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Understanding new hybrid professions: Bourdieu, *illusio*, and the case of public service interpreters

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Abstract

Public spending reductions across the advanced capitalist world are creating new professions which have a 'hybrid' status and/or role. However, research on professional learning has paid little attention to them. This qualitative study of one such profession, public service interpreting (PSI), addresses that lacuna. The paper focuses on interpreters' interactions with other professionals and with migrants using public services. It evokes Bourdieu's important but neglected concept of *illusio* – the extent to which players invest commitment in the stakes of a field – to frame the analysis. This highlights the lack of autonomy for PSI, interpreters' own ambiguous *illusio*, and their conflicts with the *illusio* of more powerful professions with which they must work. We conclude that there is a need for more research on the power relations between new hybrid professions and established professions, and that Bourdieu's *illusio* is a potent analytical concept for this task.

The growth of 'hybrid' professions

A seemingly paradoxical tendency is happening internationally in public service professionalism (Noordegraaf, 2007). On the one hand, established professional groups, which have traditionally enjoyed recognition and autonomy (such as doctors, lawyers and, to a lesser extent, teachers), increasingly find themselves the target of serious attacks on their legitimacy from policy makers and implementers, reflected in pejorative reports in the mass media. Typical examples include Campbell (2013) on 'failing schools' supposedly undermining the British economy, or Otterman (2011) on teachers 'failing millions of American children'. Such attacks represent attempts to impose external control on professions and to breach the bulwarks of their self-regulatory apparatus. Typically they portray professional regulation and closure merely as matters of occupational protectionism and vested interest counterposed to the interests of service users.

On the other hand, entirely new groups - which we might term 'hybrid' professions (Henriksson, 2010; Noordegraaf, 2007) - are being formed in the same sectors (such as nurse practitioners, paralegals and early years educators). This sometimes entails hybridisation of roles across occupational boundaries: in the UK, nurse practitioners undertake some of the work formerly performed only by doctors. In Finland, the new role of practical nurse provides *both* health *and* social care, formerly delivered through separate services (Henriksson, 2010). In other cases, such as early years educators and paralegals, the boundaries being blurred are rather those of occupational *levels*: work that has traditionally been classified as of associate or technical status (for example, in

the International Standard Classification of Occupations [ILO, 2010]) is now re-branded as professional; or those still classified as sub-professional in status increasingly take on professional-level work.

This trend is driven partly by the claims of such practitioners themselves to assure the quality of service they provide, but also by a policy rhetoric of 'professionalisation' of lower-status occupations. The latter move can be seen as an effort to inspire public confidence in practitioners who are less qualified - and who have less favourable salaries and working conditions - than higher-status and longer-established professions. It also signals that reductions in public funding are managed by re-allocating elements of the traditional work of the public service professions to a less costly and more easily controlled labour force, whilst mobilising a disciplinary discourse of 'acting professionally' tied to managerial accountability (Fournier, 1999; Evetts, 2003) - a trend that has been referred to as the creation of a 'professional precariat' (Sommerlad, 2012a, p. 2510). A concomitant move is one of deprofessionalising established professions, whereby politicians berate and punish the supposed failures of public sector professionals as a smokescreen for legitimising capitalism's continued expansion and decimating public expenditure in that cause (Gale and Densmore, 2003). Overall, then, this shift

...is not as much about *being* a professional as it is about *becoming* professional in modern times, or more precisely, about showing that one is becoming professional without necessarily ever becoming one. (Noordegraaf, 2007, p. 775, original emphasis)

There has long been discussion in educational research about the nature of professionalism and processes of deprofessionalisation and reprofessionalisation (Gale and Densmore, 2003; Gleeson et al., 2005; Hoyle, 1975,2005; Seddon, 1997). Far more recent and far rarer, however, are discussions of the professionalisation of lower-status occupational practices. Indeed, at the First International Conference on Professional Practice, Education and Learning (ProPEL) in 2012, where a total of 134 presentations were given, the vast majority focused on established professions (medicine, other health and social care professions, education, engineering, business management, finance and policing). By contrast, only a few focused on recently formed 'hybrid' professions (childcare workers, teaching assistants, paramedics, paralegals, and language interpreters). Such studies tend to draw attention to the democratising potential of recognising and promoting the skills and knowledge of these practitioners (e.g. Aberton and Slade, 2012; Chen, 2012; Henriksson, 2008, 2010; Mansaray, 2006), implying some credence for arguments *pro* deprofessionalisation (Hoyle, 2005). Some, however, take a more critical perspective through a focus on the harsh material realities and super-exploitation of such practitioners, along with the negative effects on established professions and the service provided to students, patients or clients (e.g. Edmond & Hayler, 2013; Sommerlad 2012).

We do not propose to reprise well-worn debates about deprofessionalisation further here. Nor is the remit of this paper to perpetuate discussions about whether fields such as teaching, nursing or social work, for example, are only 'emerging' professions in comparison with 'classic' professions such as law and medicine, or 'new' professions such as engineering and accountancy (Gale and Denscombe, 2003). Indeed, we will refer to all such professions as 'established', whatever their relative status, given that they have for some considerable time possessed the technically rational attributes of professional status (cf. Schön, 1983): formalised training, professional registration,

codes of practice, a developing corpus of academic literature, and so on. We are instead deeply interested in the formation of new hybrid professions - not with the primary purpose of championing their knowledge and skills, though we recognise the immediate political validity of such research - but in order to interrogate sociologically their practices, roles and identities in the authentic settings in which they work. This includes not only the reificatory apparatus by which they seek to assert themselves as a profession (cf. Wenger, 1998), but also their situated enactment of their role, and - crucially - their interactions with the established professions alongside whom they tend to work, as well as with service users.

