



An overview of Latin American Journalistic Culture(s). The profile, professional situation and perception of journalists in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador and Mexico

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Introduction

THIS chapter draws on survey data collected in the international *Worlds of Journalism Study* (WJS)¹, with probabilistic samples of journalists in seven Latin American countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador and Mexico. Through descriptive and multivariate tests, we present the most complete

¹ Official website of the project *Worlds of Journalism Study*: <http://worldsofjournalism.org/> [recovered 14/02/17].

panorama to date of contemporary Latin American journalists, their work conditions and their beliefs, including: their demographic and occupational profiles, their perceptions of the contextual factors that influence their work, the professional roles they support, the degree of autonomy they believe they exercise on the job, their ethical frameworks, levels of trust in social institutions including the media system itself and changes in journalism practice.

1. Beyond *Worlds of journalism Study* in Latin America

The Latin American section of WJS is developing the study in this region based on, firstly, study requirements for the 67 participating countries developed by the project's central coordinating committee and, secondly, the contextual reality of Latin America. The context of Latin American journalists includes not only aspects of journalism, and the media, but also the relationship of journalists and the media system with the other actors and social fields within each country in particular, and Latin America in general.

A second goal of the study is to strengthen the community of journalism studies scholars in the region to facilitate exchange of ideas, data and methods, and ultimately to improve research quantity and quality. This initiative is intended to address the lack of academic work focused on the area of journalism and communication in Latin America, and consolidate and improve the methodologies of the first studies that appeared in the last decades of the 20th century. These pioneering studies focused narrowly on journalists without considering broader systems, “isolating the object of analysis in question” (Oller & Chavero, 2016: 22). As Mellado (2009: 10) states, “the research topics have been more oriented towards the receiver, the medium or the message for themselves, not to the transmitter as subject influenced and conditioned by a contextual and professional reality”. To avoid these problems, according to Esser & Vliegenthart (2018), this comparative study tries to combine the *substance* and *method* through five steps: contextual descriptions; functional equivalents; classifications and typologies; explanation; and prediction.

Although the WJS is a pioneer in many respects, the first large group of comparative survey research on journalism that included some

countries of Latin America appeared in the 1990s (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986; Weaver, 1998; Donsbach & Patterson, 1992; Virtue et al., 1994; Wilke, 1992, 1994, 1996; Donsbach & Klett, 1993, among others). The inclusion of some Latin American countries responded to a “wave of democratic reforms [that] promised new growth and progress” in the region (Salwen & Garrison, 2009: 185). These studies were a prelude to the WJS, which “has become the largest collaborative endeavor in the field, and a model for many other, similar studies” (Hanusch & Hanitzsch, 2017: 532). The early studies began to outline the comparative analysis in Latin American that today is consolidated through WJS and other related projects such as *Journalistic Role Performance Around the Globe*² and *Journalism Students Across the Globe*³.

1.1. From Global to Regional Latin American Journalism

Although international studies have documented important similarities and differences among journalists and their conceptions about journalism around the world (Sreberny-Mohammadi, Nordenstreng, Stevenson & Ugboajah, 1985; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986; Weaver, 1998; Herscovitz, 2004; Mwesige, 2004; Ramaprasad, 2001; Stevenson, 2003; Norris, 2004; Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006; Weaver *et al.*, 2007; Hanitzsch *et al.*, 2011; Oller & Meier, 2012; Mellado *et al.*, 2012; Cohen, 2013; Esser, 2013; Hanusch & Hanitzsch, 2017; among others), comparative studies dedicated to Latin American journalists have been extremely scarce, and even less so studies which connect these countries’ changing political and media systems with journalist’s perceptions.

Latin American countries are geographically proximate and share some common colonial experiences, including racially based inequalities that persist today. They also were inserted into the international economic order in ways privileging extraction of raw materials, late industrialization, and crises in representation that led to various forms of authoritarian rule as late as the early 1990s. While these broad contours show some similarities, development paths in

² Webwite of Journalistic Role Performance Around the Globe Project: <http://www.journalisticperformance.org/> [recovered 14/05/17].

