Illusio and disillusionment: expectations met or disappointed among young journalists

Daniel Nölleke, Phoebe Maares and Folker Hanusch
University of Vienna, Austria

Abstract
Recent developments in journalism seemingly curtail a satisfying work environment and contribute to journalists experiencing discrepancies between initial job expectations and actual day-to-day practices. This can lead to disillusionment, challenging journalists’ dedication to their job. Research indicates that young journalists are particularly affected by the symptoms of the journalistic crisis and thus exhibit low job commitment. This study examines the extent to which their initial job motivations and expectations are met or disappointed in practice. We apply Bourdieu’s concept of illusio to advance our understanding of expectations and experiences in the journalistic field and as an explanation for why journalists tend to remain in the profession. Based on in-depth interviews with 40 Austrian journalists we found that autonomy constitutes a key facet of the field’s illusio, both as an ideal of journalistic work, as well as the superior reason to become a journalist despite the awareness of financial drawbacks. While respondents are disillusioned by the lack of autonomous decision-making in everyday work, they still adhere to the ideal of acting as autonomous providers of information and thus remain in the profession. Crucially, they believe that accepting periods of precarity, as well as less autonomous work empowers them to better contribute to journalism’s societal mission.

Keywords
Autonomy, field theory, in-depth interviews, illusio, job expectations, journalistic work, young journalists

Corresponding author:
Daniel Nölleke, Department of Communication, University of Vienna, Währinger Strasse 29, Vienna 1090, Austria.
Email: daniel.noelleke@univie.ac.at
**Introduction**

Technological change has dramatically affected journalistic news production over the past two decades and largely contributed to a so-called crisis of journalism (Anderson, 2017; Franklin, 2012). This crisis fundamentally endangers journalism’s role as an authoritative source in contemporary societies (Carlson, 2007, 2015; Deuze, 2005) and challenges traditional business models of news organizations (Fletcher and Nielsen, 2017; Sjøvaag, 2016). Moreover, it strongly affects individual journalists and their professional practices (Ekdale et al., 2015; Reinardy, 2011). Three key inter-connected developments are at the heart of this crisis: economic constraints, technological disruption, and societal attitudes.

Economic constraints imply a high level of permanent uncertainty for individual news workers (Barnes and De Villiers Scheepers, 2018; Ekdale et al., 2015) and gaining employment in mainstream journalism has become increasingly difficult (Hummel et al., 2012), while job loss is an omnipresent threat for journalists throughout their careers (Cohen et al., 2019). Moreover, the field is witnessing an ongoing shift toward precarious employment (Ekdale et al., 2015; Gollmitzer, 2014; Örnebring and Conill, 2016). Technological transformations have fostered newsroom convergence and a 24/7 news environment which has increased workloads (Seethaler, 2017), leading to stress, emotional exhaustion, and burnout among journalists (Reinardy, 2011). In addition, studies report a decline in public trust in the news media across societies (Fink, 2019; Kiousis, 2001; Lewis, 2019; Newman et al., 2019). Hence, while striving for public prestige has been found to be a major motivation to pursue a journalistic career (Hanusch et al., 2015), journalists are faced with increasing audience hostility (Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring, 2016; Post and Kepplinger, 2019).

Taken together, these developments in journalism seemingly curtail a satisfying work environment which, ultimately, may make the pursuit of a journalistic career less appealing. Yet, we still have an incomplete understanding of the extent to which individual journalists’ experiences during a time of crisis in journalism meet their prior expectations and the role that disenchantment – or lack thereof – may play in their job commitment. We address the relationship between expectations and experiences by applying a field-theoretical framework (Bourdieu, 1996, 1998a) and, more precisely, through the conceptual prism of illusio. The concept encapsulates individuals’ aspirations and investment in a field, such as the journalistic field, as a belief ‘that the game is worth playing’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 98). The impression that the journalistic crisis causes journalists to invest themselves less and less in the field is thus at the heart of what the concept of illusio is concerned with. Hence, we explore how it might help us explain the relation between job experiences and prior expectations and how commitment and intensity toward illusio might strengthen job commitment even though expectations were disappointed. As such, we employ the concept to uncover what being a journalist actually means to young professionals in challenging times.

We focus on young journalists who started a journalistic career despite the obvious downsides, addressing how the perception of a journalism crisis affects the assessments of experiences on the job. Our research is additionally informed by the ‘space of journalistic work’ – a model introduced by Örnebring et al. (2018) which adapts Bourdieusian
field theory and emphasizes the need to pay closer attention to the material conditions of journalistic work, that is the access to resources and material security along with journalistic renown. We utilize this model ‘as a heuristic tool’ and ‘to better understand the challenges and changes that journalism faces’ (Örnebring et al., 2018: 4), by focusing our research on young journalists with high status in the field (indicated by being awarded a journalistic prize).

That way, we take account of the fact that even journalists with a high level of journalistic capital, or prestige, do not necessarily experience ideal working conditions. Researching awarded journalists allows us to illuminate how aspects other than journalistic capital (i.e. the crisis symptoms introduced above) shape journalists’ assessments of their experiences on the job.

