

Varied perceptions: freelancing in Sydney's print media

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Abstract

Freelance journalists across the world experience harsh work conditions such as insecurity in obtaining work, poor pay and lack of adequate legal protection for their work and rights. Previous research on freelance journalism has demonstrated that conditions in Australia and elsewhere remain the same despite a significant increase in the number of journalists who work under such casual arrangements. However, freelance journalism continues to be a neglected topic in media scholarship. Casual journalists remain in the periphery of media work hierarchy and in an uneven power relation with media owners and managers. Concepts of "field theory" (Bourdieu, 1991; Swartz, 1997) have been employed to explain the diverse ways of perceiving the prevailing adverse work conditions of Sydney's print media freelance journalists.

Introduction

Like many other freelance workers, journalists without permanent employment are usually found at the bottom of the media work hierarchy. There is a general lack of scholarly attention to the issues and problems of freelance journalists, and this study is a contribution to address this gap in scholarly literature. While the common perception of journalism is one of the employed journalists working for mainstream media organisations, many journalists work on a casual basis as freelancers. Indeed, several researchers (Tunstall, 1996; IFJ, 1999; Meehan, 2001; Heyck, 2002) have documented how the number of freelance media workers is increasing in contemporary societies because of factors such as changes in media organisations (changes in ownership pattern, content and audience, increased dependence on advertising) as well as changes in the symbolic prestige attached to media work (Hallin, 1996).

Journalism, including freelance journalism, has always been constrained by economic, social and cultural factors that impact on media practices. The con-

straints on freelance journalists, such as insecurity of work, poor remuneration and lack of legal rights, have been explored in this study through an examination of personal experiences of freelance journalists working in Sydney's newspaper market.

Freelance is a generic term that can mean different things in different work situations. Sir Walter Scott probably used the word "freelance" for the first time to describe mercenary soldiers who rented their materials, talents and lances to the highest bidder (Wallis & Harris, 1991, p. 11). According to one contemporary dictionary definition:

Freelance is a self-employed person offering their services where needed, not under contract to any single employer.
(*Chambers 21st century dictionary*, 2001)

A freelance journalist has been defined for the purpose of this study as a non-salaried self-employed person who works on a casual basis, usually for one or more media organisations, and provides editorial materials, but does not receive guaranteed income on a regular basis from one employer.

Literature review

Freelance or casual work is not confined to media work. Indeed, scholars from workplace and labour studies have examined the issue of freelancing from the viewpoint of increased casualisation and fragmentation of work, which contributes to our knowledge about freelancing.

Of the scant literature on freelance work and freelance journalism, one can identify four types of research: surveys and investigations of freelance media work conditions (IFJ, 1999; Meehan, 2001; Baines, 1999; Baines, 2002), providing a general picture of the highly competitive and uncertain life of freelance journalists; labour market studies on freelance work (Baumann, 2002; Gottschall, 2002; Platman, 2003), mainly arguing that the growth of freelancing has developed out of the need for economic restructuring; media studies explaining journalism work conditions (Dombkins, 1993; Tunstall, 1996; Franklin, 1997) and providing an understanding of the structures of media organisations affecting freelance journalists; and historical perspective studies (Heyck, 2002). There are also "do-it-yourself" style guides on freelancing (Brogden, 1945; Wallis & Harris, 1991; McCrone, 1996; McDuling, 2003) and chapters in media textbooks (Keeble, 1994; Franklin, 1997; Alysen, 2000) dealing with freelancing in journalism. However, these publications in most cases lack rigour and a critical approach.

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) conducted a survey in 57 countries in 1999 and found that freelance journalists, who constitute about a quarter of the total global population of journalists and are increasing in num-

ber, endure widespread deprivation of social, professional and economic rights, and that media owners consider freelancers as independent contractors instead of employees, making it hard for journalists' unions to represent them in dispute negotiations. Meehan's (2001) survey and interviews with Victorian freelance journalists validate many findings of the IFJ study in an Australian context. Meehan demonstrated that freelance journalists in this country have been braving uninspiring work conditions and financial vulnerability. She found that freelancers take few breaks or holidays, are not adequately protected against any income loss due to illness, and are being deprived of adequate training and provisions for retirement. Baines' research (1999, 2002) in Britain examines the "quality" of freelance work life and the effects of tele-working on society. Through a survey and in-depth interviews of freelance members of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), Baines explored issues such as insecurity in freelance work and financial dependence on other family resources while individuals engage in freelancing. She asserts that technological advances have encouraged fragmentation of work and thus increased the number of freelance aspirants, and argues that work from home not only affects freelancers professionally but also personally, by impacting on their quality of life.