³ Webwite of *Journalism Students Across the Globe* Project: <http://www.jstudentsproject.org/> [recovered 14/05/17].

the 20th and 21st century have been very diverse, however. Most recently, some countries greatly benefited from early 21st century commodity boom spurred by Chinese industrialization, creating for example a precarious but large lower middle class in Brazil for the first time (in part because of social policies under a center left government), while Mexican wages remained the lowest in purchasing power despite the country's oil wealth. The media systems of these countries share these broad similarities and important differences.

The configuration of Latin American journalism and media systems is, therefore, different from a typical polarized pluralist media system as for example in countries of southern Europe. Authors like Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002) found similarities between Latin American media systems and Hallin and Mancini's Polarized Pluralist Model (2004). However, even though they are historical and culturally close -specially to Spain and Portugal-, Latin American countries are far from similar to European countries because most of them have experienced diverse types of authoritarian governments and forms of transition to democracy; (de)regulation of media systems; concentration and diversification based on media systems that are fundamentally privatized; transition/confrontation between models of economic liberalization and social economy; political polarization; and social challenges -crisis, endemic inequality, violence and conflict, corruption, segregation, and so on- that define the idiosyncrasy of an separate Latin America journalism(s).

More interesting is the Guerrero and Márquez-Ramírez "Captured Liberalism" model (2015). The media system model they describe is liberal because on the surface, Latin American systems retain the formalities of a commercial system with constitutionally protected expression. However, media systems are captured because interests of many kinds instrumentalize journalism for particular gain. As Hughes noted (2017: 391), "under these circumstances, formal protections and policies cannot be taken at face value. Media regulation is instead a political discourse overlaying a system of formal and informal understandings that adapt to national circumstances while sharing common origins".

Another difference in the region is that these are formally democratic countries, with elections but varying degrees of weakness in the rule

of law and protection of civil rights including freedom of expression and the press. In some cases, these countries have become highly insecure, with journalists being targeted for routinized anti-press violence from criminal and political actors (Hughes *et al.*, 2017). In other cases, journalists work in relatively peaceful conditions but face other limitations on autonomy that are commercially or culturally based (Hughes & Lawson 2004).

Nowadays, there is a heated debate on the role of journalism, media policy and reform, and even a clear-cut antagonism between some media outlets and the populist heads of State and between governments, journalists and the largest media conglomerates. For example, Ecuador faces a highly interventionist type of elected populist president, while media elites were at odds with left-of-center governments in Argentina and Brazil (Oller, Amado & Moreira, 2016). Others like Mexico, Chile, Colombia and El Salvador continue to display a high level of media concentration and collusion between media and political elites, although in each country independent media or individual critical journalists play an important role in diversifying the mediated public sphere (Guerrero & Márquez, 2014; Hellmueller & Mellado, 2016; Garcés & Arroyave, 2016).

The empirical study of Latin American journalism(s) should then emphasize similarities and difference across countries, as well as with other world regions including those in the North and West that tend to be the focus of most of the work in Journalism Studies.

Methodology

This study, based on the methodology proposed by the project WJS, presents the results obtained from the surveys conducted in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador and Mexico during the years 2012 to 2015. The collection of data in the field was carried out face-to-face, by telephone, e-mail and online to a representative sample, according to the method chosen in each of the countries, of 2789 journalists from 438 media outlets [Table 1]. A common questionnaire was used, with a translation into Spanish from the original English consolidated among all the Spanish speaking member of the WJS team.

Surveys were carried out by members of the research teams in each of these countries. Specifically, these teams were coordinated by Adriana Amado of the Universidad Nacional La Matanza in Argentina; Miguel Garcés and Jesus Arroyave of the Universidad del Norte in Colombia, José Luis Benítez of the Universidad Central Americana José Simeón Cañas (UCA) in El Salvador; Martín Oller Alonso of the Universidad de La Habana and Palmira Chavero of the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) in Ecuador; Sallie Hughes of the University of Miami and Mireya Márquez of the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico; Claudia Mellado of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso in Chile; and Sonia Virginia Moreira of the State University of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil.