Literature review

Job motivations and expectations as the field’s illusion

Over the past few decades, and even during the crisis of journalism, the number of university journalism programs globally has increased exponentially (Mellado and Scherman, 2017; Terzis, 2009), even though not all journalism students actually aspire to work in journalism (Hanna and Sanders, 2007; Hanusch et al., 2015). Those who study journalism are commonly motivated by three key reasons: Students perceive journalism as an interesting profession, consider themselves talented in writing, and strive to contribute to society (Hanusch et al., 2015). These motivations are closely linked to aspiring journalists’ expectations, which can be divided into practical, idealistic, and personal anticipations (Hovden et al., 2009). For instance, British journalism students appear to be motivated predominantly by personal and practical motives such as the job’s fit to their personality and talents, as well as their perception of journalism as interesting and diversified work. For them, idealistic motives like public service traditionally play a minor role (Boyd-Barrett, 1970; Hanna and Sanders, 2007). In contrast, journalism students in Nordic countries support the public service ideal more strongly (Hovden et al., 2009). Comparative evidence suggests considerable differences in journalism students’ professional views across different countries: Whereas students in Ibero-American countries have a strong devotion to addressing audiences as citizens, students in Western developed countries give great importance to consumer orientation, while still valuing their countries’ tradition of watchdog journalism (Mellado et al., 2013).

Regarding job expectations, journalism students across the globe focus mostly on personal achievements such as career advancement, public prestige, and the level of autonomy, while also expressing altruistic desires to serve society (Hanusch et al., 2015). Notably, previous research suggests that aspiring journalists have internalized the narrative of journalism’s economic crisis and are thus aware of financial uncertainty and assess future working conditions realistically. Still, they are more optimistic than pessimistic about their future (Williams et al., 2018). Journalists are aware of the profession’s downsides such as low wages, stress, and incompatibility with family life, however, they still call journalism a ‘dream job’ for its varied work and public respect (Hummel et al., 2012: 725). Studies also suggest that journalists exhibit strong commitment despite
experiencing the work as stressful and with insecure career prospects (Cohen et al., 2019). Apparently, journalists believe in the higher purpose of their profession despite the drawbacks in their everyday work.

From a field-theoretical perspective, these pre-existing ideas of what the field entails and the beliefs about why it is worth pursuing can be conceptualized as *illusio* (Bourdieu, 1996). Broadly, the term refers to why members of a field invest themselves in it and what is at stake for them. Using the analogy of a game to describe a field, Bourdieu (1996: 228) conceptualizes illusio as an ‘interested participation in the game’. Illusio is frequently used to understand aspirations, especially of young people, and how class, gender, ethnicity, and more, can provoke reflexivity and affect the intensity of and commitment to this belief in the game (Threadgold, 2018). Interested participation is established in a relationship between a habitus and a field (Bourdieu, 1996). In that sense, it suggests that individual desires, needs, and interests to join the game are shaped by knowledge from within the field. In other words, the motivation to invest oneself in it is based on the knowledge about the game and is, hence, a product of the field (Bourdieu, 1998a). Moreover, pre-existing dispositions make it easier to establish a specific interest in the game, that is beliefs about the value of a field can already be formed before entry and inform expectations about the field (Bourdieu, 1998b). Although theoretically located between individuals and the field, illusio can also be analytically assessed on the level of individual actors and by relating (job) motivations, (job) expectations, and the understanding of the field. Bourdieu’s metaphor of the game refers to the struggle for the most advantageous positions within the field which includes being able to impose and legitimize definitions of what constitutes the field and who belongs to it (*nomos*), as well as which truths and rules are taken for granted (*doxa*). Doxa refers to intuitive knowledge about the rules of the game shaped by experience. It denotes the unquestioned shared beliefs constitutive of a field (Bourdieu, 1977).

The ‘game’ is facilitated by means of different resources, in Bourdieusian terms called forms of *capital*, namely economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). To participate in a professional field, agents therefore need to possess some form of material assets, knowledge both in cultivation and educational credentials, connections with other members of the field, and social recognition. Depending on which of these resources are more valued in the field, agents are able to occupy more powerful positions and thus contribute to the hegemonic power over what constitutes nomos and doxa (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Moreover, the overall access to resources also influences to what degree individuals persist in realizing their aspirations and, thus, how much time and resources (commitment to illusio) they invest, as well as how much they reflect on and change their strategies (awareness toward illusio (Threadgold, 2018)).

Bourdieu’s concepts have in recent years attracted considerable attention in journalism scholarship (for example, Benson and Neveu, 2005; Hovden, 2012; Schultz, 2007; Willig, 2013). At the same time, most studies have focused particularly on the concepts of field, the various forms of capital, and habitus, while a small number of studies have employed the concept of doxa. Much more rarely have journalism scholars focused on illusio as embodying the reasons for why journalists commit to the journalistic field and the struggles within it in the first place (Maares and Hanusch, 2018).
In one of the few studies exploring journalistic illusio, the concept has been described as ‘the unquestionable conviction that the journalistic game is worth playing’ (Willig, 2013: 374). In some cases, this resembles a ‘strong feeling’ for the journalistic mission (Hovden, 2012: 67) or playing an important societal role as watchdog (Hummel et al., 2012), but, as past research has pointed out, the reasons can also be less idealistic and more closely connected to personal expectations and preferences, such as simply wanting to pursue a varied career or working in a prestigious field (Hummel et al., 2012). Hence, the concept of illusio could explain the relatively high level of commitment to journalistic work despite precarious circumstances (Cohen et al., 2019; Hummel et al., 2012; O’Donnell, 2017; Reinardy, 2011). Applying Bourdieu’s terminology, Hummel et al. (2012) conclude that journalism’s illusio is strong enough to keep journalists in the field despite its drawbacks. As such, illusio also acts as a force of preservation of power relations and inequalities (Vos et al., 2012). Apparently, aspiring and active journalists expect and experience gratifications that can explain why they involve themselves in the field’s struggles in the first place. However, this is only one side of the coin and does not hold true for every journalist. In fact, for many, disillusionment, or an ‘ironic disposition’ toward illusio (Threadgold, 2018, 46) – that is, a reflexive awareness of the game and its absurdities – has become a common experience.

