

## **Effects of Media Companies' Organizational Nature and Journalists Autonomy and Position on Internal and External Influences: Evidence From Spain**

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Internal and external influences are crucial to understanding how news organizations work. Their impact at the organizational level and their resolution at the level of practice permeate journalism discourses on autonomy and ethics. Drawing on Bourdieu's field theory, this article examines how organizational and individual-level factors predict the likelihood of suffering internal editorial influences and external political and commercial ones. Based on a secondary analysis of Spanish data from the World of Journalism project, we first find that journalists working at public news organizations are more prone to suffer internal editorial influences than journalists working at private/commercial ones. Second, we find a negative association between journalists' autonomy and both types of influence, but a positive relationship between temporary news-workers and internal editorial influences. Finally, we find a cleaved moderation effect of journalists' position on the relationship between age and internal editorial influences, and a contributory moderation of gender on the relationship between autonomy and both types of influences.

*Keywords: journalist autonomy, news organizations, organizational nature, internal editorial influence, external political influence, external commercial influence*

During the last decade, news organizations have experienced a deep financial crisis, triggered by a myriad of factors that have challenged their vital role as the Fourth Estate (Siles & Boczkowski, 2012). Propelled by changes in readers' news consumption patterns (Molyneux, 2018), the emergence of new competitors both inside and outside the news industry (Picard, 2014), and, especially, the inability to monetize digital content, most news organizations are increasingly relying on fewer human resources (Deuze & Witschge, 2018), implementing downsizing operations (Goyanes & Rodríguez-Gómez, 2018), and increasingly hiring freelancers. Many news-workers have been dismissed or "pushed" into retirement, while new professionals are being hired under less favorable labor conditions and mostly temporary contracts (Salamon, 2020). All these challenges affect the quality of news organizations' output and increase their

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vulnerability to internal and external influences (Goyanes & Rodríguez-Castro, 2019). The organizational and individual-level antecedents of this phenomenon are the focus of the study.

While most studies on the journalism crisis concentrate on Western societies, and especially on the U.S., there is growing pressure to provide empirical evidence beyond this geography. Communication scholars from different geopolitical locations agree that economic crises and technological developments have affected journalistic practices to a great extent (Davis, 2007; Gasher et al., 2016; Hanitzsch et al., 2010). Our study contributes to a better understanding of the organizational- and individual-level factors that affect journalists' perceptions of the impact of internal and external influences in Spanish newsrooms. Specifically, the study examines how the organizational nature of news organizations and journalists' autonomy and position affect both internal editorial influences and external political and commercial ones. Based on a secondary analysis of Spanish data from the World of Journalism project and drawing on Bourdieu's field theory, we aim to design an empirical model that explains the configuration and main characteristics that shape journalistic influences in Spain.

Our findings first reveal that journalists working for private/commercial news organizations are less likely to suffer internal editorial influences than those working for public news organizations, while higher levels of journalistic autonomy are revealed as a negative predictor of both internal editorial influences and external political and commercial ones. Second, we show that journalists with temporary positions are more prone to suffer internal editorial influence—a variable that acts as a cleaved divergent moderator over the relationship between journalists' age and internal editorial influence, in such a way that the strongest positive association between age and internal editorial influence is found in the case of those journalists who work on temporary contracts. Finally, we show that female journalists, with respect to male counterparts, are less likely to suffer both internal and external influence when their autonomy is high.

### **The Field of Forces on Journalism: Theoretical Framework**

Media scholars might be familiar with different approaches that conceptualize journalism practice through spatial metaphors that consider it a discipline that must balance between political and economic powers. Typical examples include Jürgen Habermas's conception of the *public sphere* or Manuel Castells' understanding of the *media sphere* (Benson & Neveu, 2005). Still, it was the Bourdieusian conception of the *field* that, to an ever-increasing degree, started to flourish in journalism studies as an appropriate theoretical framework with which to make sense of journalism in practice. According to the original Bourdieusian idea, the field is

the space of the relations of force between the different kinds of capital or, more precisely, between the agents who possess a sufficient amount of one of the different kinds of capital to be in a position to dominate the corresponding field. (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 34)

The field of forces (the original, *le champ*, is sometimes translated as field of power or simply force field) is constituted, maintained, and continuously shaped by the agents of the field, whose power positions determine the extent to which they can contribute to the field of forces. In other words, the

field of forces itself could be conceived as the projection of the power positions of the participating agents (Bourdieu, 1998).

The Bourdieusian field theory has been applied to many subfields of communication studies in general (Demeter, 2018; Rothenberger, Auer, & Pratt, 2017), and journalism in particular (Benson & Neveu, 2005). A social field (Bourdieu, 1998) is constructed by dynamic internal and external forces. In the case of journalism, they are typically economic forces (or economic capital) on the one hand, and political forces (or political capital) on the other. These Bourdieusian concepts could be related to Murdock's conceptualization of different types of control: allocative control and operational control (Murdock, 1982). Allocative control refers to media owners having the power to determine the goals and scope of the media corporations and define the ways they manage their resources. On the other hand, operational control works on the institutional level by making decisions on the effective use of resources provided by the agents of the allocative control, that is, media owners (Murdock, 1982). In Bourdieusian terms, allocative control relates to external influence (media owners), while operational control usually relates to internal (editorial) influence.