Freelancing has also been examined from the viewpoint of changing employment patterns across the cultural industries. Several critics (Gottschall, 1999, 2002; Platman, 2003) have examined the impact of increasing mobility on the workforce and concluded that the impact of such mobility is positive as it produces more casual work opportunities and thus improves the gender and age balance in the workforce by providing more openings for females and elderly people. Contrary to this positive view of freelance work arrangements, Baumann (2002) takes a cautious look in a comparative analysis of British and German informal labour markets in the electronic media industries. He claims the expansion of the field of freelancing has been constructed on the basis of the need for economic restructuring. Tunstall (1996), in a study of "newspaper power" in Britain, claims that the number of freelance workers has increased as a result of declining budgets in newspaper companies because of declining advertising revenues. Tunstall asserts that squeezed news budgets and increased numbers of freelance aspirants mean section editors are in an advantageous position when dealing with issues such as freelance pay rates (Tunstall, 1996, pp. 74, 170). Heyck (2002) takes a historical view and studies freelance writers and authors, not specifically freelance journalists, who have played an important role in Britain's cultural and intellectual life. He compares data from the British Bureau of Statistics from 1880 to 1980 to demonstrate that the rise of academia and mass media has marginalised independent intellectuals in society (Heyck, 2002, p. 249).

The review of literature has highlighted the fact that many freelancers struggle to survive in a highly competitive marketplace. Despite this, freelancing is seen as an option for many unemployed people associated with the cultural

industries. The situation becomes a cycle in which more and more unemployed people vie for work, which creates scarcity of job opportunities and makes freelancers vulnerable in bargaining. These studies have raised important issues such as poor work conditions and organisational pressures on the media workforce, but inadequately explore these issues and do not analyse the relationship between freelancers and media organisations.

Theory and methodology

This study draws on the field theory (Bourdieu, 1991), which implies that individuals or agents in a field possess varied amount of "capital" and engage in struggles with each other to maintain or alter the distribution of capital in the particular field, depending on their dominant or subordinated positions (Swartz, 1997, p. 125). All individuals in a certain field, however, share some "fundamental presuppositions" and believe in the game in which they are engaged. This relates to Swartz's explanation, in which he asserts that "entry into a field requires the tacit acceptance of the rules of the game" (Swartz, 1997, p. 125).

Of the different power and capital, the idea of symbolic power and symbolic violence is pertinent here. Bourdieu argues that symbolic power is "the invisible power" (Thompson, 1991, p. 164) of the agents in a field which is employed in mediating the relations in a field and gaining control over material or symbolic resources (Swartz, 1997, p. 136). Such power can be "... exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it" (Thompson, 1991, p. 164).

In the "struggle for legitimation", the holders of symbolic power often exercise their power over other workers in the same field (Swartz, 1997, pp. 218-241), which engenders symbolic violence. This symbolic violence is the power of imposing meaning on the contemporary social world by "representing economic and political power in disguised, taken for granted forms" (Swartz, 1997, p. 89). In this study, the exercise of symbolic violence by one group of agents in journalism (media organisations/commissioning editors) on another group (freelance journalists) has been examined to find out how freelance journalists perceive adverse work conditions as against commissioning editors.

To explore the above assumption, a method of anonymous in-depth qualitative interviews with freelance journalists and commissioning editors was adopted for data collection. A total of 18 journalists, who contribute to Sydney's broadsheets and periodicals but are not permanently employed by any media organisation, were interviewed. Three commissioning editors were also interviewed to provide their perspectives on issues of constraints on freelance journalists. The face-to-face semi-structured interviews, conducted on the basis of a pre-tested questionnaire as a framework for questioning, lasted 60 to 90

minutes on average. Four follow-up short interviews were also conducted to obtain further clarification on some points and comments. In this paper, all 21 interviewees have been identified serially according to the date of the interviews; no distinction was made between freelance journalists and commissioning editors in such identification. The interviews were anonymous because the pre-testing of the questionnaire indicated that the willing freelance respondents preferred confidentiality, as they feared harm in their freelance work if they revealed their identities. The interview data were supplemented by deliberations at the sixth annual freelance convention, organised by the Media, Arts and Entertainment Alliance (MEAA) in April 2003 in Sydney. Freelance journalists from across the nation, commissioning editors from different media organisations and legal experts, as well as MEAA officials directly involved in freelance matters, participated in the convention to discuss the problems and prospects of freelance media work and to evaluate practical solutions for such problems. Many statements and perspectives from the convention have direct relevance to this study. Speakers at this convention have been identified according to the serial of audio recording of their speeches.