Disillusionment

Power relations in the journalistic field are structured both by internal and external hierarchization (Bourdieu, 1996). The first refers to the dominance of those who achieve what is internally valued (i.e. investigative reporting, contributing to the social mission of journalism), while the latter describes the influence from other fields, for instance the economic field (such as profit expectations of media companies and needs of advertisers), which has always affected individuals and organizations in journalism. When external hierarchization is experienced too strongly by aspiring individuals such as journalists entering the field, it can modify their illusio in a way that it is more in line with external, for instance economic, logics (Bourdieu, 1993, 1996). Indeed, journalism scholarship indicates that recent developments in journalism put limits on journalists’ job commitment and they experience disillusionment and disenchantment when their ideals clash with day-to-day work (Goyanes and Rodríguez-Gómez, 2018; Johnstone et al., 1976). Recognizing such discrepancies leads to disappointment and makes journalists question their dedication to the industry.

First and foremost, the feeling of permanent job insecurity contributes to these doubts (Gollmitzer, 2014). To stay competitive in a changing business environment, news organizations have adjusted their structures and staffing levels (Goyanes and Rodríguez-Gómez, 2018), increasing the uncertainty of journalists’ career prospects (Deuze, 2007). Reinardy (2011) found that such an environment of job insecurity negatively affects job satisfaction and, hence, journalistic performance. Journalists who believe their careers are at risk are unlikely to alter their practices (Ekdale et al., 2015). Moreover, disillusion is also triggered by disappointment with day-to-day working conditions and lacking appreciation. For instance, Nikunen (2014) found that especially older journalists struggle to maintain their professional self-perception when they experience difficulties keeping up with the demands of a technology-centered newsroom structure.
However, studies indicate lower levels of job satisfaction among younger rather than older journalists (Johnstone et al., 1976; Reinardy, 2011). Young journalists feel ‘exasperated’ (Reinardy, 2011: 47) by intense pressures in digitized work environments and are more likely to suffer from burnout. Nikunen (2014) detects frustration among younger journalists as current restrictions make it impossible for them to focus on news gathering. Journalists interviewed by Goyanes and Rodríguez-Gómez (2018) were concerned that present circumstances make it increasingly difficult to reach high quality standards. Even journalism students seem to already be aware of these constraints: While they aspire to fulfill a watchdog role in society, they fear that achieving this ideal will be hampered by the constraints of ethical standards and the objectivity norm (Williams et al., 2018).

In summary, young journalists experience limits to their professional autonomy in their everyday work practice, which – given that autonomy is closely linked to job satisfaction (Von Rimscha, 2015; Willnat et al., 2013) – leads to dissatisfaction. Their expectations and motivations to involve themselves in the field’s struggles – their illusio of journalism – are disappointed. Recognizing such discrepancies between expectations and experiences puts their commitment at stake and, ultimately, calls their future in journalism into question. For them, the game may no longer be worth playing. Indeed, studies reveal that young journalists are more likely to consider leaving the field than to stay and work under precarious conditions (Gollmitzer, 2014). Journalism research and education have both recognized this risk, and aimed to identify skills that could better prepare them for the current requirements of the profession. Besides classic journalistic skills, scholars have explored aspects outside such core practices (Drok, 2013).

Hence, studying young journalists promises rich insights into the current challenges of the profession (O’Donnell, 2017). Only by relating specific expectations to experiences can we identify whether the illusio (and, perhaps more importantly, what kind of illusio) is confirmed after successful entry to the field, or what aspects have contributed to experiencing disillusionment, and thus a more ironic awareness of illusio. Moreover, we can assess whether young journalists as new entrants to the field challenge the illusio of the societal mission of journalism, as well as the ‘natural’ rules (doxa) that protect this illusio, or whether they reproduce it and thus reinforce existing power relations. Hence, we can explore whether young journalists’ illusio changes with experience and to what extent high amounts of journalistic capital benefit reproducing the dominant illusio.

Moreover, as we argued earlier, the current crisis of journalism is likely to foster the disenchantment of young journalists and leads them to question their remaining in the profession. However, we have little understanding about whether young journalists perceive journalism to be in a crisis and, if so, whether they relate their experiences to this perceived crisis.

From these assumptions, we derive our research question:

RQ: To what extent are young journalists’ prior expectations and motivations met or disappointed in everyday professional life and how is this affected by perceived symptoms of a journalism crisis?
Method

To answer our research question, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 40 young Austrian journalists. The qualitative research design allows us to closely relate prior expectations to actual experiences and to investigate how perceived discrepancies or consonance affect individual job commitment and satisfaction. Our sampling was informed by two crucial theory-driven assumptions. First – as explained earlier – we decided to study young journalists. Second, we used the ‘space of journalistic work’ (Örnebring et al., 2018) as a heuristic tool and focused on journalists with considerable reputation in the field to illuminate how aspects apart from valued journalistic expertise shape the assessment of day-to-day experiences. Using Örnebring et al.’s (2018) framework, we studied journalists with high journalistic capital and, consequently, interviewed young journalists who had been awarded a journalistic prize. We referred to an award by the Austrian industry magazine Der Österreichische Journalist [The Austrian Journalist] which chooses a list of ‘Top 30 under 30’ Austrian journalists once a year. Since the prize was first introduced in 2011, the outlet has awarded 180 young journalists in total. Hence, the awardees meet our criteria of being both comparatively young and reputable in the field. They were nominated by industry members, usually by their employer’s editorial board, for their work in general and not for individual pieces of journalistic work. While the significance of awards may be discussed controversially (Jenkins and Volz, 2018), this procedure indicates a rather stable reputation within their newsrooms and the industry.