The main capital of journalists (and thus the unique capital of the journalistic field) consists of their legitimacy and autonomy (Vos, Eichholz, & Karaliova, 2019), meaning that they should maintain a balance between the state (political forces) and the market (economic power), while keeping an appropriate distance from both (Bourdieu, 2005; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Bourdieu himself positioned the journalistic field in relation to the political field and the social science field (Bourdieu, 2005). He considered these three fields to be relatively independent, but still strongly interrelated. The agents of the field "react to these relations of forces, to these structures; they construct them, perceive them, form an idea of them, represent them to themselves, and so on" (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 30).

Bourdieu (2005) stresses that one of the main characteristics of the journalistic field is, however, its relatively weak autonomy—or, in other words, a high degree of heteronomy (as contrasted, for example, with the field of mathematics, in which neither political nor commercial capital has a direct interest). Notwithstanding, it does have some level of autonomy. Accordingly, "to understand what happens in journalism, it is not sufficient to know who finances the publications, who the advertisers are, who pays for the advertising, where the subsidies came from, and so on" (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 33). For a better understanding of what happens in a given field, one needs to be familiar with the ruling habitus of the agents in different power positions: "Any explanation of attitudes, discourses, behavior etc., must draw on an analysis of both structural position (within the field, the field's position vis-à-vis other fields, etc.) and the particular historical trajectory whereby an agent arrived at that position (habitus)" (Benson & Neveu, 2005, p. 3).

### **Journalism Between the Market and the State**

According to Bourdieu, the field is structured by the two kinds of power (Champagne, 2005), or, in Bourdieu's terminology, two distinctive types of capital, the economic and the cultural; the economic is the most powerful. In the case of the journalistic field, economic capital comes in the form of advertising revenues, circulation, or the ratings of the audience, while cultural capital consists of many kinds of

journalistic practices. In journalism, the field is structured in terms of the opposition between internal and external forces, derived from economic and cultural capital, while the field-constructing, autonomous power represents some unique, special capital that expresses professional excellence. The unique capital of journalism comes in the form of special skills needed for participation in the field. Journalists today need to be multiskilled (Deuze, 2007), which means at least three sets of skills. First, journalists need to be proficient in a wide variety of production techniques and media forms; second, they require skills associated with entrepreneurship (Ryan, 2009); and, finally, they must have new skills as well, such as self-branding and marketing (Usher, 2014).

Turning to the two external forces shaping the journalistic field, the most extensively investigated phenomenon is arguably the problem of commercialization. Criticism of commercialization is as old as making a profit by selling news (McManus, 2009)—a practice that has more than 150 years of history. Neo-Marxist theoreticians and cultural studies scholars also condemn commercial media for class domination and hegemony by promoting the culture and ideology of the elites (Gramsci, 1971; Habermas, 1989). McManus (2009) defined commercialization as “any action intended to boost profit that interferes with a journalist’s or news organization’s best effort to maximize public understanding of those issues and events that shape the community they claim to serve” (p. 219). The risks and harm that commercialization has perpetrated on the classical journalistic profession have been extensively discussed (Goyanes & Rodríguez-Castro, 2019; Holcomb, 2011). The main effect is, allegedly, that the profession continually moves toward entertainment instead of serving public interests (Hanusch, Hanitzsch, & Lauerer 2017), a tendency that undermines the classical ethos of journalism as a profession (McManus, 2009).

However, a number of scholars argue that journalists do not necessarily feel the pressure of the market themselves, because these are mediated through journal editors (Reich & Hanitzsch, 2013). Thus, power relations in the field of journalism benefit from intermediary agents—in the form of editors—who mediate between journalists and external forces such as the market and the state. Thus, editors negotiate between different groups such as the audience, the organization, the journalists (and journalism as a profession), and society (Duffy, 2019). Part of the role of editors is the supervision of journalists (Duffy, 2019), quality control (Singer, 2010), and gatekeeping (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009) as they select, pass through, and also legitimize news.

The other external force that shapes the quasiautonomous field of journalism is the state, or, in other words, political power. Political and commercial influences are frequently conceived as binary oppositions that counteract each other. As Sjoavaag (2019) puts it, the market could be considered, on the one hand, as a deliberating force that frees journalism from the grip of the state; on the other hand, it could be seen as a force that corrupts journalism through commercial pressure, in which case it needs the help of the state. The positive effect of the market could be that it liberates the media from taxation and state censorship (Curran, 2012), while it could endanger the media by pushing it toward consumerism, advertising, and lowest common denominator content. Thus, the all-time challenge of the press is to secure its borders against these two forces—the market and the state—and to maintain and reinforce its autonomy to ensure the legitimacy in the third sphere of influence: civil society (Sjoavaag, 2019). As we have seen, the spheres of journalism and politics are tightly interwoven, where political parties seek to expand their own interests. As Maurer and Beiler (2018) put it,

while there is a journalistic drive to increase the sphere for reporting on newsworthy matters from the general public's perspective, there is also a drive from political actors to control journalism, which mostly means avoiding publicity about negative issues while trying to convey favorable information. (p. 2026)

Thus, Larsson (2002) refers to this relationship as a "tactical game," but still a routinized interaction. While journalists tactically want to gather information on politicians straight from the horse's mouth, politicians are interested in presenting and maintaining a good public image of themselves; to this end, they have to cooperate with journalists (Mancini, 1993). Bourdieu (2005) himself expresses this bipolarity between politics and markets in a spatial example in which journalistic identities could be defined by their positions on an imagined line with two endpoints: The endpoint on the left represents the state, and the endpoint on the right represents the market. The more distance journalists keep from one endpoint, the closer will they be to the other.