Table 1. Sample and statistical data by country

Country	Population size	Sample size	MOE	Response rate	Sampling strategy	WJS Coordinator
Argentina	5525	363	4.97	25.92%	<p>Organization: convenience sample & purposive quota sampling.</p> <p>Neither official data of the national media system nor any censuses of journalists available -> sample was established from available information of media outlets and demographic patterns (distribution of inhabitants in different regions as proxy): Quota scheme based on national composition of news media.</p> <p>Journalists: convenience sample</p> <p>Contacted journalists of selected media in different regions. Then combined snowball sampling to complete the quote.</p>	Adriana Amado

					Newsrooms size taken into account: yes.	
Brazil	44915	376	5,03	35.1%	<p>Organization: Simple random sampling & convenience sample Convenience sample: Organizations selected from a list of journalists in different regions presented by an agency.</p> <p>Journalists: Simply random & convenience sample Convenience sample: Organizations selected from a list of journalists in different regions presented by an agency.</p> <p>Newsrooms size taken into account: yes.</p>	Sonia Virginia Moreira
Chile	5000	491	4.2	45.05%	<p>Organization: stratified proportionally random sampling Stratification Criteria: media types, reach</p> <p>Journalists: stratified sampling</p> <p>Newsrooms size taken into account: yes</p>	Claudia Mellado
Colombia	10000	560	4.02	63%	<p>Organization: stratified proportionally systematic sampling & purposive quota sampling Stratification Criteria: media types</p> <p>Journalists:</p>	Jesus Arroyave & Miguel Garcés

					<p>purposively chosen based on quota</p> <p>Quotation Criteria: region, rank, gender</p> <p>Newsrooms size taken into account: yes</p>	
Ecuador	17000	372	5.03	14%	<p>Organization: simple random sampling, purposive quota sampling & convenience sample</p> <p>Simply random choice from media list of the principal institution of communication in Ecuador (SECOM, Secretaría de comunicación). In this list, we selected the media and journalists. Additional list for community media</p> <p>Quotation Criteria: media types, reach, ownership</p> <p>Journalists: simply random & convenience sample</p> <p>The most common was the snowball sample.</p> <p>Newsrooms size taken into account: yes</p>	Martín Oller & Palmira Chavero
El Salvador	710	250	4.99	51.2%	<p>Organization: stratified proportionally systematic sampling, purposive quota sampling & convenience sample</p> <p>Criteria: media types, reach</p> <p>Convenience sample:</p>	José Luis Benítez

					<p>Selection of organizations to which we happened to have access</p> <p>Journalists: convenience sample</p> <p>Journalists that were willing to participate in the study and those who answered the online questionnaire</p> <p>Newsrooms size taken into account: yes</p>	
México	18400	377	5	57%	<p>Organization: stratified proportionally random sampling</p> <p>Stratification Criteria: media type, geographic sub-regions</p> <p>Compiled lists in one year of work.</p> <p>Journalists: No lists available. Care was taken not to snowball. Rank and gender taken into account. Asked for respondents with different characteristics in news organization.</p> <p>Newsrooms size taken into account: yes</p>	Sallie Hughes & Mireya Márquez
TOTAL	101550	2789	4.74	41.61%		Coordinator of WJS in LATAM: Martín Oller

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The sampling technique was based on simple and intentional random sampling or convenience, according to each country's methodological decision. The simple random sampling was established from the

official reports that showed the number of professionals related to journalism in the Latin American countries analyzed. In cases where this information does not exist, as in Argentina, it was based on media lists and demographic data to carry out the stratification. From the information collected, media were selected, representing the aggregate sample unit, from a multistage sampling that included an intentional selection by quotas based on criteria of ownership (public, state, private and mixed); type (daily, weekly newspapers, magazines, news agencies, radio, television and online media, whether native or adhering to a main medium); range of coverage (local, regional, national and international) and geographic region.

Regarding the selection of journalists, a snowball sampling was carried out, which made it possible to overcome the difficulties of selecting and locating them. As a result, a sample ($N = 2789$) was obtained from an estimated universe ($N = 101550$) for 95% confidence and a margin of error of 4.74.

The evaluation of the sample of journalists was based, firstly, on the analysis of their psychographic profiles:

- The variables analyzed with respect to the *profile of journalists* were: years of experience in journalism; gender; age; politic ideology; ethnic group; importance given to religion; religious belief; level/capacity of association within the field of journalism; level and specialty of studies; and relationship between training and current work.

- The analyzed variables related to the *professional situation* of the journalists were: professional position and number of media in/for which he or she works; current employment category; type of contract; number of platforms/informative products; paid activities in addition to journalism; number and type of informative fronts/topics/areas; notes/pieces of information on which he or she works per week; and ownership, type and scope of the medium in which he or she works.