Austria’s media system resembles systems in many other Western democracies. It is characterized by a co-existence of public service and private broadcasters, although the relatively late entrance of private broadcasters has barely affected the dominance of the public broadcast service ORF (Steinmaurer, 2009). Almost half of the market share is controlled by two media organizations, namely the public broadcaster and the tabloid newspaper Kronenzeitung (GMMP, 2015). Further, Austria’s media system is experiencing many of the symptoms of the crisis of journalism discussed earlier. Public trust in journalism is decreasing (Gadringer et al., 2019), and the journalism job market is particularly competitive (Hummel et al., 2012: 722). Moreover, the media landscape of Austria is characterized by its concentration in and around the capital Vienna, with approximately 70 percent of the country’s journalists working in the city or surrounding areas. For young journalists from outside the area this requires a willingness and ability to be mobile.

For this study, we identified 40 respondents following a structured but randomized sample. Hence, we chose a roughly similar number of journalists from each of the six cohorts, and ensured an equal share of male and female journalists. Within cohort and gender criteria, sampling was random. When they were chosen as one of the Top 30 under 30, our respondents were aged between 20 and 29. Half of them worked (primarily) for print media, five for TV, and six for radio programs; eight were employed by online outlets and one by a news agency. In terms of education, half of the respondents had finished a specific journalism degree at a university of applied sciences, while the rest had pursued other university degrees or started working as a journalist right after completing secondary education. When we conducted our interviews, the youngest
respondent was 24 years old, the oldest 37. At the time of the interviews, all our respondents still worked as journalists, and most had remained at the news outlet they worked for when winning the award. Thirty respondents were in stable employment. Thus, most had reached higher material security at the time of the interviews, another dimension in the space of journalistic work that posits them in the more dominant sphere (Örnebring et al., 2018).

Interviews were conducted by trained graduate students in December 2018 and January 2019; 30 were conducted face-to-face and 10 via telephone. We used an interview guide with open-ended questions covering issues related to our research questions. The interview guide was developed jointly during a master seminar under the supervision of the authors. From our theoretical considerations on job expectations, work experiences in times of crisis, as well as job satisfaction we deduced more specific supplementary questions in order to ensure that respondents addressed all relevant issues. On average, the interviews lasted 45 minutes, were recorded and transcribed by the students and thematically analyzed by the authors of this article, using MAXQDA software. Through an inductive approach we identified emergent themes related to expectations, experiences, and assessments of crisis. In addition, we derived categories from theory to examine the meaning of aspects which we anticipated based on our literature review.

Results and discussion

Job motivations and expectations

When asked why they originally pursued a journalistic career, our respondents’ narratives widely resonate with previous studies on job motivations and expectations (Hanusch et al., 2015; Hanna and Sanders, 2007; Hovden et al., 2009). Most importantly, they wanted to put their talent and interest to write into practice. Some remembered that teachers and relatives noticed their talents early on and urged them to start a journalistic career. One interviewee remembered: ‘My German teacher always told me that I should somehow try journalism because I can write’ (2016, m_4). Apart from the talent to write, which nearly every respondent mentioned, some referred to a further communicative competence, namely their ability to deal with strangers: ‘Well, I’ve always been very communicative. Whenever anyone had to be approached on the street, they always sent me’ (2013, f_3). Besides such practical motives, they also highlighted idealistic ones. Most mentioned aspects that relate to the watchdog function of journalism: Respondents originally strived to control the powerful, to uncover and draw attention to social grievances, to give a voice to the underprivileged, to change society, and to explain complex relationships.

These prevailing practical and idealistic motives of contributing talent and serving society relate to what Hovden (2012) calls the strong illusion of the field. Apart from communicative competences, respondents mentioned further practical reasons that motivated them to pursue a journalistic career. Similar to findings by Hanusch et al. (2015), they simply perceived journalism as an interesting job. When asked to elaborate, interviewees referred to their initial perception of journalism as a diverse profession. Moreover, many described themselves as ‘naturally’ curious and, hence, stated that they were motivated by
the expectation to look behind the scenes. Said one respondent: ‘As a teenager I already had this image of journalists who attend each and every Formula 1 grand prix, important football matches, big tennis matches’ (2011, m_3). Some of the young journalists referred to their interest in politics that motivated them to strive for a journalistic career.

When further asked about their personal motives, very few journalists conceded personal objectives such as longing for public prestige. As an exception, one journalist stated: ‘I’d be lying if I said that you do the job out of pure idealism, that you’re not vain at all and you don’t do it for prestige. That’s not true, of course’ (2017, m_3). While previous studies found future journalists’ expectation to accumulate public prestige a major job motivation (Hanusch et al., 2015), our respondents rarely refer to prestige. This finding might be an indicator for young journalists’ awareness of public skepticism about legacy news media. Less surprisingly – and in line with previous studies – not a single respondent referred to financial aspects as a motivation to follow a journalistic career.