### **Internal and External Pressure on Journalists' News Selection in Spain**

In general, most of the analysis on the field of Spanish journalism has dealt with specific features, such as the roles of journalists (Túñez & Martínez, 2014), the defining characteristics of the profession (Humanes, 2003), the ways in which the profession was historically transformed over the course of the last century (Martín-Sabarís & Amurrio-Vélez, 2003), or the impact that different workplace attitudes and conditions have had on news production (Túñez & Martínez, 2014). Spain is usually considered a relatively young democracy, but according to Llorens (2010), some parts of democratic development could be found even in Franco's dictatorship. A free-market economy was tolerated and even fostered later, and while the content and ownership of media outlets were strictly controlled by the authorities, they weren't nationalized. After Franco's death, the principles of state control and commercialization changed, but it still has not reached Western European standards (Llorens, 2010); in addition, as Iosifidis (2007) suggests, Spanish media promoted, from the beginning, government interests and not public ones.

Spanish media has long been considered an example of the Mediterranean media model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), in which political pressures and political parallelism are more common than in the North Atlantic model. Recent research has found that this can be seen on at least two levels. First, on the whole, the opinions of the actual political parties are overrepresented in the media, and second, there is a long-time tradition of partisan journalism in which left-wing media outlets give voices to left-wing politicians, while their right-wing counterparts display mainly right-wing politicians. As a result, the media scene lacks independent or balanced platforms (Kaiser and Königslöw, 2019).

According to Mateo, Bergés, and Garnatxe (2010), journalists in Spain are hugely dependent on information from official sources. Moreover, "communication policies in Spain are characterized by fragmented legislation, sometimes improvised according to the political-economic situation of the moment, and easily changeable" (Mateo et al., 2010, p. 269). The same authors also stressed that the dependency of media outlets on political pressures can be perceived at the regional level, too, given that there are certain correlations between regional ruling parties and the results of the tenders for local media licenses.

Another important feature of the Spanish media culture is its historical aversion to any censorship-like regulation. As a consequence, there are not any cross-media ownership rules, while horizontal centralization of media outlets is regulated. For example, the law allows only one television license for a given owner (Llorens, 2010). According to Llorens, it results in a situation that shows "a healthy media landscape: no media monopoly in sight, no excessive fragmentation, and a relatively high number of medium-size media groups competing against each other" (p. 856). Spanish journalism culture is an extraordinarily interesting field to study because the economic crisis in 2008 and the media industry crisis have had an extremely marked effect on the country (Conde, Herrero-Jiménez, & Montero, 2018). The effect of the crisis was serious; many newspapers and media outlets had to shut down, which has resulted in a field where fewer agents (journalists) have to work with fewer resources, including less economic capital. This weakening economic and political independence has caused both job insecurity and a decline in news quality (Gómez-Mompart, Gutiérrez Lozano, & Palau Sampio, 2015). According to recent market research from the Media Pluralism Monitor (2016), commercial and owner influence over editorial content presents a very significant risk to media pluralism, including in Spain, which is at the medium risk level of the 30 countries under study. These organizational and internal/external influences are especially robust in public media companies (Humanes, Montero-Sánchez, Molina-de-Dios, & López-Berini, 2013), following the Mediterranean or polarized pluralist model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

There is a long research history of the phenomenon of owner influence in the news industries (Bantz, 1985; Chada & Wells, 2016; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991; Sivek, 2010), starting with Breed's (1955) classic work in which the author suggests that the owner has the nominal right to determine both the journal's general policy and the staff's activity. It means that the publisher sets news policy, and this should be followed by the editors and journalists. According to Breed, the publisher has, even in a form of a veto, much say in policy decisions, such as whether to feature or dismiss a story, which party to support, and so forth. Bunce's (2019) recent work concentrates on the conflict of the profit motivations of owners and the journalistic values of their journalists. The author suggests that the economic crises definitely deepened these conflicts. In Bourdieu's terms, the journalists themselves interiorize different aspects of these conflicts because they possess and collect both economic (in the form of salaries) and cultural (their journalistic experiences, education, and reputation) capital (Bunce, 2019). The same author also emphasizes that most studies on this issue concentrated on domestic newsrooms in the UK and the U.S. Thus, our study contributes to the still-needed literature on journalistic conflicts beyond the Anglo-American world.

Spanish media scholars have illuminated the general phenomenology of influences on public media services (Gómez-Montano, 2013) and agree that there is permanent control over news content (Soengas & Rodríguez-Vázquez, 2015), especially institutional and political control, although the level of these influences and their effects at the level of practice (manipulation and/or censorship) vary according to the instrumentalization of public services by political parties and governments. In short, there is a general consensus on the orientation of most regional and national governments to control (with different degrees of interventionism) public media companies, thereby calling into question the independence of such services and their value in informing citizens about current events and politics.

Private news organizations have also been affected by the economic crisis, but the effects of the latter have largely been seen in the form of organizational transformations, job loss, and the precarization

of journalists' work (Goyanes & Rodríguez-Castro, 2019). Commercial and political pressures have always existed in both private and public media companies, but their level, naturalization, and resolution in practice have arguably increased in recent years. However, there is a traditional history of the connection between public media companies and political statements that significantly affects the output of such services (Soengas & Rodríguez-Vázquez, 2015). Meanwhile, commercial/private news organizations follow a clear editorial line, thus precluding journalists from perceiving many potential internal and external influences as challenging.