We draw, then, on a qualitative study of public service interpreters (PSIs), a group who perhaps exemplify the model of a new hybrid profession. In many advanced capitalist countries now, PSIs are employed to facilitate meetings between public services - medical, social, and legal - and immigrant service users whose language capabilities would not be adequate to understand and fully engage in these interactions without assistance. This work has only recently (since the late 20th century) been constituted as a profession; moreover, it is carried out by freelance and highly casualised practitioners who, by the very definition of their role, are obliged to work on the 'home terrain' of other more established professions. These extremes make it a particularly illuminative practice, which renders highly visible the 'boundary work' (Noordegraaf, 2007; Seddon et al., 2010) that PSIs must learn to do to establish and defend their professional role and status.

This article therefore makes an original contribution to the international literature on professional education and learning in a number of ways. First, we focus on the emergence of one of the new hybrid professions that remain sorely under-researched in this field. Second, we pay attention not only to the ostensible work of PSIs, but also to the hidden complexities of their professional role and positioning in interactions with more established professions - an approach which may have wider relevance for other hybrid professions. Third, we eschew a *research* purpose of celebrating PSIs skills and knowledge, and seek to go beyond the way in which this approach dominates most of the educational research on hybrid professions. We are concerned here to add to the scant literature which takes a more trenchantly critical stance and seeks to expose and explicate the precarity, inequalities and injustices visited upon new hybrid professions. Finally, in analysing the data, we put to work one of Bourdieu's concepts, that of *illusio* (people's commitments to invest themselves in a particular set of practices or 'field'). This concept is central to his sociological theory, but has rarely been applied in educational research until now. It is, we shall argue, one which can be valuably applied in the understanding of new hybrid professions.

We begin, then, by considering different theoretical approaches to professional education and learning, and by justifying and explaining our application of Bourdieu's theoretical approach. We go on to give an account of the birth of public service interpreting as an exemplary case of a new hybrid profession, and of the key formal protocols on which it is based. We then present data from qualitative research with PSIs, focusing on different aspects of *illusio* as they interact with other professions. Finally, we draw some conclusions about the nature of this particular hybrid profession, and point to the wider relevance of these conclusions for other such emerging groups.

The formation and ongoing reproduction of a profession has long been understood to entail both more formal education in institutional settings (initial training and continuing professional development) and less formal learning through participation in work itself (Beckett & Hager, 2000). If, as Schön (1983) recommends, we view technically rational accounts of this process as inadequate, we can see that its dominant alternative theorisation in the international literature over the last two decades has been that of situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This adopts a metaphor of learning as social participation rather than as cognitive acquisition. Its central tenet is that newcomers to an occupation enter a community of practice through legitimate peripheral participation alongside 'old timers'. That is to say, they begin with simpler and less crucial work, and gradually take on more complex tasks and more responsibility, until they master the complete range of practice and attain full membership of that community. The development of knowledge and skill is therefore inherently seen as a process of 'becoming' (Fuller et al., 2005), albeit a very one-directional process in terms of its assumed dynamics (Colley et al., 2007).

This social constructionist approach to professional learning has recently been challenged by socio-material approaches drawing on actor-network theory (ANT), for its lack of attention to the ways in which inanimate objects interact with human agents to shape practice and knowledge (Fenwick and Edwards, 2010). Those who espouse ANT argue that it is essential to focus on what such objects *do*, rather than how people invest them with meaning:

The focus is on the *socio-material*—and how minute relations among objects bring about the world. ANT's analyses trace how different human and nonhuman entities come to be assembled, to associate and exercise force, and to persist or decline... A key assumption is that humans are not treated any differently from nonhumans in ANT analyses. (Fenwick & Edwards, 2011, pp. 1-2)

Briefly, ANT seeks to understand phenomena as networks of highly diverse actors (social, technical, and material) brought into association; and to analyse how actors are enrolled into networks, the relative durability or weakness of those associations.

There is not space here to engage in more detailed accounts of either of these rival theoretical approaches. However, our assessment is that while they might appear promising for an analysis of new hybrid professions, both are open to similar critique. They fail to attend to the *historical* materialist context of professional learning, that is, to locate it within a particular mode of production - specifically, that of late capitalism and its neo-liberal manifestations. As a result, they take insufficient account of social relations of power. While Lave and Wenger (1991) acknowledge that the influence of power relations is crucial to understanding how communities of practice function, they devote no further attention to this. In this respect, communities of practice have been described as a concept with 'a gaping hole in the middle' (Colley, 2010, p. 63). Similarly, ANT explicitly rejects the notion of social structures and divorces human agency from the production and 'actions' of material objects. As such, it has been critiqued for its political conservatism and its inability to challenge 'the imaginaries of market managerialism' (Whittle and Spicer, 2008, p. 622).