As we were not only interested in job motivations but also in further job expectations, we addressed such possible downsides of journalistic work through supplementary questions and asked respondents about their expectations regarding salary, job security, reconcilability of family and work, and public trust. Most respondents admitted they had not thought properly about such downsides or suggested these issues were not important to them when they made the decision. For example, when prompted to elaborate on prior expectations about the possibility to reconcile family and work, respondents showed awareness for the topic but pointed out that, for them, starting a family was not a primary goal when they pursued journalism, and in some cases still was not. This applies to both women and men. With regard to the potential downsides, our respondents had only developed clear expectations about the financial aspects of being a journalist over time. Many of them said they were aware of the difficult job entry, job insecurity, and low and irregular income, especially as a freelance journalist. Interestingly, most had learned about these insecure and precarious job prospects during their studies. Some said they were explicitly urged to reconsider starting a journalistic career: ‘During our studies we were always told that we wouldn’t find a job and that everything would be terrible’ (2017, f_1). ‘I used to hear it all the time when I was studying journalism: “You’re too many, you’re just a number. You can forget journalism anyway; you’ll never make it”’ (2016, f_1). Apparently, our respondents were advised against pursuing the career confirming the finding that journalism students are intensely warned of the death of the industry (Williams et al., 2018). This might explain why Hanna and Sanders (2007) found that students’ interest in starting a journalistic career decreases in the course of their studies. Yet, our respondents ignored this advice. For them, their interests were stronger than concerns about insecurity and precarity. Still, in retrospect, many respondents admitted that, at the start of their career, they worried about their future prospects. Some developed alternative plans in case they failed in journalism, which might hint at some level of pragmatism engaging in the field’s struggle.

By examining young journalists’ original job motivations and expectations an understanding of journalistic practice emerges which can be considered as benchmark for their assessment of actual work experiences. We can conclude that interviewees assign journalism a crucial role in democratic societies. Many were motivated by providing
public service. As this outweighs the expected financial downsides and explains why our respondents involve themselves in the field’s struggles (which they were partly aware of), the contribution to society forms an essential part of our respondents’ illusio of journalism. Their focus on the normative function of journalism was especially evident when they talked about the perceived significance of journalism in modern times. In this regard, all respondents stressed the profession’s crucial role for democratic societies.

But strikingly, the reputable young journalists were initially not only motivated by contributing to democratic societies but also by their expectation to follow personal interests and skills, such as their talent to write, communicative competences, curiosity, and political interests. Yet what all of these motives have in common, is that they actually refer to a much bigger concept – which is autonomy (Sjøvaag, 2020). Respondents expected autonomy from external interferences by political and economic interests (endangering the contribution to democratic societies) as well as from internal constraints in the newsroom (endangering the realization of individual interests and talents). Hence, autonomy appears to be the major underlying motivation for our respondents’ decision to start a journalistic career. Consequently, it constitutes a key facet of the field’s illusio, as it is the superior reason to become a journalist despite the awareness of job insecurity and financial downsides.

**Fulfilment and disappointment of expectations**

But are these expectations fulfilled in day-to-day practices? As we argued above, this appears doubtful as we witness a time of journalism crisis which does not only lead to increasing job insecurity but also fosters economic constraints in the newsroom, increases workloads, and is characterized by a decline of public trust in journalism. Thus, we assume discrepancies between prior expectations and actual experiences. Of course, this is only true for the disappointment of positive expectations – which we have conceptualized as the respondents’ illusio of journalism. It is not very likely that respondents will experience disillusionment when they realize that their concerns regarding salary and uncertainty are in fact not met.

Indeed, our respondents clearly pointed out that not all of their prior expectations were fulfilled once they worked in journalism. However, their explicit references toward suffering disillusionment remained rare exceptions. One journalist stated: ‘When one deals with [journalistic practices] for the first time, initially disillusionment arises’ (2017, f_3). A second journalist reported: ‘When you get a little older you notice that very often you don’t have time to complete a story. Then you get a bit disillusioned’ (2013, f_4). A third journalist stressed that – contrary to her expectations – journalism was ‘not romantic at all’ (2016, f_2). Crucially, disillusionment refers to the level of autonomy which is lower than young journalists initially expected and hoped for. This corresponds with survey results that point to decreasing autonomy in journalism (Willnat et al., 2013). This lack of autonomy relates to several facets of prior expectations: Most importantly, respondents quickly realized that their potential to affect society positively was limited. As one journalist puts it: ‘You’re a young journalist and you think you can change the world. And then you realize, well, you don’t actually change the world at all’ (2016, m_3). Similarly,
another journalist said: ‘You can report about everything, but it doesn’t change much or anything. You don’t feel the effect directly’ (2015, m_1).

Moreover, young journalists find that journalistic practice is far less autonomous than they originally expected. In that regard, they refer to editorial guidelines, time pressure, and economic constraints that put limits on realizing individual desires. Our respondents reported that – contrary to their expectations – it was not possible for them to regularly implement their own ideas. For some, disappointment of expectations also refers to the assumption of journalism as a varied job. For example, journalists originally expected to work not only at their desks. As one respondent put it: ‘And I would have imagined that you would be on the road more, too. And not spending 90 percent of your time in the office’ (2015, m_2). Our respondents indeed recognized discrepancies between their prior expectations and actual experiences. However, this did not lead them to question their decision to work in journalism. On the contrary, they highlighted that they would make the same decision again, as it is an honorable occupation and the work worthwhile. As an exception, one journalist stated: ‘So, what now? Am I going to keep this up for 20 years now? And then, I started to think: “Hm, why am I doing this?” and “Okay, it’s cool, but somehow I can’t achieve what I initially wanted to”’ (2016, m_2). Others blamed themselves for their naïve and unrealistic expectations when they started out.

