moves one way and one of negative charge in another) (...) <In the general social scale, this can be expressed in the search for various sources of advice: in the sphere of TV and internet counselling, in guides, in horoscopes, at the fortune-teller, and so forth, as well as in the emergence of a fashion for various types of counselling and consulting aiming at solving the problems of everyday life (cooking, cleaning, home management, gardening, etc.), together with the cultural changes in the environment>.

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<sup>2</sup> The examples offered <in brackets>, here concerning counseling, were suggested by prof. Alicja Kargulowa as well as by myself.

3. The elements have particular attributes that make them susceptible to the field effect (particles differ in the degree and direction of charge) <The changes mentioned above, occurring in the counselees arise in a triadic relation: counselee-counsellor-environment. In the analysis of field in micro-scale, the role of habitus of both participants in the counselling cooperation is important, together with the “institutional conditions.”>.
4. The field without the elements is only a potential for the creation of force, without any existing force (...). <Without the counselees and counsellors the phenomenon of counselling would be impossible>.
5. The field itself is organized and differential (...). In other words, at any position the field is a vector of potential force and these vectors are neither identical nor randomly distributed” (Martin 2003 p. 4). < Counseling field also consists of various elements that do not function randomly>.

### **Examination of a counseling *field*, or knowing the *effects* of the *field***

The examination of a field is a very demanding and strenuous process involving ceaseless attempts to understand the logic of its function – constantly (and even simultaneously) approaching its details and moving away in the direction of general principles. As Bourdieu stated: “there is thus a sort of hermeneutic circle: in order to construct the field (as an object of research, also of the counselling kind – M.M.), one must identify the forms of specific capital that operate within it (as regards counselling the capital is defined, among others, through the habitus of counselees and counsellors, the developed patterns of behavior in a counselling situation, material resources of the counselling process, perception of its meaning and significance in the space of social life and by those in power – M.M.), and to construct the forms of specific capital one must know the specific logic of the field. There is an endless to and fro movement in the research process that is quite lengthy and arduous” (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992, p. 108). The moment of interruption of this process and writing down the findings is really conventional and it shows itself to be a suspension (in every moment of the research process it can be continued even though the field is historically variable) – however, it occurs when the researcher finds out that he or she has sufficiently understood and explained the logic of functioning of the certain field existing in a given place and in a given time.

Bourdieu provides us with the terminology and concepts that can help us go deeper into the social (and also the counselling) reality, and by doing so, to achieve better results. Following Bourdieu, I see the social space of counselling as a dynamic reality, as a *field* in which *agents* (acting individuals) produce and reproduce practices of guidance provision and reception. In doing this, however, they are not fully free and intentional, or even entirely conscious, because they are conditioned by the structures of the social world (in particular the structures of advice giving

and taking) interiorized as embodied dispositions (which can be expressed by the counselee with words like: *I have to receive help to find a job*; and by the counsellor: *I have to provide the best help in accordance with the accepted standards*).

All concepts employed by Bourdieu in his theory describing social reality are relational, i.e. they “work” only when interconnected. It is not possible to isolate the concepts of habitus or field and treat them as separate categories which are detached from the others. The French scholar often emphasized this (e.g. Bourdieu 2001), but still this is what happened with many of his concepts (more precisely, often only with specific meanings given by him) – a very typical example is the category of cultural and social capital. Describing the logic of the way in which a field functions, one can have the impression that the same is being written all the time, just using different words. It cannot be otherwise, since the field is an inseparably connected mutual network of relations between its phenomena – for example, by defining *doxa*, at the same time we write about *illusio*<sup>3</sup> and dispositions or principles of generative divisions, or symbolic power, or distinction. All these concepts have a fundamental meaning, because due to them it is possible to present the effects of the field from many perspectives that are mutually related. Moreover, this is necessary. As a result, we present the field using many notions and points of view. However, all the time we describe and elucidate the same main phenomenon of the field, thus making possible a complete view of its relations and understanding of it. Therefore, in order to describe the counselling field in an accessible and consistent way, I arranged and conceptualized the key concepts of Bourdieu’s theory, at the same time keeping in mind that they can be distinguished only analytically. I made this categorization guided primarily by two criteria: the specifics of my research project and the clarity of the argument. I distinguished four main analytical categories that describe the effects of the field. I conceptualized them as follows.