The sociology of Bourdieu provides a way to surmount these shortcomings, with its more critical theoretical perspective (e.g. Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). One of the central advantages of his theory-as-method is his ontological refusal of a binary dichotomy between structure and agency, and his insistence that both entail 'bundles of relations' (Wacquant, 1992, p.

16). His primary notion of 'field', designating any specific social space and its practices, reflects both structure (being positioned) and agency (self-positioning). Its corollary, *habitus*, offers a similar integration, expressing a combination of socially structuring dispositions and socially structured pre-dispositions. This underpins a critical perspective that illuminates the ways in which particular social groups engage with practice, and their differentiated trajectories within fields that, under capitalism, are inherently competitive and unequal (Bourdieu, 1992).

Habitus and field are therefore inseparable concepts, but how are they articulated together? One could argue that Bourdieu himself is not at all clear on this issue (Warde, 2004). This is, however, a difficult position to maintain, given that there is a key concept in his framework - *illusio*, which he sometimes also refers to as interest - that expresses precisely this articulation. Indeed, the trio of field, *habitus* and *illusio* are so closely imbricated that each cannot be intelligibly defined in isolation from the others (Gouanvic, 2005) (although we focus primarily on *illusio* for heuristic purposes in this article). It is therefore surprising that *illusio* has barely been considered in the now-substantial body of Bourdieusian literature in educational research, with only rare and recent works utilising it (Colley, 2012; Rowlands and Rawolle, 2013; Widin, 2010). The concept is a vital one, which expresses the commitment of 'players' in any field to invest in its stakes, that is to say, its objects of value:

We have *stakes (enjeux)* 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: 98, original emphasis)

It is through *illusio* that players bring their *habitus* to the field and engage with the practices that constitute it. The stakes that inspire this engagement are the objects of value in the field, including values and beliefs. *Illusio*, then, represents the more conscious counterpart of the tacit and unquestionable 'doxa' of a field. In this regard, it is important not to mistake *illusio* for 'illusion' (Costey, 2005). Indeed, players' engagement is an illusion only to the indifferent spectator observing the game from outside it (Bourdieu, 2000; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This does not, however, mean that *illusio* is always wholeheartedly invested by all players:

The homology between the space of positions and the space of dispositions is never perfect and there are always some agents 'out on a limb', displaced, out of place and ill at ease. (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 157)

Colley (2012) has further argued the potential for such disjunctures to result in the 'shattering' of *illusio*. Her study of youth support practitioners revealed the consequences of economic austerity, as cutbacks in resources for their service, imposed by powerful policy-makers and other dominant financial interests, had radically altered the stakes in their field. The introduction of policy targets *de facto* excluding the most disadvantaged youth from access to their services stood in stark tension with the strong client-centred values and emancipatory purpose of this established profession. This situation did indeed leave them 'displaced and ill at ease', unable to reconcile their *illusio* to the new

stakes of the game. This undermined their learning in a variety of ways, adversely affected their physical and mental health, and led to a number being driven out of the profession altogether.

The case of PSIs adds to this incipient literature, since it poses a somewhat different and dual sociological puzzle to be solved. Not only do we seek to understand the *illusio* of interpreters as a newly formed profession, important and original though this task will be. But PSIs interpret medical consultations, housing interviews, immigration tribunals and criminal trials. They are always concurrently *involved in someone else's game* as well as playing their own; they are always playing 'away from home', and have no autonomous field of their own. Since their practice is performed integrated into the practices of other fields, we therefore also need to investigate what happens as their *illusio* encounters that of other professions. In this we are evoking Bourdieu through deploying a little-used but core concept of his, as we take the concept of *illusio* and use it as an explanatory tool to investigate not just commitment or indifference to participating in a field, but highly complex issues of professional hybridity that are becoming ever more important in education itself, as well as in broader educational research on professions.

Public service interpreting: the birth of a hybrid profession

Public service interpreting may be a new profession, but interpreting is of course a very ancient practice. For millennia, human beings have needed interpreters to conduct trade, cultural exchange, and politics between nations of different tongues. This makes it the stuff of legend, from the story of the Tower of Babel in the *Book of Genesis* to that of the Babelfish device (inserted into the ear to communicate instantly with speakers of other languages) in the modern-day comedy *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Authentic historical evidence exists of interpreting work dating back to at least 3000 BC (Delisle and Woodworth, 1995). These accounts, from a wide variety of scenarios, show that interpreters have always undertaken a hybrid role, often as political mediators, advocates, gatekeepers or peacemakers. Their duties far exceeded the basic transfer of a message into another language and thus led them constantly to cross occupational as well as linguistic boundaries. At the same time, they have been viewed as suspect agents: a 'necessary evil', the traitor or potential enemy who knows too much from crossing the boundaries on both sides (Valero-Garcés and Martin, 2008). Furthermore, interpreters' positional status has varied greatly, from that of servant despised for speaking 'barbaric' tongues to that of power behind the throne. Perceptions of the social practice of interpreting are therefore deeply infused with issues of power, trust, loyalty and betrayal which still endure for PSIs today, as we discuss below.