In summary, our respondents experienced certain discrepancies between expectations and day-to-day practice which mostly relate to the difference of expected and experienced autonomy. They regret a low degree of autonomy but still accept it as an important facet to make journalistic work manageable. Crucially, they do not question their decision, although most of them admit some degree of disenchantment. As an exception, only one journalist explicitly stated that he now had a ‘much more romantic idea of journalism’ (2016, m_4). Still, other journalists were also pleased with their work even when acknowledging drawbacks with regard to autonomy. Whereas Goyanes and Rodríguez-Gómez (2018) found that realizing discrepancies between expectations and experiences puts job satisfaction at stake and, hence, challenges job commitment and journalists’ dedication to stay in the field, our respondents demonstrated high degrees of job commitment. This may be due to the fact that the majority of our respondents were in permanent employment at the time of the interview, contrary to their own initial expectations. They called themselves ‘privileged’ as they did not (or at least no longer) have to worry about salary and job insecurity. Regardless of gender, most also stated that employment contracts allowed them to reconcile family and work, which challenges previous research that suggests that female journalists perceive the journalistic profession as largely incompatible with motherhood (see, for example, North, 2016).

Hence, our findings suggest that high status in the field (journalistic capital) as well as material security facilitate mechanisms to cope with the disappointment of individual expectations. Even though our respondents experienced disenchantment with regard to autonomy, they did not doubt they would remain in the job. While we assumed that symptoms of the crisis of journalism would compromise a satisfying work environment and foster disillusionment, our respondents did not currently express a decrease in the appeal of journalistic work. This suggests that disillusionment can be perceived as an awareness of the game at play rather than as indifference to the game and reiterates Threadgold’s (2018) argument that material security supports higher commitment to illusion.
Whereas young journalists recognized challenges with regard to business models and public trust, they also predominantly assessed the profession’s future optimistically. Rather than a crisis of journalism, our respondents perceived a ‘crisis of old media’ (2016, m_1) and stressed that ‘each crisis holds out certain opportunities’ (2016, f_3). Young journalists agree that journalism has to change in digital times and they feel blessed that they can accompany this change. As one journalist put it: ‘I think a lot is changing right now. But I also think it’s a super exciting time to do journalism’ (2017, f_1). Moreover, when examining only respondents who completed a program at a university of applied sciences, we could neither detect different motivations, nor varying degrees of disillusion or differing evaluations of the crisis. This indicates that even though the journalistic socialization of participants in these journalism programs usually starts earlier and is more streamlined, in the end they share similar beliefs with other members of the field that are just like them: young and reputable.

Conclusion

While industry volatility adversely affects journalists’ working conditions and may foster career disillusionment, this research finds younger Austrian journalists are still invested in their work. We approached this issue through a field-theoretical framework and aimed to understand the relationship between job expectations and experiences through the conceptual prism of illusio. We argue that expectations and gratifications, which can explain why journalists invest themselves in the work despite known drawbacks, constitute the field’s illusio. Similar to previous research (Hovden, 2012; Hummel et al., 2012) our findings reiterate the idea that illusio is partly composed by the belief in the journalistic mission of providing a public service. However, through our interviews, a broader image of the field’s illusio emerges. In particular, aspiring journalists defy acknowledged drawbacks because of their expectations of autonomy, which relates to both the autonomy of the field as a key institution in democratic societies, as well as the autonomy of work – both in terms of individual contributions to society and in terms of individual development opportunities in newsrooms. Idealistic and altruistic interests concur with personal or egoistic motivations, sustaining illusio in case one investment is not met. In a sense, illusio here consists of what Christin (2016) refers to as symbolic and institutionalized stakes: the investment to define what the field is about (public service autonomous from any influences) and the personal gratification (creative work autonomous of any constraints). Thus, illusio, together with the doxic belief that naturalizes economic constraints, protects most of our respondents from being fully disillusioned up to the point of ‘stoic ataraxia’ (Bourdieu, 1998a) and eventually exiting the field.

When examining to what extent young journalists’ prior expectations of journalistic work are met or disappointed, we found that our respondents experience disillusionment in their everyday work. Strikingly, even awarded journalists as the field’s future elite are affected by constraints and do not necessarily experience ideal working conditions. This clearly supports the model by Örnebring et al. (2018), who point out that the space of journalistic work is no longer sufficiently defined by the possession of journalistic capital, but also defined by the material conditions and access to resources. Our respondents demonstrated high degrees of job commitment despite realizing discrepancies between
expectations and experiences. This may be explained by the recognition they experienced both by being awarded and by simply being employed.

Notably, they even referred to the positive aspects of disillusionment because – according to them – a more realistic (instead of idealistic) approach to journalism allows for more efficient work. What is more, they understand potential downsides like the difficult job entry as constituent facets of the field and argue that enduring hard times is part of the game. Obviously, our respondents have developed an understanding of the key rules of this game even though they might contradict their prior expectations. They voice drawbacks with regard to individual autonomy as vital facets of professional journalism. In Bourdieusian terms, our awarded journalists appear to have internalized a journalistic doxa and, hence, tend to reinforce existing power relations, such as exploitative working conditions, instead of changing them. This is in line with Bourdieu who argues that new entrants to a field might be most successful in receiving recognition by the fields’ dominant agents by being well-adapted to the field and its internal doxa (Bourdieu, 1993).

Our respondents’ general contentment despite experiencing discrepancies between expectations and everyday work may be explained by two further reasons: First, journalists state that reflecting about job motivations and expectations was prompted mainly by our interviews and did not serve as a benchmark for assessing actual job experiences. In other words, expectations could not be disappointed as journalists were not – or at least no longer – aware of them in their day-to-day practice. Second, satisfaction may be explained by our respondents’ privileged employment. Most were salaried and thus did not need to worry about income and job insecurity. Hence, they escaped major symptoms of a journalism crisis on the individual level. This privileged position even allows them to understand the crisis as an opportunity for journalism. However, it remains doubtful whether such well-adapted journalists who have lost their belief in autonomous work and instead support the prevailing doxa that exploitative work is part of the game, will indeed act as agents of change and take the lead in battling the crisis of journalism. In Bourdieusian terms, our respondents have internalized the rules of the game and cannot be expected to act as heretics, or doxa breakers.