In addition, Spanish public media companies are generally characterized by strong government intervention and a huge influence of political parties, both in the corporate governance and in the appointment of likeminded editors and section managers (Goyanes & Rodríguez-Gómez, 2018). Based on these previous theorizations, we may presume that public organizations, compared with private ones, are more prone to suffer both internal editorial influences and external political and commercial ones. In addition, we can assume that the more professional (autonomous) a news organization is, the more independent it will be in terms of external capital such as political and commercial powers. This relative autonomy might be expressed in practice as the journalists' relations with journal editors as intermediary agents between the market/politics and the journalists. Thus, our first two hypotheses presume that:

*H1: Journalists working for private/commercial news organizations are less likely to suffer (a) internal editorial influence and (b) external political and commercial influences than their colleagues working at public service media.*

*H2: Journalists who report higher levels of autonomy to select news stories and decide which aspects of these stories should be emphasized will have lower levels of (a) internal editorial influence and (b) external political and commercial influences.*

### **Positional Aspects on the Field: Stability and Gender**

According to Bourdieu, agents of a given field could be described by their positions in that field, which are primarily determined by their accumulated capital. However, other important factors could affect their behavior in the field. We will investigate two such factors: the safety and gender dimension of the agents. Heteronomy—in other words, the absence of autonomy—goes hand in hand with many types of pressure: pressure from advertisers, pressure from the audience through ratings, political pressure, and so on.

But all these forces are intensified by the temporary positions and precarious employment of journalists who are, according to Bourdieu (2005), "linked to the existence of widespread underemployment within the intellectual professions" (p. 43). In a situation in which supply significantly exceeds demand, the labor market is to a great extent defenseless against pressures from both economic and political agents, and these pressures are much more serious in the case of temporary employees with short-term contracts. In Bourdieu's (2005) words, "precarity of employment is a loss of liberty, through which censorship and the effect of economic constraints can more easily be expressed" (p. 43).

Such precarity is also evident in freelance journalism. In fact, freelance journalism, which had once been imagined as a romantic world without bosses, shiftwork, and office politics (McKercher, 2014), turned out to be less pleasing than imagined. Freelancers earn significantly lower wages than workers in newsrooms; for example, in Canada, freelance journalists' standard of living dropped more than 60% in a single generation. And although independent journalists often demonstrate that being a freelancer also signifies their strategies to resist organizational demands (Salamon, 2020), freelancers also compete with each other, they struggle with unequal social relations (Cohen, 2016), and they are pressured to produce salable media content (Cohen, 2016; McKercher, 2014).

As Örnebring (2010) argues, temporary positions and an increasingly deregulated labor market result in a moral decline in which traditional commitment and classical values such as autonomy play less of a role. Recent academic discussions on the commercialization of the field indicates that growing economic pressures would lead to serious concerns regarding the autonomy of journalism as a social field that could seriously endanger journalism's status as a profession (Meyers & Davidson, 2016). In the case of precarious workers on temporary contracts, we could assume that both external and internal pressures would undermine autonomy to a much greater degree than in the case of journalists with fixed contracts. Thus, our subsequent hypothesis suggests that:

*H3: Journalists with a temporary position are more likely to suffer (a) internal editorial influences and (b) external political and commercial influences than journalists with a permanent position.*

Previous studies on journalistic influences state that journalists' autonomy is dependent on both journalists' age and position (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996). Findings reveal that the type of contract journalists have and their experience in the field are mutual forces that explain the level of potential influences. As age increases, the level of influences will decrease, just as they do when a journalist holds a permanent position. However, when journalists hold a temporary position and their age increases, the degree of outside influence might increase as well because of the precarious position of news-workers and age constraints. Therefore, journalists with temporary contracts and journalists with fixed ones will be further distanced from one another in terms of both internal editorial influences and external political and commercial ones, as there is movement from younger to older journalists. We predict that the type of contract a journalist has (temporary versus permanent) is a cleaved divergent moderator of the relationship between age and both internal and external influences (Holbert & Park, 2019). In a more formal hypothesis:

*H4: Journalist position (permanent versus temporary) is a cleaved moderator such that the strongest positive (a) age-internal editorial influence and (b) age-external political and commercial influence association will be found among those who work on a temporary contract.*

Journalism had long been considered a masculine discipline; especially in the first half of the 20th century, as women continued to demand jobs in the media, their mostly male editors, colleagues, and sources refused to take them seriously (Steiner, 2009). Nowadays, however, at least officially, gender does not count as a decisive feature in newsrooms. As Steiner puts it, national surveys show that "gender is not a reliable predictor of differences in professional practices. Men and women conceive the role of news and evaluate the ethics of reporting methods in similar ways; they show similar (declining) levels of job

satisfaction" (Steiner, 2009, p. 120). However, other scholars state that men and women still socialize differently in the workplace, since they might have different identities, values, and priorities (Rogers & Thorson, 2003). Steiner (2009) emphasizes the importance of a "feminist journalism" (p. 127) in which collaboration and noncompetitive strategies are valued over their traditionally more masculine counterparts. Thus, through its different values and even different professional strategies, gender might be meaningful when addressing the question of how perceived autonomy is related to internal/external influences in different gender positions.