This qualitative methodology is justified in that following several local and international surveys and investigations it is now generally acknowledged that the conditions of freelance media work are harsh in most countries. What is needed is an explanation of this prevailing situation, which warrants deeper examination into the issues and problems, and in-depth interview data were considered best suited for this purpose.

Findings

The position of freelance journalists has been examined through various themes, such as uncertainty in getting work (in freelance parlance, “getting commissioned”), lack of protection for story ideas and copyright entitlements, and lack of negotiating power over pay rates and documentary agreement of work.

Commissioning

Commissioning in freelancing means engaging a non-employed journalist to produce journalistic material (story/item). This can be done in one of two main ways: a commissioning editor may assign the journalist a job, or the journalist may pitch the story idea to the editor, who may subsequently accept or reject it. Data in this study reveal that both beginner and veteran freelance journalists continually experience insecurity in getting commissioned for work. For beginners, it is very hard to break into the field; it is a battle to get commissioned. It is hard even for experienced journalists who start freelancing for the first time. For instance, a journalist (interviewee 1), who once worked for a

Sydney-based foreign news agency, described her experience when she approached a major newspaper for freelance commissioning:

I always find it [getting commissioned] hard. I write for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, My Career section so far. [But when for] the first time I emailed the editor and wrote about my ideas and called her a few days later, she didn't answer. So, I left a message and I gave up. (interviewee 1)

It is hard, too, for the experienced freelancers, no matter how efficient they are. One journalist (interviewee 4) has been working as a freelancer in Sydney for more than three decades; still she needs to generate new ideas all the time and start from scratch for every new commissioning. For her (interviewee 4), it is "always reinventing the wheel". Moreover, the difficulty of experienced freelance journalists does not end with getting commissioned and completing a job properly; it is also difficult for them to protect their published material from unauthorised use and save their ideas from misuse. Such uncertainty and difficulty of work explain why none of the journalists interviewed for this study is totally reliant on freelance journalism for her/his living. Yet, all the respondents identify themselves as "freelance journalists". Many interviewees say they love their work, but do not like the everyday uncertainties it entails. As a result of such difficult experiences and insecurity, freelance journalists feel powerless in their work. One long-time freelancer (interviewee 6) expressed his frustration over the power of commissioning editors in the following way:

The relation between commissioning editors and freelancers [is] unjust because you can be a very good writer, you may have a very good eye for a story, but unless people know about it [it's of no use]. After my four or five years [in freelancing] I realise that what you are selling is not just your ideas, but yourself. (interviewee 6)

This journalist (interviewee 6) believed that in selling "yourself", freelance journalists had to empathise with the commissioning editors' position, their story requirements and the way of thinking. He said: "You have to use reverse psychology, you have to persuade the commissioning editors ..." (interviewee 6) This view reflects intense pressures the journalist experienced in the "struggle for legitimisation", despite a long track record in the media industry.

This "empathising" is not limited to understanding the editor's position; it extends to the broader environment of their work. In response to a question regarding freelance commissioning, one journalist (interviewee 17) who once was an employed staff member said:

I think it's [commissioning] always going to be limited ... probably it's easier to become a successful freelancer if you come

out of the industry ... I find it much easier [to succeed if] (a) you've got the contact, if you're coming from the industry, (b) you've got the experience, you know what you're doing, and (c) you've got a sense about how to deal with the editors ... (interviewee 17)

However, the commissioning editors see and evaluate the situation from a different perspective. They take the position that the issue is not so much about contact, networking or ways of dealing with the editors, but more about the quality and efficiency of the freelance journalist. One editor (interviewee 14) said:

[We need] good ideas. It's really good if they come to us, we don't have to go to them. If the freelancers contact me (and if) it's a great idea, I'm prepared to give them a chance. [It's also] good reputation because it's a small industry, you can find out if they [the freelancers] are reliable, if they file on time, if they're happy to take the advice on writing ... if they take directions. (interviewee 14)

The viewpoint turned out to be different when the commissioning editors spoke to the freelance audience at the Sixth Freelance Convention. One editor (convention speaker 12) said about dealing with editors:

Remember that you're calling a person who has awesome stuff to do. The last thing he may want to do is to talk with a freelancer. It's really very tricky to be that freelancer. (convention speaker 12)

He emphasised the clarity of communication with the editors and offered a "short piece of philosophy" for freelance journalists who wanted to survive and succeed in the market: "As a freelancer, you are serving one primary function, that is, to deliver a work that could not have been created without you ..." (convention speaker 12). This editor explained that the freelancers needed to accommodate the editor's requirements and dispositions. "Ultimately be flexible, because [the] editors are whimsical, indecisive and change their mind often. So be ready for it." (convention speaker 12)

This difference in response from the commissioning editors between the research interviews and speeches at the freelance convention reveals the real "trap" for freelance journalists' need to "accommodate" "whimsical" editors, a rather clear indication where the power lies in this type of media work.

Most freelance respondents accept the requirement of "quality" as a precondition for continued work, for jobs ultimately depend on the commissioning editors, a condition which reflects the power of these editors. The freelancers say they feel insecure and powerless as they need to constantly prove them-

selves. In addition, they highlight their marketing abilities and an “understanding” of publications as important factors in getting work. This scenario – the editors’ emphasis on “quality”, its acceptance by the freelancers, and advancing their own “marketing ability” and “understanding of the publications” as important factors – reflects Bourdieu’s notion that different individuals in a field engage in different types of struggles with different “aims”, depending on their positions. Freelancers want to remain freelancers, no matter what; commissioning editors want to exert their decision-making power in the name of quality work, no matter who does it. It suggests that journalism as a field enforces a “specific form of struggle” (Swartz, 1997, pp. 121-125) on its freelance agents. Both the “dominant” commissioning editors and “subordinated” freelancers (Swartz, 1997, p. 123) understand that there are certain rules by which the struggle is played out: freelancers should be experienced, they must have a good understanding of the publications and commissioning editors have the discretion of judgement and the right to turn away skilled freelancers.

Ideas

All freelance journalists in this study were aware of the competitive market and thought that without extraordinary ideas or stories it would be hard for them to survive. Nearly all believed they had such ideas. According to one journalist (interviewee 2): “Ideas are currency ... being freelance you have to always generate ideas, that’s the business.” In order to get work, the freelancers need to pitch interesting story ideas to the commissioning editors. Most interviewees (14 out of 18) said pitching story ideas was an important way of letting the editors feel their presence. However, pitching story ideas works as a double-edged sword for the freelancers, because once pitched, a story idea can no longer be protected from misuse; it then enters into a domain which is rather open. All but one freelance interviewee asserted that at one stage or another their ideas (or even work) had been used without permission or they did not get the commission/credit. Although freelance story ideas require protection, ensuring such protection is difficult. The freelance journalists were frustrated about the situation and thought misusing ideas or stories was a highly unethical practice.

In an extreme case a whole piece was misused, and this happened to an experienced journalist. This freelancer (interviewee 12), who entered into journalism as a copygirl 15 years ago and now specialises in lifestyle features, spoke about the incident of “stolen work”, which occurred a few years ago:

I took my portfolio to an editor, and he was looking through my portfolio ... we were discussing stories I might do for that publication ... he asked me if he could photocopy a couple of stories, which I said of course. I thought he would actually have to read them. Three issues later, [I found that] one of the stories

from my portfolio [appeared] in the magazine, it was very distinctive, unusual story ... written by someone else ... and I thought that was extraordinarily unethical. (interviewee 12)

Out of the 18 journalists interviewed for this study, only one (interviewee 8) said that the protection of ideas was not at all applicable to freelancers, because most of them worked on ordinary stories and feature articles, not on investigative or breaking stories which were essentially secretive in nature. She further elaborated:

An idea is an idea; anyone can come up with that idea in any part of the world. If someone could come up independently with his or her idea, it's not their or my fault if I come up with the same idea. It's not that important unless it's really a unique investigative piece. People reinvent the wheel all the time. (interviewee 8)