### **1. Generative structures of divisions and classifications – distinctive game features**

Based on Bourdieu’s concept, I assume that the logic of the counselling field rests on a foundation built from the opposing meanings of the binary terms (in my project it was the opposition: active / passive). These are fundamental oppositions – influencing the elements in a field according to the principle of attraction and repulsion – shaping the deepest level (unconscious) of doxical social reality (including counselling). The same is true of such dichotomous pairs as: male / female, high / low, dry / moist, light / dark, unemployed / employed, etc. These opposites determine our symbolic universe of possibilities and, by structuring human perception, shape our preferences and inclinations, i.e. affect our system of dispositions (habitus).

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<sup>3</sup> These terms will be articulated further in the present article.

## 2. *Doxa* – game rules

The basic stake of the counselling “game” is providing effective help in activating one to action which can be of any type, thus not only of professional nature, although the latter is also included in my research on career counseling (for example, to find a job). The game is based on shared, deeply internalized, taken for granted and rarely questioned (more unconscious than conscious, rather like “impulse” or “instinct”) beliefs about reality and therefore *doxa* (see Bourdieu 1992, 1998, 2004, 2008). From the side of the counselee, this can be the following conviction: *I should find a job*; and from the side of the counsellor: *I have to provide you with the best possible help*. Due to them, the game is possible and is “played”. This is a kind of common sense, dogma and evidence.<sup>4</sup>

## 3. Counseling game stakes – symbolic tensions, conflicts and fights

Based on the results of my research carried out at the local labor office, and using Bourdieu’s conception, which I applied to my research, we can say that the fundamental stake of the counselling game is the power to establish a valid definition of activity and the help which leads to it, or activation, especially in the professional field (although not only there). What does it mean that we help someone to activate themselves? What is this appropriate, effective help? What is activation, especially in the professional sphere? What effects should it bring about? What is activity in a general sense? There is a struggle to construct appropriate answers to these and other, similar questions, as well as impose the proper understanding of them to other players in the activation field, or producing a valid particular definition of counselling situation.

There can be many game stakes in a field – some more important, the others less significant. They provide the desired objectives to be achieved, the values to realize, widely recognized and appreciated in the field (especially diverse capitals). This does not exclude the possibility for some stakes sometimes to seemingly contradict each other (e.g. money and knowledge, or economic and cultural capital, or – as is the case in the activation of a counselling field – change and stabilization, professional adaptivity and creativity). In such a way, they can increase (or decrease, as with conversing various capitals) the tension and conflicts within the field, which, by definition, are an immanent part of the game. Therefore, as a result of it, there are always winners and losers (the definitions of the situation made by one side, e.g. either by the counsellors or by the counsees, always win, and the other side loses: *I provided help/I did not get to the counselee; I received help/my visit was useless*). Therefore, there are dominating and subordinated sides – although the structure of the relations between them can be susceptible to reconfiguration, because

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<sup>4</sup> I describe contemporary counselling *doxa* in one of my publications (Mielczarek 2016).

the stakes of the counselling game are subject to competition and can change (see Bourdieu 1992, 1998).

#### **4. *Illusio* – sense (prone to) the game, the embodiment of its principles (feeling)**

Bourdieu's notion of *illusio* (cf e.g. 2001, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2009) is not sufficiently elaborated in his theory, and it can be understood in various ways (which does not mean completely arbitrarily, because in every situation and every moment it may signify the same phenomenon, as difficult to grasp it may be, of emotional devotion to participation in a given game – to “be overwhelmed” by it, to be “caught up” in the game). Bourdieu introduced this notion as a more precise and adequate equivalent of the term “interest.” It is often connected with notions such as investment, engagement, belief, illusion, libido, or *amor fati* (love of fate, or “to agree on what cannot be avoided”- Bourdieu 2004, p. 129). *Illusio* allows us to anticipate the future: „one positions oneself not where the ball is but where it will be; one invests oneself and one invests not where the profit is, but where it will be” (Bourdieu 1998, p. 79). It allows a kind of “reflexive” sense for the game, e.g. counsellor and counselee, a game between the counselling institution and its client (its borders, place, time), definition of “what is appropriate for me” and what is not, positioning on the appropriate side of the forces located within the field. Necessarily, as a result of the game it produces a virtue. As Bourdieu states: “*Illusio* is the fact of being caught up in and by the game, of believing the game is ‘worth the candle,’ or, more simply, that playing is worth the effort (cooperation, struggle, shame involvement in a counselling situation – M.M., based on the idea suggested by Kargulowa 2014, pp. 121–132.). In fact, the word ‘interest’ initially meant precisely what I include under the notion of *illusio*, that is, the fact of attributing importance to a social game, the fact that what happens matters to those who are engaged in it, who are in the game” (Bourdieu 1998, pp. 76–77). *Illusio* is a specific attitude toward the field (game) “(...) social games are games that are forgotten *qua* games, and the *illusio* is the enchanted relation to a game that is the product of a relation of ontological complicity between mental structures and the objective structures of social space (as regards the search for counselling help, this can be expressed with the following proud words: ‘we make our own destiny,’ or one somewhat less elegant from the Communist time: ‘whether you work or not, you should get your two-thousand note’- M.M.). That is what I meant when speaking of interest: games which matter to you are important and interesting because they have been imposed and introduced in your mind, in your body, in a form called the feel for the game” (ibid. p. 77).