Feminist literature on the media industry has illustrated a number of imbalances in the journalism profession. Arguably, the most important states that while women move into the journalistic workforce in increasing numbers, they are not distributed equally across all areas of work. It means that higher-power positions (television news force, writing services or television news directors) are typically occupied by men, while there are twice as many female freelancers and precariat media workers as men (McKercher, 2014). McKercher also stresses that feminization is often accompanied by lower wages and the declining social status of the profession. Moreover, as other media scholars observed, unfairly underpaid or even unpaid freelancer contracts affect women workers disproportionately more than their male colleagues (Cohen, 2016; Salamon, 2020). As suggested, gender may play a crucial role in explaining journalism practices and in accounting for the potential perception of internal and external influences. However, because of a limited development of a formal theory (Robinson, 2005; Steiner, 2009) that links the role of gender and journalists' autonomy in news organizations, we explore the following research question:

*RQ1: What is the nature of the moderation that stems from the effects of gender in the relationship between journalistic autonomy and (a) internal editorial influences and (b) external political and commercial influences?*

### **Methods and Measurements**

Data for this study are based on the World of Journalism project. In this case, the sample is from Spain ( $N = 390$ ), where 160 participants were female (42%) and 230 (58%) were male. The size of the population of Spanish journalists was estimated at 18,000 news-workers. The sampling methods were twofold: (1) a stratified proportionally random sampling for newsrooms and (2) a convenience sample for journalists within newsrooms. The interview method was face-to-face and by mail/e-mail, reaching a response rate of 82.3%. The period of field research was from July 2013 to April 2015. This study had two complementary objectives: to understand the factors that predict journalists' perceptions on (1) editorial influences (inside media companies), and (2) external political and commercial influences. Therefore, our models include both internal editorial influences and external political and commercial influences as dependent variables. Accordingly, the World of Journalism project includes a series of measures of these constructs, considered as key variables. The main measurements are as follows.

*Internal editorial influences:* To measure perceptions on internal editorial influences, respondents were asked to rate how much influence each of the following items had on their work on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *not influential* to 5 = *very influential* (four-item averaged scale; Cronbach's  $\alpha =$

0.84;  $M = 3.40$ ;  $SD = 1.00$ ): "your editorial supervisors and higher editors," "the managers of your news organization," "the owners of your news organization" and "editorial policy."

*External political and commercial influences:* This variable was measured by asking respondents how much influence each of the following items had on their work on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *not influential* to 5 = *very influential* (four-item averaged scale; Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.83$ ;  $M = 2.22$ ;  $SD = 0.92$ ): "government officials," "politicians," "pressure groups" and "business people."

*Journalistic autonomy:* To measure journalists' autonomy, respondents were asked to rate "How much freedom do you personally have in selecting news stories you work on?" and "How much freedom do you personally have in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized?" on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *no freedom at all* to 5 = *complete freedom* (two-item averaged scale; Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.76$ ;  $M = 4.03$ ;  $SD = 0.77$ ).

*News organization ownership:* This variable measures if a news organization is 1 = private/commercial ( $N = 332$ ) or 2 = a public service ( $N = 52$ ).

*Journalist contract:* This variable measures if journalists have a 1 = permanent position ( $N = 314$ ) or a temporary contract ( $N = 36$ ).

### **Control Variables**

To control for potential confounds, our statistical models also include a variety of variables that may explain relationships between the variables of interest. The first set of controls includes sociodemographic information: age ( $M = 39.23$ ;  $SD = 9.16$ ), gender (male = 230; female = 160), and education (no university/college degree = 13; university/college degree = 377). We then introduced union membership to control for the potential effect that this variable might have on internal and external influences (member = 229; nonmember = 160). Media unions are considered successful social agents in helping shift the balance of power from companies and managers to the workers (Cohen, 2016; McKercher, 2014). According to Marjoribanks (2000), a complex model of the media environment should deal with power balances among trade unions, workers, management, and the state. Salamon illustrates the balancing powers of unions through the *Tasini v. New York Times* (1993) and the *Robertson v. Thomson Corp* (1996) cases (both cases are cited in Salamon, 2020); in these cases, with the support of trade unions, freelancer contributors won million-dollar settlements that consequently forced media companies to use written contracts that freelancer contributors would sign over their copyrights to the media companies (Salamon, 2020).

### **Statistical Analysis**

Considering our hypotheses and research questions, we conducted two regression (and correlation, see Table 1) analyses: one with internal influences as a dependent variable and a second one with external political and commercial influences. In both models, the independent variables were introduced in different blocks. The first block of variables comprised a set of demographics, the second included organizational

antecedents (union membership), the third block comprised our variables of interest (news organization ownership, journalistic autonomy, and journalist position), and the fourth and final one included the interaction terms (Journalistic Autonomy  $\times$  Gender and Age  $\times$  Journalist Position). Finally, to plot the interaction effect, we used the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Darlington & Hayes, 2016).

**Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero Order Correlations.**

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Internal Influences	External Influences	Age	Autonomy
Internal influences	3.40	1.00	-			
External influences	2.22	0.92	.294	-		
Age	39.23	9.16	-.160	-.174	-	
Autonomy	4.03	0.77	-.252	-.244	.017	-

## Results

The first hypothesis (H1) proposed that journalists working for public news organizations are more likely to suffer (a) internal editorial influences and (b) external political and commercial influences than those working for private news organizations. Table 2 shows that, consistent with H1a, private/commercial news organizations are negatively associated with internal influences ( $\beta = -.181, p < .01$ ). However, the same variable is not statistically significant for external political and commercial influences. Therefore, H1a is supported, while H1b is not. Younger journalists ( $\beta_{(\text{internal})} = -.144, p < .05$ ;  $\beta_{(\text{external})} = -.146, p < .01$ ), those who do not hold a university degree ( $\beta_{(\text{internal})} = .107, p < .05$ ;  $\beta_{(\text{external})} = .117, p < .05$ ), and those who are not affiliated with a union (in this case, just for external political and commercial influences;  $\beta = .106, p < .05$ ) are more likely to be affected by internal and external influences.