More recently, interpreting has achieved greater public prominence, as the post-colonial era has seen successive waves of mass migration, largely from the global South to the North. In the UK alone, the nation's 2011 Census reveals that 4.1 million people (around 6.5% of the population) speak a main language other than English, including over 100 different languages (Lansley, 2013). For many years, such immigrants to former colonial powers had to rely informally on community or family members, often children, to facilitate their interactions with public services if they were not proficient in their host country's language. Studies of such facilitation led to the notion of 'language brokering' (Shannon, 1990), since they revealed how much cultural as well as linguistic interpretation was involved. However, some tragic miscarriages of justice in the last two decades of the 20th century prompted ethical and human rights concerns in relation to immigrants' access to

services, especially the right to a fair trial (Corsellis, 2008). These concerns were further supported by evidence about the stressful responsibilities that language brokering placed on children (Cohen et al., 1999). On the political plane, attitudes to immigrants were also shifting, with less emphasis on assimilation and moves towards a multicultural approach in many countries. As a result, a number of governments around the world introduced legislative and regulatory frameworks at both national and transnational levels (including several EU directives), to establish and fund professional public service interpreting. (We note here that other countries have adopted different terms for this practice, such as 'community interpreting', 'community-based interpreting', 'cultural interpreting', or 'dialogue interpreting'.)

This prompted the rapid formation of a profession with all its reificatory trappings. Corsellis, herself a central leader of this process in the UK, lists the technically rational necessities thus:

selection criteria, initial training and in-service training, nationally recognised assessments at all levels, guidelines to good practice, disciplinary procedures. All five of the above should be: transparent, nationally/internationally recognised, consistent and accountable to the public and to the profession. (Corsellis and Fernández, 2001, p. 147)

In Britain, for example, the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI) was launched in 1991, a national vocational qualification at a level equivalent to a bachelor's degree, offering specialisations in Law, Health, or Local Government. Three years later saw the setting up of a regulatory body, the National Register for Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI), which now numbers 2,200 police-vetted interpreters with proficiency in 101 languages. As Noordegraaf (2007) argues is typical in the formation of new hybrid professions, there has been a proliferation of professional associations promoting national occupational standards and/or holding registers, including the Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIoL), the National Centre for Languages (CILT), the Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI) and the Association of Police and Court Interpreters (APCI).

Codes of practice for PSIs, and for collaboration with them by other services, have been imposed externally by powerful institutions such as the Criminal Justice System, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Home Office, and by associations for other professionals who work with PSIs. The NRPSI has also produced its own Code of Professional Conduct (2011). The core professional duty it promotes is that:

Practitioners shall interpret truly and faithfully what is uttered, without adding, omitting or changing anything. (NRPSI, 2011, 5.4)

It emphasises that:

Practitioners shall not enter into discussion, give advice or express opinions or reactions to any of the parties that exceed their duties as interpreters. (NRPSI, 2011: 5.9)

The Code is supported by the DPSI Handbook, produced by the Institute of Linguists Educational Trust (IoLET, 2010). This stresses the need for interpreters to be neutral and impartial whilst performing their role, and to refrain from judging the parties involved in the interpreted interaction (for instance the veracity of users' words, their innocence or culpability). Instead, they should always focus on the interpreting process to the best of their abilities and in an unobtrusive manner.

To that effect, PSIs are instructed to detach themselves from the situations in which they interpret, but with limited guidance on how to do so. As Gale and Densmore note, 'The professional is traditionally exhorted to remain detached from, in contrast to committed to, social ideas and values, on the assumption that this detachment permits objectivity' (2003, p.86). So, for example, DPSI candidates learn to introduce themselves to both parties at the beginning of assignments in line with this guidance:

My name is ... and I am working as a [*language*] interpreter. I am here to interpret for both of you. I am bound by my professional code of practice to interpret everything that you say, so if you do not want me to interpret something, please do not say it. Everything will be kept confidential. My role is to interpret everything accurately and impartially to the best of my ability. I will not act as an advocate or give advice. It would help me if you could speak to each other directly. I am ready to start.

This introduction is intended to present the PSI as a professional who can be trusted by both parties but does not side with either one. It clearly reflects the ancient but enduring concerns we noted earlier about the allegiances of the interpreter and their potential power to influence the course of interactions between others. At the same time, it creates an impression of the interpreter as if she were not present as a human being: not a social actor within the interaction, but merely a mechanical mouthpiece. According to this dominant 'conduit model' of interpreting, which constructs the practice as one primarily of technical linguistic transmission, DPSI training emphasises techniques for 'becoming invisible' and behaving 'professionally' in the workplace. For example, interpreters are instructed not to remain alone with service users and, in case they are obliged by circumstances to do so, always to have a book at hand in which to immerse themselves so as to avoid conversation. They are advised to carry spare clean underwear in their briefcase, so as to maintain a 'professional' and unobtrusive demeanour by avoiding body odours on lengthy assignments. They are also made aware of sitting arrangements as a way of becoming 'invisible' in the workplace, the official recommendation being ideally to sit in a triangle with the interpreter set back from service provider and user.

All of these rubrics may, at first sight, appear to be non-controversial, indeed essential for public service interpreting to function as a practice. They may certainly be seen as an attempt to codify a particular set of 'stakes' that should generate *illusio* on the part of PSIs. Indeed, many interpreters take great pride in 'disappearing into the background' as a marker of professionalism (Wadensjö, 1998). These are assumptions which, as we shall later show, need to be brought into question. For now, however, we turn to an explanation of the actual work that PSIs perform.

Public service interpreters' work: serving as an invisible conduit?