Secondly, the *perceptions of journalists* were studied based on the main dimensions that determine their professional performance in order to establish certain common and proper features in Latin

American countries that allow defining a common way of acting in the region:

- Contextual influence factors
- Self-perception of professional roles
- Concept of professional ethics
- Degree of professional autonomy
- Levels of trust in the main institutions of the country
- Changes in Latin American journalism during the last years

Results

Backgrounds and profile of journalists

Regionally in Latin America, six in ten surveyed journalists are male, in their mid-thirties and hold a university degree in communication or journalism. Of the 2789 interviewed journalists from 438 media, 1682 were men, which represents 60.3% of the overall sample, and 1092 (39.4%) were women. A similar proportion (33%), slightly more representative of women, can be found in the analysis of Weaver & Wilhoit (1996) in their study of 19 countries.

On average, Latin American journalists were 35.33 years old, although the main age range is between 28 and 35 years old, as the mode (28 years old) and the median (33 years old) show. This age is slightly lower than the average age found in Brazil, Chile and Mexico in the first decade of the 21st century (37.7 years old) (Mellado *et al.*, 2012).

The average age of female journalists (32,8 years old) is lower than that of their male counterparts (37,8 years old), coinciding with the results offered in the Global Media Monitoring 2015 carried out in Latin America. This suggests that women leave journalism earlier than men, a hypothesis supported by the fact that women in the sample on average had worked 9 years in journalism while men had 12 years work experience (this difference was statistically significant according to Anova tests for differences in the means).

Latin American journalists are well educated compared to the overall population; 70.9 percent have a Bachelor's degree, 13.4 percent a Master's and 1 percent a PhD. Only 0.8 percent of journalists do not

have secondary studies. This high proportion of university trained journalists was similar in the 1990s in the Latin America region, especially in Chile and Ecuador (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996). Furthermore, the large majority of them (73.9%) have specialized in journalism (44.3%), communication (11.5%) or both (18.1%).

Ethnicity is very difficult to measure in Latin America because of historical national policies of whitening the population through ideological indoctrination and census categorizations, as well as other non-governmental forms of discrimination against minority groups. Only four country teams asked participants if they identified with a particular ethnic group, following the question with “which one?” if the answer was affirmative. Cautioning that these are self-identifications, the results show a mixed though relatively poor record of inclusion in Latin American newsrooms. In Mexico 11% of the sampled journalists identified as indigenous (about one-third of the national estimate), while only 1% did in Ecuador, one-seventh of the national estimate (CIA World Factbook 2017). In El Salvador, 4% self-identified as indigenous, much higher than the national estimate of 0.2%. Meanwhile in Brazil, 31% identified as afro-descendent while only 1% did in Ecuador. National estimates are that 50% of Brazilians are mulatto or “black” while 6.2% of Ecuadorans identify as Afro-Ecuadoran or mulatto.

The same four country teams asked about religious preferences. As expected, the principal religious affiliation was Roman Catholic (22.8%), but a tendency to secularism (17%) can be seen - only one-fifth of journalists considered religion very or extremely important (20.2%). In each country journalists were proportionally much more secular than the general populations (CIA 2017). However, the diversity of journalists in Latin America can also be seen in responses to this question. In Brazil, almost 7% of journalists professed their believe in an Spiritism, popularized in the 20th century by the late religious leader Chico Xavier. Another 3% followed afro-Brazilian religions such as Candomblé. 12% of El Salvador’s journalists identified as Protestant and another 3% as evangelical, in line with the rise of evangelical Protestantism in that country. Brazil is another country where Protestantism has grown in previous decades; 9% of journalists there professed that faith. Mexican journalists were

the least diverse, and least religious of the four countries: 50% professed no religion and 47% professed to be Catholic, although those who did believe thought religion was very or extremely important. Ecuador had the highest percentage professing a Catholic faith, 63%. In the sample of 1319 journalists across four countries, only 2 identified themselves as Jewish, and both were in Brazil.

While the journalists who were asked tended to be more secular than the general population of their countries, they also tended to have a left-center political tendency in greater proportions. Finally, the average Latin American journalist is slightly left of center. On a 10-point scale where 10 is right, 5 is center and 0 is left, national averages were 3.7 in Brazil, 4.2 in Chile and Mexico, 4.3 in Ecuador and 4.6 in El Salvador.