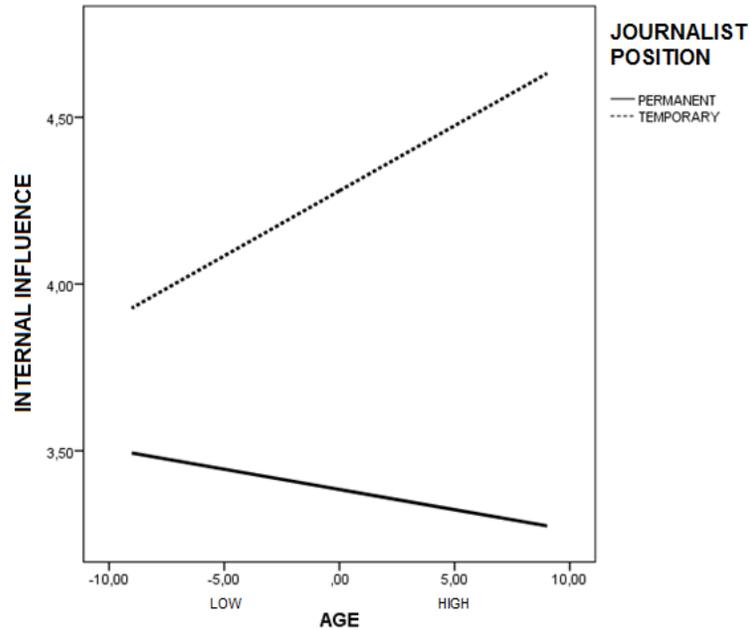
H2 predicted that the autonomy of journalists would be negatively associated with (a) internal editorial influences and (b) external political and commercial influences. Consistent with H2a and H2b, journalists' autonomy is directly related to internal and external influences, and the relationship is negative and statistically significant ( $\beta_{(\text{internal})} = -0.363, p < 0.01$ ;  $\beta_{(\text{external})} = -0.274, p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, H2a and H2b were fully supported. Our third hypothesis (H3) stated that journalists with a temporary position are more likely to suffer (a) internal editorial influences and (b) external political and commercial influences than journalists with a permanent position. Results of the regression analysis revealed a positive association between journalists' positions and internal editorial influences ( $\beta = 0.364, p < 0.05$ ), but not with external political and commercial ones. Journalists with a temporary position are thus more prone to suffer internal editorial influences than those with a permanent position, but this relationship is not statistically significant for external political and commercial influences. Therefore, H3a was supported, whereas H3b was not.

**Table 2. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Internal and External Influences on Journalists.**

	Internal Influences	External Political & Commercial influences
<i>Block 1: Demographics</i>		
Age	-.144	-.146
Gender	.004	.086
Education	.107	.117
$\Delta R^2$ (%)	.032	.048
<i>Block 2: Antecedents</i>		
Union	.104	.106
$\Delta R^2$ (%)	.036	.059
<i>Block 3: Variables of interest</i>		
Ownership	-.181	-.068
Autonomy	-.363	-.274
Position	.364	-.082
$\Delta R^2$ (%)	.132	.130
<i>Block 4: Interaction terms</i>		
Age * Position	.051	.049
Autonomy * Gender	-.315	-.309
$\Delta R^2$ (%)	.018	.019
Total $R^2$ (%)	.150	.154

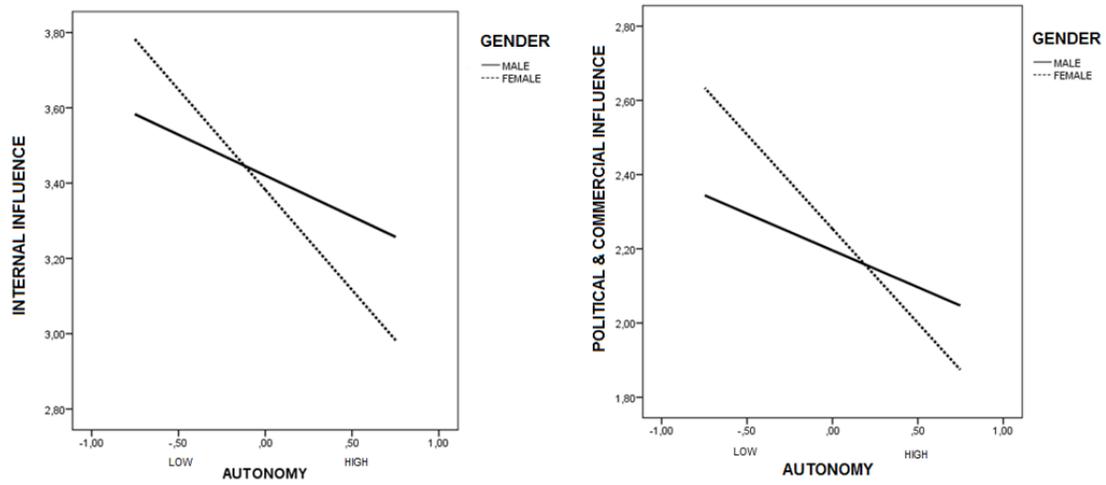
Note. Sample size = 390. Cell entries are final-entry OLS standardized coefficients. \* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Results of the interaction term between age and position revealed a cleaved moderation effect on internal editorial influences ( $\beta = .051, p < .05$ ), but not with external political and commercial ones. When age increases and journalists hold a temporary contract, they are more prone to receive internal influences, while this relationship is negative for a permanent journalist. In other words, the strongest positive association between age and internal editorial influence is found among those journalists who work on a temporary contract (Figure 1). Therefore, H4a was supported, whereas H4b was not.