Unlike conference interpreters, who work in teams, translate only into their mother tongue, know the content of the sessions they are to cover, and relieve each other about every 20 minutes, PSIs work in more challenging conditions. They usually work alone, sometimes for long hours, usually without prior knowledge of the subject of their assignment, and in *both* language directions. Their practice consists of interpreting dialogues, the idiosyncrasies of which include fast turn-taking, false starts, overlapping or unpredictable speech, and this in either consecutive or simultaneous modes.

In addition to mastering a variety of interpreting techniques, practitioners are therefore required to possess an excellent command of both languages and cultures (for instance, idiomatic usages, dialects or linguistic variations), develop a broad range of technical vocabulary appropriate to the service context, and display an awareness of current political situations, public service procedures and protocols in both countries. To achieve 'faithfulness' in their renderings, PSIs are also taught to mirror speakers' use of language (tone, vocabulary, register and so on) and mimic their body language. The task of conveying messages in such a way that they produce the effect originally intended in the target language, whilst 'melting into the background', is highly challenging: it demands high-level cognitive and acting skills, coupled with the ability to decipher non-verbal cues such as gaze, posture and gesture that are often culturally specific (Mason, 1999).

Moreover, the interactions in which PSIs are involved often concern intimate aspects of service users' lives and can be highly emotionally charged, posing further ethical challenges. They may interpret for a terminally- or mentally-ill patient in hospital, for an asylum seeker at an immigration interview (possibly recounting horrific experiences such as witnessing massacres or being gang-raped by militias), or for a mother engaged in a battle with social services for custody of her children. In such contexts, service users inevitably turn to the PSI, who can communicate with them in their own language, to expect warmth and support, even advice and advocacy (Alexander et al., 2004). As our data will show, it is also common for service providers, who cannot themselves access the cues of a non-native speaker, to view the PSI as a tool to assist their own work. They may, for example, ask the PSI if an asylum-seeker's accent or dialect corroborates or contradicts their stated place of origin; or request that the PSI comfort a client who has broken down in tears.

We can already begin to see here that, despite the many and strict textual iterations of the NPRSI Code of Professional Conduct, which present the PSI as somehow hermetically sealed off from the other participants in an interaction, their role can easily take on a 'leaky' character, with unwitting subversions from both of the other parties, and expectations that interpreting is a hybrid role. We do not suggest by this that PSIs cross entirely from one set of practices to another, but that there is a taken-for-granted assumption by others – embodied in their practice – that the PSIs' role will blend with aspects of the profession on whose terrain they are working, or integrate practices desired by service users, such as advocacy or comforting. In addition, this refusal to recognise the PSI's specialist role and expertise, and their treatment as a subordinate assistant or auxiliary to other professionals, also highlights the hybridity of PSI in terms of its contested status. Unsurprisingly, then, there is a stark tension between officialised definitions of the PSI as an invisible linguistic conduit - almost as a Babelfish device - and the very human and social nature of their authentic interactions. As one commentator succinctly put it: 'interpreters don't have a problem with ethics, they have a problem with the role' (Fritsch-Rudser, 1988, cited in Roy, 1993/2002, p. 347).

Researching public service interpreting

A growing academic literature on PSIs (incidentally, another marker of a new profession according to Noordegraaf, 2007 and Gale and Densmore, 2003) includes a critical strand of research which challenges paradoxical assumptions of the interpreter as an invisible presence, a third participant *but a non-social one* in social interactions (see for example Angelelli, 2004, Inghilleri, 2012, and Wadensjö, 1998). Such studies have done much to provide evidence of the complexities of PSIs'

work, and to demonstrate the deeply social nature of their participation in interpreted interactions. Here, we build on and beyond these ground-breaking analyses to further understand the experience-as-learning of this new profession as a *hybrid* one.

This study was conducted as a doctoral research project by Frédérique Guéry, herself a qualified and experienced public service interpreter and interpreter-educator, and supervised by Helen Colley, who had worked in a voluntary capacity as a conference interpreter in political campaign settings. Both of us therefore had first-hand experience of the intensive linguistic and technical challenges of simultaneous interpreting, and one of us had extensive experience also of PSIs' work and the interactions in which they are involved. This inevitably disposes us to some extent to champion the cause of professional recognition for PSIs; but while recommendations about such matters have been discussed elsewhere (Guéry, 2014), this was not the primary focus of the research, nor is it our concern here.

The overarching aim of the research was to understand in greater detail the roles and practices of PSIs in authentic work settings. Since there were no qualitative studies that focused in-depth on PSIs' own perspectives on their work, the project drew on a narrative, interpretive methodology (Moustakas, 1990) recommended for the study of professional lives and careers that can also keep wider social and economic influences in view (Collin & Young, 2000; Goodson and Sikes, 2001). The data is derived from PSIs' own detailed narratives of their work, generated in 90-120 minute semi-structured interviews with 11 experienced PSIs (three of whom were also DPSI trainers) from one region in the north of England during 2010. This represented a combination of opportunity sampling (asking for volunteers among experienced PSIs known to Guéry) and snowball sampling, appropriate for small-scale qualitative research which does not seek statistical generalisability (Somekh and Lewin, 2005). All participants were given information sheets about the project in advance, and signed consent forms which also re-stated their right to withdraw from the project at any point. Ideally, it would also have been helpful to undertake observations of workplace interactions, but ethically and pragmatically, this was not possible given the sensitivity of many such events and the confidentiality protocols of service providers.