As explained above, we deliberately interviewed awarded journalists. This, however, also constitutes a limitation of the study, as these journalists might not have experienced the same struggle to enter the field as other aspiring journalists do, given they received recognition early in their career. Thus, dimensions of disillusionment likely differ especially from those journalists who work in less prestigious areas. Hence, future research should study job expectations and experiences of less privileged journalists. In our study, we found little influence of gender or education on journalistic illusio and overall assessment of job experiences. Future studies should pay closer attention to these aspects.

Our methodical approach is limited insofar as semi-structured interviews can be compromised by social desirability. For instance, this might explain why we did not detect the motivation to pursue journalism for its prestigious appeal as was found by other studies (e.g. Hanusch et al., 2015). In addition, being interviewed by an outsider might prompt respondents to actively negate disillusionment so as to justify to themselves and others why they still work as journalists. Moreover, we acknowledge that their motivations are discursively reconstructed and thus might not reflect their ‘real’ initial motivations.
Authors’ note
All authors have agreed to this submission. The article is not currently being considered for publication by any other print or electronic journal.

Funding
The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iDs
Daniel Nölleke https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3494-3897
Phoebe Maares https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9518-7132

Notes
1. The prize was first awarded biennially (2011, 2013, 2015), later annually (2016, 2017, 2018).
2. Aspiring journalists have the opportunity to study journalism in two programs offered by universities of applied sciences, one in the capital Vienna (Journalism and Media Management) and one in Graz (Journalism and Public Relations). Entry to these programs is highly competitive as classes accept only between 30 and 40 students per year (Dorer et al., 2009).

References
Anderson CW (2017) Venture labor, media work, and the communicative construction of economic value: Agendas for the field and critical commentary. International Journal of Communication 11: 2033–2036.
Barnes R and De Villiers Scheepers MJ (2018) Tackling uncertainty for journalism graduates: A model for teaching experiential entrepreneurship. Journalism Practice 12(1): 94–114.
Benson R and Neveu E (eds) (2005) Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Bourdieu P (1977) Outline of a Theory of Practice. Cambridge: University Press.
Bourdieu P (1986) The forms of capital. In: Richardson J (ed.) Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education. Westport: Greenwood, pp. 241–258.
Bourdieu P (1993) The Field of Cultural Production. Essays on Art and Literature. Cambridge: Polity.
Bourdieu P (1996) The Rules of Art. Cambridge: Polity.
Bourdieu P (1998a) Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
Bourdieu P (1998b) The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
Bourdieu P and Wacquant LJ (1992) An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
Boyd-Barrett O (1970) Journalism recruitment and training: Problems in professionalization. In: Tunstall J (ed.) Media Sociology: A Reader. London: Constable, pp. 181–201.
Carlson M (2007) Blogs and journalistic authority: The role of blogs in US election day 2004 coverage. Journalism Studies 8(2): 264–279.
Carlson M (2015) The robotic reporter: Automated journalism and the redefinition of labor, compositional forms, and journalistic authority. Digital Journalism 3(3): 416–431.
Christin A (2016) Is journalism a transnational field? Asymmetrical relations and symbolic domination in online news. The Sociological Review 64(2_suppl): 212–234.
Cohen NS, Hunter A and O’Donnell P (2019) Bearing the burden of corporate restructuring: Job loss and precarious employment in Canadian journalism. *Journalism Practice* 13(7): 817–833.

Deuze M (2005) What is journalism? Professional identity and ideology of journalists reconsidered. *Journalism* 6(4): 442–464.

Deuze M (2007) *Media Work*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Dorer J, Götzenbrucker G and Hummel R (2009) The Austrian journalism education landscape. In: Terzis G (ed) *European Journalism Education*. Bristol: Intellect, pp. 79–92.

Drok N (2013) Beacons of reliability: European journalism students and professionals on future qualifications for journalists. *Journalism Practice* 7(2): 145–162.

Ekdale B, Tully M, Harmsen S, et al. (2015) Newswork within a culture of job insecurity: Producing news amidst organizational and industry uncertainty. *Journalism Practice* 9(3): 383–398.

Fink K (2019) The biggest challenge facing journalism: A lack of trust. *Journalism* 20(1): 40–43.

Fletcher R and Nielsen RK (2017) Paying for online news: A comparative analysis of six countries. *Digital Journalism* 5(9), 1173–1191.

Franklin B (2012) The future of journalism. Developments and debates. *Journalism Studies* 13(5–6): 663–681.

Gadringer S, Holzinger R, Nening I, et al. (2019) *Digital News Report 2019. Detailergebnisse für Österreich*. Salzburg: Universität Salzburg.

GMMP (2015) *Global Media Monitoring Project. National Report Austria*. Available at: http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2015/national/Austria.pdf (accessed 2 September 2020).

Gollmitzer M (2014) Precariously employed watchdogs? Perceptions of working conditions among freelancers and interns. *Journalism Practice* 8(6): 826–841.

Goyanes M and Rodríguez-Gómez EF (2018) Presentism in the newsroom: How uncertainty redefines journalists’ career expectations. *Journalism*. Epub ahead of print 4 April 2018. DOI: 10.1177/1464884918767585.

Hanna M and Sanders K (2007) Journalism education in Britain: Who are the students and what do they want? *Journalism Practice* 1(3): 404–420.