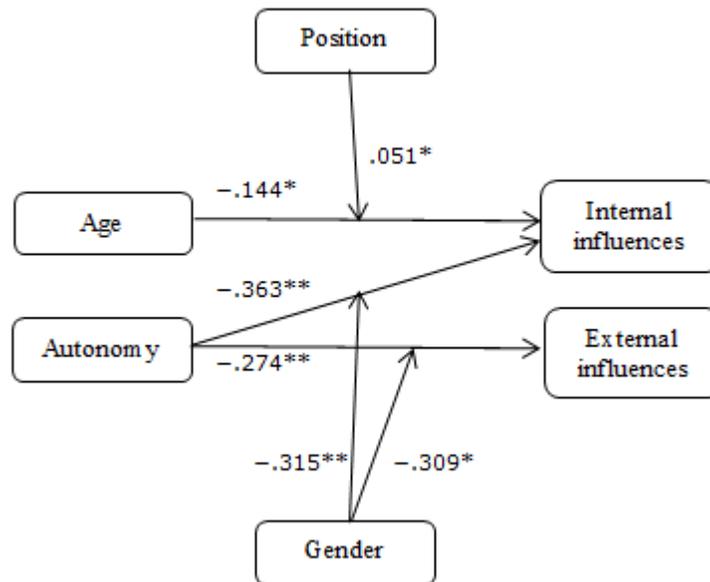


**Figure 1. Interaction term of journalists' position on the relationship between age and internal influences.**

Finally, our research question explored a potential interaction effect of autonomy and gender on (a) internal editorial influences and (b) external political and commercial influences. The regression analysis revealed a negative, statistically significant interaction effect on both types of influences ( $\beta_{\text{internal}} = -.315$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $\beta_{\text{external}} = -.309$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Overall, the relationships between autonomy and both internal and external influences are negative regardless of gender, but the effect seems to be stronger for females in both cases when their autonomy is high (see Figure 2). In other words, female journalists are less likely than male journalists to suffer both internal and external influences when their autonomy is high. Therefore, the nature of the interaction is contributory, transverse negative (see Figure 3 for the conceptual model).



**Figure 2. Interaction terms of gender and autonomy on (a) internal editorial influences and (b) external political and commercial influences.**



**Figure 3. Conceptual model predicting internal and external influences.**

### Discussion and Conclusions

The financial and economic crises that the Spanish news industry has undergone have significantly eroded journalists' labor conditions and the overall quality of news content (Gómez-Mompart et al., 2015). This situation, typical in most Western democracies, has also challenged the traditional ethos of journalists, guided by canonical values of news objectivity, autonomy, and accuracy. The response of most news organizations to this economic turbulence has been a growing commoditization of the news business (Goyanes, 2014), leading to an increasing deterioration in the autonomy of journalists and thus their capacity to deal with internal and external pressure. This study provides further evidence to understand the main organizational and individual-level antecedents of such influences. Drawing on Bourdieu's field theory and based on a secondary analysis of Spanish data from the World of Journalism project, this study presents five insightful contributions related to this line of inquiry.

First, we show the key role of media ownership in shaping the level of news influences in Spain. Specifically, our results indicate that journalists working in public media companies are more prone to suffer internal editorial influences than journalists working on private/commercial ones. The Spanish case may be paradigmatic of the Mediterranean or pluralistic polarized media system, with the long-standing connection between political power and public services (Soengas & Rodríguez-Vázquez, 2015). In this regard, political interventionism in public media companies is well documented in most Spanish public media companies (Gómez-Montano, 2013), although its level may vary according to different historic stages and societal situations. These political influences are, however, not directly executed by individuals holding political responsibilities; our results indicate that this association is not statistically significant. Therefore, external political and commercial influences are not organizationally dependent, that is, there is no difference between public and private/commercial media companies. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that political influences may be prevalent in public media companies via internal editorial influence achieved by appointing political commissioners and like-minded managers. In fact, research on Spanish public service broadcasting agrees on the key role of the political pole in shaping the agenda and news content of media services through internal influences based on the political control of editors, heads of sections, and the appointment of political commissioners (Humanes et al., 2013). Therefore, although our results only indicate a significant association between public media companies and internal editorial influences, we cannot rule out the possibility that these internal influences are de facto external and political.