The research was informed not only by the critical studies mentioned above, but aimed to deepen their findings by working with *a priori* themes derived from the wider literature on workplace learning. These drew our attention to three specific but often hidden forms of work: boundary work (Seddon et al., 2010), ethics work (Colley, 2012; Cribb, 2009), and emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983). These concern, respectively, the issues of maintaining or breaching occupational boundaries and levels (particularly visibility and invisibility in PSIs' interactions); the day-to-day, on-the-spot ethical decision-making demanded by professional roles; and the prescribed management of one's own and others' feelings as part of one's job role. The three core themes did indeed arise strongly and repeatedly in PSIs' accounts, but we were also struck by two aspects of the data. First, the three themes were deeply imbricated with one another. For example, challenges to PSIs' professional boundaries seemed to generate not only efforts to deal with these, but often entailed immediate ethical decisions as well as strong emotional reactions that needed to be managed. Second, despite the varieties of ways in which the themes and their inseparability manifested themselves, there were strong overall patterns in terms of where agency and compliance or resistance lay with respect to different players in the interactions. As a result, rather than analysing the data through the heuristic construction of holistic narratives for each individual PSI (Moustakas, 1990), the data was

instead categorised through a three-stage approach: initially in relation to the three themes of boundary work, ethics work and emotional labour; then in relation to the locus of agency and of resistance or compliance in interactions where the official boundaries of PSIs' professional practice were subject to challenge; and finally using the concept of *illusio*. All of the names used here are pseudonyms, and all locations and other identifying factors have been anonymised or omitted to protect confidentiality.

In this article, we focus on the specific ways in which PSIs interact with other established professionals in their specialised fields, as well as with service users. First, we consider the ways in which PSIs did seem to share, to some extent at least, an *illusio* in the stakes of their own profession's official constructs and codes; we then go on to explore on the one hand how PSIs' personal beliefs and values at times over-rode these official rubrics; and on the other, some instances where the *illusio* of PSIs clashed with the *illusio* of established professions with whom they were working; as well as pointing to threats to the profession from wider economic and political shifts.

Congruent illusio: buying into the official 'stakes' of public service interpreting

Some of the PSIs emphasised their investment in the official 'stakes' of their profession we have outlined above: a commitment to technical excellence in the performance of their duties, including the effort to remain 'invisible'; and adherence to the NRPSI's Code of Professional Conduct, in which 'invisibility' is linked to impartiality.

Mateo, for instance, remembers being shown a video during the DPSI course of typical mistakes made by interpreters. From it he learnt that: 'You shouldn't be using your body language when you're interpreting, because you may give out different signals during the interview'. His appreciation of the neutral role of PSIs was echoed by Andrew, who was taught that as an invisible 'tool for communication', the interpreter is not 'involved as such in communication', but just 'there as a way to facilitate communication through language transfer'. Larry declared that this seemed straightforward:

You [*the interpreter*] are only there to be almost just sort of an invisible person whose mind is being used, but not me the person. I take off my person hat and put on my interpreter hat.

Yet as Mary explained, it can require considerable effort 'to resist the urge to make your own comments about what's going on, even though you might be thinking inside: "What? How can you say that?" or: "This is ridiculous, no one believes you".' Monika recalled how she was even complimented by a solicitor for remaining passive during one such incident:

It was the world's tallest ever story you heard from somebody accused of burglary, something that was quite stunning, it was quite amusing. I came out and the solicitor said to me, he said: 'You did very well at keeping a straight face when you were [*laughs*] interpreting for him.' Some quite amazing things that people come up with!

Challenges to the official protocols of PSIs could also come from service providers. Oliver, for example, protested about solicitors' tendency to ask him to go beyond his remit: to call a detained person's friends or relatives on his own mobile phone, for example; or, even more problematically, to elicit specific information by having 'a chat on the side with the client and trying to get the answer, when it shouldn't be the way'. He assertively reminds them that this is not his role: 'It's not any of my business really'. Maintaining their *illusio* in their profession's protocols, then, is something that many PSIs consciously try to do. But we see from some of these accounts that it can require great efforts given the behaviour of service providers and users. This might suggest that official reifications of the profession are suitably strong. However, as we argue below, this is not so clearly the case.

Weak illusio: PSIs doing things their own way

Some of the PSIs we talked to were far less committed to the letter of their profession's code and seemed to feel quite comfortable with using their personal judgment about how to relate to others when interpreting. Lucy, for example, was assigned to work long hours for many days with a suspected terrorist during police interrogations and in court. Despite her suspicion that the accused man might have planned atrocities in the area where she lived, she came to develop a relaxed demeanour with him, even discussing 'poetry and French cuisine and whatever else' with him during breaks in proceedings – a clear breach of the code, and which prompted the police and their lawyers to complain to her. Her response to them, however, seemed to take her further still from the PSI protocols:

I said to them, 'Well, you may not realise this, but the more you get a good relationship going between the interpreter and the person they're interpreting for, the better your interpreting is gonna be, and probably from a legal and police point of view they are going to be much more forthcoming if they are relaxed, if they are OK with the people around them, including the interpreter.'