Another interviewee (interviewee 2), who also experienced reuse of her ideas without permission, said she was very frustrated and infuriated when it happened, but later she realised that " ... only a good relationship with your editors [can] stop that sort of thing happening, that's the best safeguard" (interviewee 2). She offered a suggestion for other freelancers who were eager to succeed:

... basically make yourself pliable as much as possible. When you are pliable, it's easy to work with the unusual gang [the commissioning editors]. Just put yourself in their shoes ... you try to make yourself as appealing as possible with lots of ideas; take some load away from them. (interviewee 2)

The commissioning editors generally deny "stealing" story ideas from freelancers, but all three editors were aware of this practice. One editor (interviewee 19), himself formerly a freelancer, said that "... it happened to me 20 years ago. I am sure it [still] happens, because there are lots of editors around [who] don't have good ideas ..." (interviewee 19). He offered an illuminating perspective on why commissioning editors took ideas from freelance pitches:

... it often happens that people come to me with an idea. I think who is this person? Can they [sic] write? I really like the idea, it would be great if I can give it to one of my staff ... but I [personally] don't do it. I go along with them [the freelancers] and say, look I don't know your writing ... but I love the idea ... I can't guarantee I would run it, but send it in, I'll see how it goes, then [we'll] work with them. (interviewee 19)

Another editor, who said she (interviewee 14) had never personally experienced incidents relating to the reuse of ideas but knew it did happen, supplemented her colleague:

... It's terrible ... [but] if a freelancer comes forward with a really good idea, and you know that they [sic] are not very good, what do you do? It's a great idea, but you know they won't actually be able to execute it ... We had a freelancer [working on] a story, it had to go back to her three times for rework, it just did not work. So, we gave it to another journalist ... (interviewee 14)

These assertions indicate that the editors are more concerned about the mismatch between a good idea and the capability of the proposing freelancer to produce a quality story utilising the idea. The above editor further asserted that if such a mismatch occurred, which did happen to her recently, she would:

... Just say no, or give them [the freelancers] a chance and pay them ... and get someone else or me to spend a week trying to fix it up ... I don't know if you can pay someone for an idea ... [however] I don't think you should steal other people's ideas, that's just wrong ... (interviewee 14)

Although they are "furious" about the "unethical" misuse of ideas, and helpless against big media organisations, freelancers seem not to see it as an issue of power. Rather, they explain such misuse of ideas as a matter of whether or not they are "pliable" and whether or not they have a "good relationship" with the editors. This supports Bourdieu's notion of "symbolic violence", in that the editors exercise their power of imposing meaning on the practice of freelancing. The freelancers know the story ideas they generate through hard work are not secured once they are pitched; yet they don't claim the editors have a responsibility to protect these ideas.

Remuneration

The process of remuneration is another important aspect of freelance practice which generates anxiety, delay and uncertainty for the freelancers and, once again, reveals their powerlessness. All freelancers interviewed considered the pay rate for freelance work in Sydney's print media was very poor and had remained "stagnant" for a while. According to the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance's (MEAA) recommended rate card for freelance work (MEAA, 2005), the rate should be 77 cents per published word. Interviewees said many freelancers didn't get this rate, and some even got as low as 10 cents a word. Some interviewees claimed that the actual pay rate was declining as the number of freelance workers across the media industry had grown, "undercutting each other" (interviewee 3). The process of payment in different media organisations is also lengthy and sometimes complicated. One interviewee said some media organisations pursued a "take it or leave it" (interviewee 7) approach because they implied that freelancing was a "lifestyle choice", a decision the

freelancers made knowingly, so they must accept whatever rate they were being offered. This is a constant reality for the freelancers, as one travel writer asserted: "It [low pay rate] is something I always have to deal with, it's no surprise to me. Editors will expect you to deliver gold on peanuts sort of wages. It has been a continuous frustration." (interviewee 3)

Some interviewees took this low pay regime as a given and accepted it as a reality, while others were critical of the situation and asserted that such low pay rates undermined their contribution to journalism. Negotiating remuneration with media organisations is an extremely delicate matter for the freelancers because, as one travel writer (interviewee 6) illustrated:

there are always four or five good travel writers ... (but) there are always a 21 or 22 year old to say yes, I will do it. And the editor would say it doesn't matter, it's just filling a few pages.
(interviewee 6)