The inclination or impulse – of which a person is often not aware – for the game (the thirst for it) directed Bourdieu towards the psychoanalytical notion of *libido*, which conveys perfectly the driving force and driving power of *illusio*. As we read: “The work of socialization of the libido is precisely what transforms impulses

into specific interests, socially constituted interests which only exist in relation to a social space in which certain things are important and others don't matter and for socialized agents who are constituted in such a way as to make distinctions corresponding to the objective differences in that space. (...) What is experienced as obvious in *illusio* appears as an illusion to those who do not participate in the obviousness because they do not participate in the game" (Bourdieu 1998, pp. 77–78). As Lucyna Kopciwicz (2007, p. 74) observes, *illusio* takes the meaning of "practical belief" in what is important, what cannot be questioned (see Bourdieu 2005, p. 112). It is worth adding that if we can translate the notion of *illusio* into the language of the philosophy of mind (which was decisively rejected by Bourdieu), the category which would correspond to it the best would be the notion of motive. And, if we can add in such a context, it is "unconscious," which demonstrates very well the paradoxes and problems of definition that we would face in this scientific field.

## Conclusion

In my opinion, the field theory of Pierre Bourdieu, when properly conceptualized, is a very useful tool for describing social reality, including the counselling one. It breaks with many thinking habits in social sciences, to which we have been used for a long time. However, it offers an alternative whole and coherent ontologically-epistemological and methodological conception, which allows a deeper inquiry into and knowledge of social reality. This allows researchers to achieve a complete explanation and understanding, as well as reach original conclusions, which would be unavailable on the basis of other theories. In the case of counselling, it requires changing its current paradigm – transforming the perspective on the reality besides the corresponding conceptual apparatus. It also sets different research goals: it directs us towards knowing its hidden and invisible dimensions that can be known only indirectly, with the help of notions like generative principles of classification and division, *doxa*, *illusio*, and stake of the game (including capital). The main research goal, then, is to reconstruct the effects of the logic of the relational being called the *field* (here it is the counselling field). The "reward" for this may involve reaching still unknown spheres of counselling and discovering invisible structures influencing its "fabric".

It is clear that field theory has various limitations. One of the most important of them is the inability to avoid tautological explanations and definitions. Let us repeat again what Bourdieu wrote about the notion of field, being aware that this may include some tautology: "We may think of a field as a space within which an effect of field is exercised, so that what happens to any object that traverses this space cannot be explained solely by the intrinsic properties of the object in question. The limits of the field are situated at the point where the effects of the field cease" (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992, p. 100). Such tautology is also associated with the real danger

of falling into the occult, because “field theory relies on something of uncertain ontological status, at least in the Western tradition where things that are real have to possess the properties of extension and mass. (...) Since fields are only known by their effects (...), it is tempting to proliferate invisible fields that ‘explain’ whatever it is that we otherwise cannot explain” (Martin 2003, p. 10 and 8).

There is a serious problem “in our inability to say exactly how some ‘force’ is being transmitted” (ibid. p. 9). We are also unable to answer the following significant question: what is this force in general? It is not certain whether we will be able to answer it at all. This issue is related to the limitations of our perception, and to the lack of proper language (or conceptual categories) for describing, explaining and understanding the world from the perspective of relations and fields. Bourdieu often stressed the latter issue, complaining about the difficulties in expressing his relational view of the world. Nevertheless, the theory of counseling *field* allows us to comprehensively (re)construct a full picture of the counselling practice, if we are able to use its potential and cope with its shortcomings.

*Translated from Polish by Aneta Słowik*

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