Samir also disregarded the code in the belief that this allowed him to do a better job of interpreting. He routinely turned up early when booked for medical appointments, with a view to asking the patients about their medical history and condition, ostensibly in order to be able to check any difficult vocabulary before the consultation began.

If the patient is there, they [*hospital staff*] would point out to the patient and say: 'This is your patient, this is your case' and then it's entirely up to me whether I go and sit with them and have a chat to try to get familiar with the condition or sit somewhere else and walk into the room when they are called in.

His rationale was that these conversations were not in breach of the code, because they consisted of background preparation for the interpreted interaction. Lauryne acted similarly in medical contexts, not just to ensure background knowledge, but also because – particularly in mental health settings – she felt it was important for the patients to have the PSI develop a trusting and supportive rapport with them.

Here, we could say that the PSIs are perhaps investing more commitment in the 'stakes' that drove the formation of PSI in the first place, but which are less prominent in the profession's own rubrics: political and ethical concerns for immigrants' human rights and equitable access to services. Where they sense that these broader 'objects of value' might not best be served by those promoted by the code, their *illusio* in it is weak, and their personal judgment supplants it.

Conflict of illusio with established professions

Even where PSIs' *illusio* in the code was strong, they gave many examples of how this could be overridden by the actions of the established professions with which they were working. This was particularly the case when unpredictable turns of events meant that service providers had to respond rapidly and intuitively to an unfolding situation.

Monika tells a powerful story of how she was assigned as PSI to attend a maternity ward. The appointment for which she was booked was only supposed to take an hour, but due to complications and the need for the medical staff to communicate throughout with the patient, she was actually needed for ten hours. When the patient's husband felt too nervous to go into the operating room with his wife, the medical team asked Monika to go instead, and despite her efforts to 'tactfully stay out of the way', she was eventually hauled out of 'invisibility' most abruptly:

When the baby was born, they showed her [*the mother*] the baby, they went to clean it and they brought it back and she was actually still shaking, you know from the drugs and things, and she couldn't hold the baby, so they gave it to me, because I was closest to mum. I was sitting at her head, right by her side, so they gave me the baby to hold, so that she could see it, be as close to her as possible.

This might be seen as a relatively benign instance of another profession's practices sweeping aside the PSI's *illusio* in their code, but Monika also offered a more adversarial example from a courtroom encounter with a lawyer, one of the higher-status 'classic' professions. Although the PSI is bound to give complete and accurate simultaneous interpretations of others' speech to the defendant – as we have already noted, demanding an extremely high level of technical and linguistic knowledge and skills – many of them complained about other professionals' lack of awareness of the difficulties created for them by, for example, others speaking very fast and without pause. Monika found herself in this situation with one lawyer: 'Even though I'm fast, it was not possible to keep up at the speed that he was going at'. Worried about failing to give a complete interpretation to the defendant, she was provoked to breach the court protocol of asking the judge to intervene:

I did actually just look round the corner and asked the lawyer to slow down, and he was quite gobsmacked and said: [*in an incredulous and indignant tone*] 'Slow down?!' He didn't expect me to have the impertinence to ask this.

Not only does this exemplify others' privileging of their own *illusio* and disregard for the *illusio* of PSIs, even though legislation might on paper oblige those services to uphold the interpreters' code, it could also be seen as a strongly hierarchical assertion of superiority and power by the lawyer, ridiculing the PSI in front of the court as she had technically breached its protocols.

Alongside Monika's contrasting experiences, there are many more examples in our data from other PSIs about being expected by service providers to comfort or advise clients, interpret for parties other than their assignment, interview defendants, take witness statements, and examine evidence such as identity cards. Whilst in some cases, as in Oliver's above, PSIs can resist this by citing their Code of Professional Conduct, they are often under considerable pressure to comply – not least because they are being paid by the service providers and because their highly casualised status means they do not wish to get a reputation for being 'uncooperative'.

Disappearing grounds for illusio: the rise and fall of new hybrid professions?

The fragility of such new hybrid professions – not just of their *illusio*, but their very existence – is also important to acknowledge here. Colley (2012) discussed the demise of a new hybrid profession in youth support work (Personal Advisers, a profession established in the UK only in 2001) as austerity policies first drastically reduced the resources for their service and the Conservative-led coalition elected in 2010 then decided to withdraw all national funding for youth advice and guidance. These practitioners' *illusio* was shattered as the targets for their work shifted far from the outcomes they valued in their work with young people. But eventually the entire field of their work was erased.

A similar process has affected PSIs in Britain since our research was conducted, and since economic austerity measures were introduced after the global economic crisis struck in 2008, and which bear out Gale and Densmore's (2003) observations on the centrality of capitalism's role in undermining public service professions. On the financial front, the government has sought to cut costs by using commercial agencies instead of the national register to source PSIs, with much lower pay rates and even worse working conditions. At the same time, public services experiencing harsh cutbacks can no longer afford to employ PSIs as frequently, and are reverting to reliance on unpaid, untrained community and family members to interpret. On the political front, the Conservative-led government has also shifted away from a multicultural strategy. With targets for a significant reduction of immigration into Britain and a return to a politics of assimilation, politicians and the media have launched attacks on public service interpreting as a supposedly spiralling cost burden on the taxpayer (Tipton, 2012). A question mark hangs over the very fate of the profession, one which must also make it difficult for PSIs to invest their *illusio* in this work. Indeed, as with the Personal Advisers discussed by Colley (2012), a number of the PSIs who participated in this research had decided to quit the profession. We can also see, then, that the apparatus of a profession cannot protect it, or the *illusio* of its members, from the 'cross-field effects' (Rawolle, 2005) arising from the field of power (by which we largely mean the global economy), and from the fields of politics and the media.