Sixteen out of the 18 freelance journalists expressed their deep dissatisfaction over poor remuneration. One interviewee (interviewee 16), who had been freelance for more than three decades, said:

Sometimes I get stuck somewhere I am writing, because the work is regular but I found it's a shocking word rate, and I work for a very low hourly rate. I just [want to] slap myself across the face, and [want to] just stop doing it ... but somehow you stick with it for longer than you should ... (interviewee 16)

Since there is no standard rate for freelance work, the rates are decided on an individual basis and depend in most cases on the journalist's efficiency, experience and ability to negotiate. This means a very few experienced and reputable freelancers are capable of negotiating their rates of pay; for others, bargaining is not a realistic option, although ideally that "would be fantastic" (interviewee 1).

Only one commissioning editor (interviewee 19) agreed with the freelance journalists about low rates of pay and said the freelance rate had not moved much while the salary of employed journalists had risen very strongly during the past 10 to 15 years. However, the rest of the commissioning editors, both at the freelance convention and in interviews for this research, contradicted claims of low pay. One editor (interviewee 14) said:

I think we pay really well, we pay 68 cents a word which is reasonably good, that's the union rate. If a particular piece involves an incredible amount of work, we will negotiate ... I never heard of that complaint [low pay]. (interviewee 14)

Even though the majority of the commissioning editors subscribe to this view, some also think budget cuts constrain them and keep freelance pay rates low.

Reasons for freelancing

Despite the above constraints and difficulties, many interviewees said they preferred to remain freelance journalists. This preference is important in understanding freelance work. A list of reasons, summarised from the interview excerpts, includes the following:

- ♦ Control over their work (they can avoid working on unwanted topics): 16;
- ♦ Flexibility (combining different work book writing, looking after young families): 17;
- ♦ Improved quality of life (spending time according to their preferences): 17;
- ♦ Scarcity of full-time media work opportunity: 2;
- ♦ Freedom from office politics: 3;
- ♦ Independence (not tied down to nine to five, choice of subject matter): 13;
- ♦ More opportunity for career/professional development (spending time on writing books, pursuing other work, such as photography, corporate training, PR): 5;
- ♦ Preference for variety (doing different kinds of work): 5.

The figures indicate the number of interviewees mentioning a particular reason and highlight the complexity of the situation, because many interviewees gave more than one reason. However, the picture becomes clearer when the responses are further analysed utilising the conceptual notions mentioned in the theory section. The interviewees preferred flexibility and control over their work so they can avoid working on unwanted topics or combine other persuasions with freelancing. They wanted quality of life and independence so they could spend time according to their preference, not be tied down to nine to five, and could avoid getting involved in office politics. Only a few mentioned that they were doing freelance journalism because they could not manage an employed position in the media industry.

These reasons for freelancing sound more like justifications for doing such work than anything else. The freelancers are clearly aware of the constraints, but accept the situation as a “reality” and get along with it, employing whatever capital they have in the “struggle for legitimation” in this media practice.

Conclusion

This study has sought to provide a contextual meaning of the constraints freelance journalists experience and how both freelancers and commissioning editors perceive those constraints from their respective subordinated and

empowered positions. The findings tend to indicate that the freelancers perceive and interpret constraints on them in diverse ways. Some freelancers are frustrated about the misuse of their ideas/materials, but others think they should have no exclusive rights to the ideas they generate. Again, some interviewees consider the low pay regime as a reality, while others are critical of it and assert that such low pay rates undermine their contributions to journalism. Their perception of the constraints is more diverse from a broader context. On the one hand they experience difficulties in commissioning, lack protection of their intellectual labour and economic interests; on the other hand they prefer the nature of freelance work which offers them flexibility and choice. The freelance journalists legitimise the power of the commissioning editors by accepting unsatisfactory rates of payment and other unfavourable work conditions as a reality which cannot be altered and which is compensated for by the flexibility of their lifestyle.

From this analysis of the findings, both the freelance journalists and commissioning editors can be seen as “agents” in the periphery of the media workplace, engaged in the playing out of the power relations. Yet in taking part in the game, the two sides maintain distinctively different understandings of the rules involved. They also have different purposes for engaging in this game, namely sustainability in the industry for the freelancers and for the commissioning editors, preservation of the status quo in their relationship and the position of editors in a competitive workplace.

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