Hanusch F, Mellado C, Boshoff P, et al. (2015) Journalism students’ motivations and expectations of their work in comparative perspective. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator* 70(2): 141–160.

Hovden JF (2012) A journalistic cosmology. *Nordicom Review* 33(2): 57–76.

Hovden JF, Bjørnsen G, Ottosen R, et al. (2009) The nordic journalists of tomorrow. *Nordicom Review* 30(1): 149–165.

Hummel R, Kirchhoff S and Prandner D (2012) ‘We used to be queens and now we are slaves’ working conditions and career strategies in the journalistic field. *Journalism Practice* 6(5–6): 722–731.

Jenkins J and Volz Y (2018) Players and contestation mechanisms in the journalism field: A historical analysis of journalism awards, 1960s to 2000s. *Journalism Studies* 19(7): 921–941.

Johnstone JWC, Slawski EJ and Bowman WW (1976) *The News People. A Sociological Portrait of American Journalists and Their Work*. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Kiousis S (2001) Public trust or mistrust? Perceptions of media credibility in the information age. *Mass Communication & Society* 4(4): 381–403.

Lewis SC (2019) Lack of trust in the news media, institutional weakness, and relational journalism as a potential way forward. *Journalism* 20(1): 44–47.

Löfgren Nilsson M and Örnebring H (2016) Journalism under threat: Intimidation and harassment of Swedish journalists. *Journalism Practice* 10(7): 880–890.

Maares P and Hanusch F (2018) Twenty years of Bourdieusian thought in journalism scholarship: A comprehensive analysis of field theory in studies of journalism. In: *Paper presented at the European communication conference*, October 31–November 3, Lugano, Switzerland.
Mellado C, Hanusch F, Humanes M, et al. (2013) The pre-socialization of future journalists. *Journalism Studies* 14(6): 857–874.

Mellado C and Scherman A (2017) Influences on job expectations among Chilean journalism students. *International Journal of Communication* 11: 2136–2153.

Newman N, Fletcher R, Kelogeropoulos A, et al. (2019) *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2019*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

Nikunen K (2014) Losing my profession: Age, experience and expertise in the changing newsrooms. *Journalism* 15(7): 868–888.

North L (2016) Still a ‘blokes club’: The motherhood dilemma in journalism. *Journalism* 17(3): 315–330.

O’Donnell P (2017) Beyond newsrooms: Younger journalists talk about job loss and re-employment in Australian journalism. *Australian Journalism Review* 39(2): 163–175.

Örnebring H and Conill RF (2016) Outsourcing newswork. In: Witschge T, Anderson CW, Domingo D and Hermida A (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Digital Journalism*. London: SAGE, pp. 207–221.

Örnebring H, Karlsson M, Fast K, et al. (2018) The space of journalistic work: A theoretical model. *Communication Theory* 28(4): 403–423.

Post S and Kepplinger HM (2019) Coping with audience hostility. How journalists’ experiences of audience hostility influence their editorial decisions. *Journalism Studies* 20(16): 2422–2442.

Reinardy S (2011) Newspaper journalism in crisis: Burnout on the rise, eroding young journalists’ career commitment. *Journalism* 12(1): 33–50.

Schultz I (2007) The journalistic gut feeling: Journalistic doxa, news habitus and orthodox news values. *Journalism Practice* 1(2): 190–207.

Seethaler J (2017) The new worlds of journalism. How Austrian, German and Swiss journalists perceive innovation and change. In: Kaltenbrunner A, Karmasin M and Kraus D (eds) *Journalism Report V. Innovation and Transition*. Vienna: Facultas, pp. 53–67.

Sjøvaag H (2016) Introducing the paywall: A case study of content changes in three online newspapers. *Journalism Practice* 10(3): 304–322.

Sjøvaag H (2020) Journalistic autonomy: Between structure, agency and institution. *Nordicom Review* 34(s1): 155–166.

Steinmayer T (2009) Diversity through delay? The Austrian case. *International Communication Gazette* 71(1–2): 77–87.

Terzis G (2009) Introduction: European journalism education in a mess media world. In: Terzis G (ed.) *European Journalism Education*. Bristol: Intellect, pp. 136–222.

Threadgold S (2018) Bourdieu is not a determinist: Illusio, aspiration, reflexivity and affect. In: Stahl G, Wallace D, Burke C, et al. (eds) *International Perspectives on Theorizing Aspirations: Applying Bourdieu’s Tools*. London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 36–50.

Von Rimscha MB (2015) The impact of working conditions and personality traits on the job satisfaction of media professionals. *Media Industries Journal* 2(2): 17–41.

Vos TP, Craft S and Ashley S (2012) New media, old criticism: Bloggers’ press criticism and the journalistic field. *Journalism* 13(7): 850–868.

Williams A, Guglietti M and Haney S (2018) Journalism students’ professional identity in the making: Implications for education and practice. *Journalism* 19(6): 820–836.

Willig I (2013) Newsroom ethnography in a field perspective. *Journalism* 14(3): 372–387.

Willnat L, Weaver DH and Choi J (2013) The global journalist in the twenty-first century: A cross-national study of journalistic competencies. *Journalism Practice* 7(2): 163–183.
Author biographies

Daniel Nölleke is a postdoctoral researcher at the Journalism Studies Center, located in the Department of Communication at the University of Vienna.

Phoebe Maares is a Research Associate and PhD Student at the Journalism Studies Center, located in the Department of Communication at the University of Vienna.

Folker Hanusch is Professor of Journalism at the Journalism Studies Center, located in the Department of Communication at the University of Vienna.