How, then, can we make sense of the uneven *illusio* revealed in the professional learning and experiences of PSIs?

Using the concept of illusio to make sense of new hybrid professions

For Bourdieu, it is *illusio* which enables practice, by articulating *habitus* with 'field': the concept explains how it is that players engage in any particular 'game'. The data we have presented here

illustrate well his point about the potential weakness of *illusio* for those who sense they are somehow out of kilter with the objects of value that are at stake within the field. They also illustrate how complex this question is for PSIs, since they are always participating in others' fields. Indeed, it highlights the fact that PSI cannot constitute a field in its own right: it may be a distinct set of practices, but it has no relative autonomy, and could not sustain itself outside of other fields. This inherent precarity is one of its distinctive, though highly marginalising, characteristics.

The official protocols of the new public service interpreting profession itself are rigid: strict imperatives are learned on training courses and promoted in legislation as well as in the NPRSI Code of Professional Conduct. But despite this rigidity, they are not strong: the formal training and guidelines are not able to generate a consistently committed *illusio*. Our data suggest two main reasons for this. First, the focus on excellent linguistic techniques, the impossible ideal of the PSI as an 'invisible' non-social participant in interactions that are inevitably (and sometimes intensely) social, and the emphasis on an ethically impartial stance may all be matters of indifference to service providers and users, who primarily desire allegiance to the stakes of the service's field from PSIs. Second, many PSIs invest much of their *illusio* in values linked to the original political drivers for their profession – human rights and fair access to public services for immigrants – which are far less prominent in its formal reifications; these are not necessarily espoused as valued 'stakes' by the established professionals with whom PSIs work. PSIs in turn do not always embrace the valued 'stakes' of these other fields, but are nevertheless caught up in those 'games': police and prosecution lawyers are interested in getting an accused person convicted; immigration authorities are trying to limit the numbers of other nationals who can legally come to Britain. However, these professions enjoy dominant positions *vis-à-vis* PSIs, since interpreters have to work on those others' terrain, are paid by their services, and are freelancers dependent on them for future work. This in turn has two consequences relating to social justice. First, PSIs are excluded from involvement in decision-making within the fields in which they work: their professional expertise and their values are largely disregarded. Second, this increasingly goes hand in hand with a political disregard for the needs of some of the most disadvantaged public service users, *including* their need to access professional interpreters in order to have fair access to the services themselves. Such critical concerns for social justice, both in relation to practitioners and in relation to service users, should be at the heart of rethinking how public services might be governed and delivered (Gale and Densmore, 2003).

The weakness of PSIs' *illusio* in their profession may be seen, then, in part at least, as a result of its newness, an expression of its recent and rapid formation. It may also be an expression of its *dual hybridity*. It is hybrid not only in the primary sense that Noordegraaf (2007) suggests, as a lower-status occupation now badged as a profession, where hybridity relates to different *levels* of occupational status. It can also be seen as a 'mixed-up' profession (Noordegraaf, 2007), one in which its practitioners have to learn to practice always within other professional fields, and with very limited autonomy. In this respect, hybridity relates to *types* of occupation and role – detective, interrogator, birth partner, comforter, legal secretary – that may be evoked in addition to or in conflict with their official code of practice as well as PSIs' own personal and professional values. All of this is compounded in Britain by economic and political threats to the very existence of public service interpreting.

Whilst PSIs engage in a very particular practice and constitute a somewhat extreme example of a new hybrid profession, we argue that our analysis has a broader relevance to other such groups. Whether considering teaching assistants, paralegals, paramedics, learning mentors or others, a focus on *illusio* can help to understand the degree of ‘homology between the space of positions and the space of dispositions’ (Bourdieu, 2000, p.157). This entails analysing hybrid professionals’ learning (both formal training and informal workplace learning), the nature of their interactions with established professions, the hierarchical occupation of terrain in the field(s) in which they practice, and the extent to which new hybrid professionals ‘fit’ or find themselves ‘out on a limb’.

There is an extensive research agenda here to be addressed. We suggest that it should follow particular directions. First, research on professionalism and on professional practice and learning needs to extend its remit far more comprehensively to the new ‘hybrid’ professions that are currently developing, especially in public services, rather than continuing to confine itself to established professions. In particular, it should investigate the nature of social practices and power relations generated between ‘hybrid’ professionals, established professionals, students/clients/patients and their families and communities. Second, such studies could usefully look beyond research on specific professions, to draw also on the wider literature on workplace learning and the attention which that literature pays to hidden forms of work around aspects such as boundaries, ethics and emotion. Third, this research needs to adopt a critical stance, which examines wider socio-economic influences on the shifting landscape of public service provision and the workforce that delivers it, as well as seeking to understand more democratic ways in which all service providers, practitioners and users may shape the future of those services. Research users should in turn base policy and practice on such evidence and understanding. Only in these ways can some of the most crucial interactions with the state in people’s lives be placed on a more socially just footing.

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