
Book review: Gender and Freelancing in the Communication Industries

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Edited by *Anca Anton and Raluca Moise*
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Freelancing within the communications industry has become an increasingly popular job modality for many practitioners. The field has often been celebrated for its virtues: freedom, autonomy and the ability to control one's professional goals and initiatives. This collection, *Gender and Freelancing in the Communication Industries: Experiences, Practices, Discourses* (Emerald, 2025), edited by Anca Anton and Raluca Moise, refuses to solely acknowledge the strengths of the field. Instead, this edited collection examines a more complicated truth – that freelancing is not only a space of empowerment, flexibility and freedom, but also a space riddled with gender inequality, exclusion and ambiguity.

The book is divided into three parts, each addressing a distinct dimension of freelancing. Part I, “Discourses, Narratives, and Identities,” examines how freelancing is framed in online communities and media narratives. Anton and Moise’s opening chapter analyzes nearly 1,300 posts from a UK-based Facebook group for freelance public relations professionals, highlighting the contradictory discussions of empowerment, resilience and well-being. While freelancers celebrate flexibility and freedom, women disproportionately discuss financial precarity, unreliable contracts and the burdens of caregiving. Raluca Moise and Anca Anton’s subsequent chapter extends this analysis to online media narratives, revealing how freelancing is simultaneously constructed as a feminist choice while often obscuring structural inequalities. Hyunji Doh’s autoethnographic chapter offers a deeply personal reflection on feminist public relations research as a mobile freelancer, capturing the tensions between professional independence and isolation.

Part II, “Practices, Constraints, and Opportunities,” shifts the focus to comparative case studies across national contexts. Martina Topić-Rutherford and Michal Chmiel investigate networking and work–life satisfaction among UK communication freelancers, finding that networking often reinforces gendered power dynamics. Maria João Cunha, Carla Cruz and Célia Belim provide an in-depth look at Portuguese freelancers, where younger professionals value networking while women encounter a “glass wall” limiting mobility. Özlem Alikılıç and Ebru Gökaliler explore Turkish freelancers, showing that women may be hired more readily than men but remain financially insecure and excluded from protections. Finally, Anton, Anna Jupowicz-Ginalska, and Monika Kaczmarek-Śliwińska compare freelancers in Romania and Poland, demonstrating how cultural norms and labor policies shape gendered access to professional opportunities.

Part III, “Inequalities, Career Dynamics, and Structural Barriers,” turns to entrenched gendered barriers in freelancing. Sarah Bowman, Heather Yaxley and Elizabeth Bridgen analyze generational differences in UK public relations, showing how freelancing is viewed as



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either a reluctant fallback by older professionals or a strategic choice by younger women. Mirela Holy, Geran-Marko Miletić, and Marija Geiger Zeman capture Croatian students' perspectives, where freelancing is seen as both aspirational and precarious. The final chapter, by Sarah Williams, uses Bourdieu's concept of habitus to examine the lived experiences of UK PR freelancers, underscoring how gender imbalances and exploitation persist despite apparent autonomy.

One of the book's key strengths is its methodological breadth. An autoethnography project is included alongside discourse analysis, surveys and comparative research. These vast methodological differences reflect the complexity and messiness of the realities of working in freelancing. Doh's autoethnographic account of being a mobile feminist PR researcher is especially powerful, capturing the personal toll of isolation and gendered expectations in academia. Similarly, comparative chapters on Portugal, Turkey and Eastern Europe underscore how cultural contexts and differing national policies shape freelance opportunities differently for women.

As Anton and Moise's opening chapter shows, online communities can provide solidarity, giving freelancers spaces to share strategies for negotiating contracts or combating burnout. Yet these same spaces risk normalizing resilience as a virtue, placing responsibility on individual women rather than addressing structural exploitation. Across the chapters of this collection, a sobering pattern emerges: autonomy is often less a matter of choice than a necessity for women pushed out of traditional employment by inflexible, male-dominated workplaces.

There is something important to consider about why women are attracted to freelancing in the first place. The allure of greater flexibility in one's schedule, the ability to choose clients and partners and the chance to leave behind a structured corporate environment that is increasingly becoming obsolete can all be seen as advantages – especially for women, who often must balance professional responsibilities with domestic expectations at home. But when the disadvantages of the field emerge – such as financial precarity, unreliable contracts and professional isolation – one must ask: Are women choosing freelancing, or do the inflexible systems of corporate communications make freelancing choose them? And do the negative aspects, as discussed throughout this collection, form structures within the field of freelancing that trap women in yet another system that ultimately fails them?

This is a timely and necessary volume. At a moment when equality, diversity and inclusion policies are facing political pushback, *Gender and Freelancing in the Communication Industries* reminds us that gender inequalities persist within supposedly flexible freelance arrangements. By drawing attention to what could be the hidden costs of autonomy, the book enriches feminist scholarship on a field that is, as stated by the various authors featured in the collection, a severely underexplored profession within the communications academy.

This collection is a call for understanding: freelancing may promise freedom, but without structural change and awareness, there are still a great many challenges ahead for women in the field.

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