Second, our results show the crucial role of journalists' autonomy in predicting both internal editorial influences and external political and commercial ones. As can be expected, journalists with a lack of autonomy are more prone to suffer both types of influence. Hence, a potential antidote to pressures from inside and outside news organizations is to empower journalists with one of the traditional values associated with their profession: autonomy. However, both the commercialization of the news business and the growing precarization of news-workers' labor conditions undermine the traditional determination of journalists to build trust and confidence in their work by having a robust shell of individual autonomy that guards against outside influence. Our findings thus offer a clear, practical implication for news organizations: For journalists to properly perform their role as watchdogs, building autonomy is crucial in fostering trust with audiences and increasing the overall quality of news content. In a context of journalism erosion, one in which traditional values of the craft are challenged by economic and financial imperatives, internal and external influences

may increase. Fostering autonomy may be a crucial antidote to these pressures, with news organizations playing a fundamental role in empowering news-workers with the indispensable freedom and independence to select and manage news content, guided by standard values of the profession.

Third, similar to journalists' autonomy, the temporary or permanent nature of journalists' contracts is a key predictor of internal editorial influence, such that journalists holding a temporary position are more prone to suffer internal editorial influence. However, this relationship is not significant when it comes to explaining external political and commercial influences. Therefore, the temporary or permanent nature of a journalist's position inside a news organization is only significant in terms of explaining the internal pressures effected by the owners or managers of media companies. These results show the challenging situation of temporary journalists when dealing with inside influences: As temporary workers, they may feel that in order to secure their jobs, they need to accept the direct orders, pressures, and influences of their superiors when it comes to defining the approach and perspective of the news pieces they produce. The effects of journalists' positions on internal editorial influences are even stronger in a context in which thousands of news-workers have been laid off and hundreds of news organizations shut down (Conde et al., 2018). These figures send a clear message to many journalists, arguably increasing the level of internal influences as a result. If journalists perceive that their position may be in jeopardy because of real or perceived factors deriving from the state of the news industry, they may be more prone to accept internal influences that undermine their autonomy and challenge the independence of the news content produced.

Solving internal influences stemming from the temporary position of journalists could be as easy as turning these temporary contracts into permanent ones. However, the financial constraints of most Spanish news organizations preclude such internal promotions, given the subsequent challenges that might cause, as the present study demonstrates. However, beyond financial constraints, news organizations' reluctance to consolidate temporary workers and turn them into permanent staff may hinder other more controversial dispositions, such as control management and limitation of individual autonomy. Spanish news organizations are correctly performing their function as the Fourth Estate, generally updating citizens on meaningful public events and politics and holding authorities accountable for their actions. However, recent legislation in relation to the status of workers may support critical determinations of news organizations in relation to the stabilization of temporary workers and the overemphasis on trainees and freelancers.

Fourth, we empirically show the cleaved divergent moderation effect of journalists' position on the relationship between age and internal editorial influences. The interaction term shows how the distance between temporary and permanent journalists increases as age increases. Therefore, both journalists' age and position play a significant role in explaining the internal editorial influences suffered by news-workers. Older journalists holding a temporary position are more prone to perceive and suffer internal influences, while older journalists holding a permanent position are less likely to do so. In other words, the relationship between age and internal influences is significant and positive when journalists hold a temporary contract, whereas this relation is negative when journalist holds a permanent one. Older journalists with a permanent contract have the experience and serenity to react calmly to potential internal influences. Contrarily, older journalists with a temporary contract might feel that they need to secure their job, given a context in which layoffs are widespread, and finding a new position in the business is not an easy task, especially for those who are older.

Fifth, and finally, our results emphasize the role of gender in explaining the relationship between both internal and external influences and journalists' autonomy. Specifically, the interaction term suggests that gender is a contributory, transverse negative moderator (Holbert & Park, 2019) in such a way that when autonomy is low, female journalists are more prone than male journalists to suffer both internal and external influences. However, when their autonomy is high, female journalists are less likely to suffer both types of influences, and this relationship is negative in all cases. Now we can conclude that Bourdieu's suggestions regarding the field of forces in journalism could be both confirmed and specified by our study. The complex dynamics among different types of capital—political capital (political force), economic capital (the force of the market), and the autonomous journalistic capital (legitimacy and skills)—have been observed through our analysis on different levels, but it was autonomy that could be considered a type of capital of central importance. This finding is consonant with the field theoretical approach to autonomous fields in societal reality that suggest that in order to be considered an autonomous field or, in other words, a profession, the subfield should have a unique type of capital. When the role and worth of this unique capital on the given field—journalism, in our case—decline, autonomy will immediately suffer serious corruption.

Our analysis shows that autonomy could be threatened by both economic and political forces that lead to corrupted journalistic autonomy and the devaluation of journalistic capital such as legitimacy, impartiality, and other professional standards. However, autonomy could be threatened by inner forces as well. The first example is when editors, who are mediators among external forces (through both economic and political capital) and the autonomous field of journalism, threaten the autonomy of journalists. The force of this effect moves along with the journalists' position (i.e., the scale of their accumulated capital) on the field. Thus, as our results show, journalists with more (and especially more diverse) capital are less likely to be threatened by both inner and external forces than their less capitalized peers. Typical examples of vulnerable journalists with a low level of accumulated capital (and thus with corrupted autonomy) are journalists with temporary contracts. Moreover, cumulative disadvantages occur when these precariously situated employees suffer other detrimental positional states because of external forces—typically the labor market, in which both women and older people are more vulnerable than their male and younger peers. Thus, when we calculate the vulnerability of agents on the field of journalism, we have to calculate with a complex field of external and internal forces indeed— when advantages as well as disadvantages could be cumulated and could thus seriously threaten not only the profession itself, but the agents participating on the field as well.

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