In the results of WJS we found great similarities within the profile of journalists who practiced the profession in the last decade of the twentieth century in Latin America. Herscovitz & Cardoso (1998) observed that in Brazil journalists were men (58%), young (between the ages of 25 and 36), white (92%), reporters without editorial responsibility (84%), with relatively little professional experience (9 years or more), and without religion (80%); who are required to have a bachelor's degree in journalism for licensing, according to the law passed in 1979.

Wilke (1998), in his analysis of journalists in Mexico⁴, Chile and Ecuador, observed that in the first country of these three two fifths of the journalists were less than 29 years old and between 30 and 39 years old; of all these, three quarters were men and one quarter were women. Furthermore, in Mexico, 72% of journalists attended a university, although 55% did not leave with a degree; 56% had been working as journalists up to 10 years; working primarily for newspapers, although 10% worked in television, and almost half was responsible for domestic politics section. In Ecuador⁵, one third of the journalists is up to 39 years old and one third is over 40 years old; of all these, three quarters were men and one quarter women. The majority of journalists in Ecuador work for newspapers and 20% in

⁴ Surveys carried on for Goehring (1992).

⁵ Surveys carried on for Zwermann (1992).

television; two fifths were responsible for domestic politics, and 90% had a university degree. With respect to this country, Virtue *et al.* (1994) add that journalists considered the lack of newsroom independence, low salaries and training their major problems. In Chile⁶, one third is up to 29 and between 30 and 39 years old; of all these, three fifths were men and two fifths were women. 38% of Chilean journalists had been working as journalists between one and three years; one sixth was responsible for domestic politics; and 80% had a university degree, with 70% having completed academic journalism training.

Virtue *et al.* (1994) in their analysis of journalism and journalists in Colombia found that 24% of the journalists considered their salary adequate; more of them have made some half-hearted attempts at unionization, but these failed because of a lack of solidarity among news people; 60% said that journalism schools were bad, while just 7% said they were good; and the main problems of journalists were personal safety for 39%, independence of the newsroom for 24%, and low salaries for 18%. Besides, working journalists and management alike give the schools a failing grade, they are highly critical of the schools of social communication and always eager to improve the quality of their publications and newscasts. According to these authors, in Colombia there were no statistics available for the number of women in the newsrooms, but the number seems to grow.

Professional situation of journalists in the newsroom

Almost three-quarters of Latin American journalists surveyed said they worked full-time (73.2%), whereas nearly a fifth (19.8%) of the respondents indicated they worked part-time, and 6.7% worked as freelance journalist. However, differences across countries suggested journalists in Argentina and Brazil, where only 58% and 59% of journalists worked fulltime, respectively, were more likely on average to combine journalism with other jobs. About 83% of journalists in Mexico and Colombia and about 70% of journalists in Ecuador and El Salvador reported working fulltime. Of those with full or part-time employment, 68% said they held permanent positions, and 32% worked on a temporary contract, suggesting about one-third of

⁶ Surveys carried on for Rehbein González (1994).

journalists work in an informal labor situation (born out by the 31% who said they work in additional jobs outside of journalism). Almost three quarters of Latin American journalists (71.8%) worked for one newsroom.

Journalism in Latin America does not seem to be a lifelong career for many journalists. On average, respondents had worked for almost 11 years ($s=9.093$), while almost two thirds (61.8%) had less than 10 years of professional experience and only one fifth (23%) had between 10 and 20 years of experience. At the national level, Chilean journalists seemed to exit the profession more quickly than journalists in other countries, staying about 8.5 years on average, while in contrast Argentine journalists had the greatest longevity (about 14 years on average). Some of this is due to gender differences. On average, women had three years less experience than men.

In every country except for Colombia, journalists are more likely to be assigned to cover a general assignment newsbeat rather than any other specialized beat: News/Current affairs (23.4%), Politics - general, foreign and domestic- (15.5%), Sports (13.8%), Culture (12.1%), Economy (10.4%) and Entertainment (8.7%) being the main topics and subjects. A few noteworthy country-level variations stand out. Chile, known for its commercially oriented press, assigned reporters to cover business and entertainment beats more often than any other country, while greater percentages of reporters in Mexico, El Salvador and Colombia covered crime and law in line with conditions of insecurity in those countries.

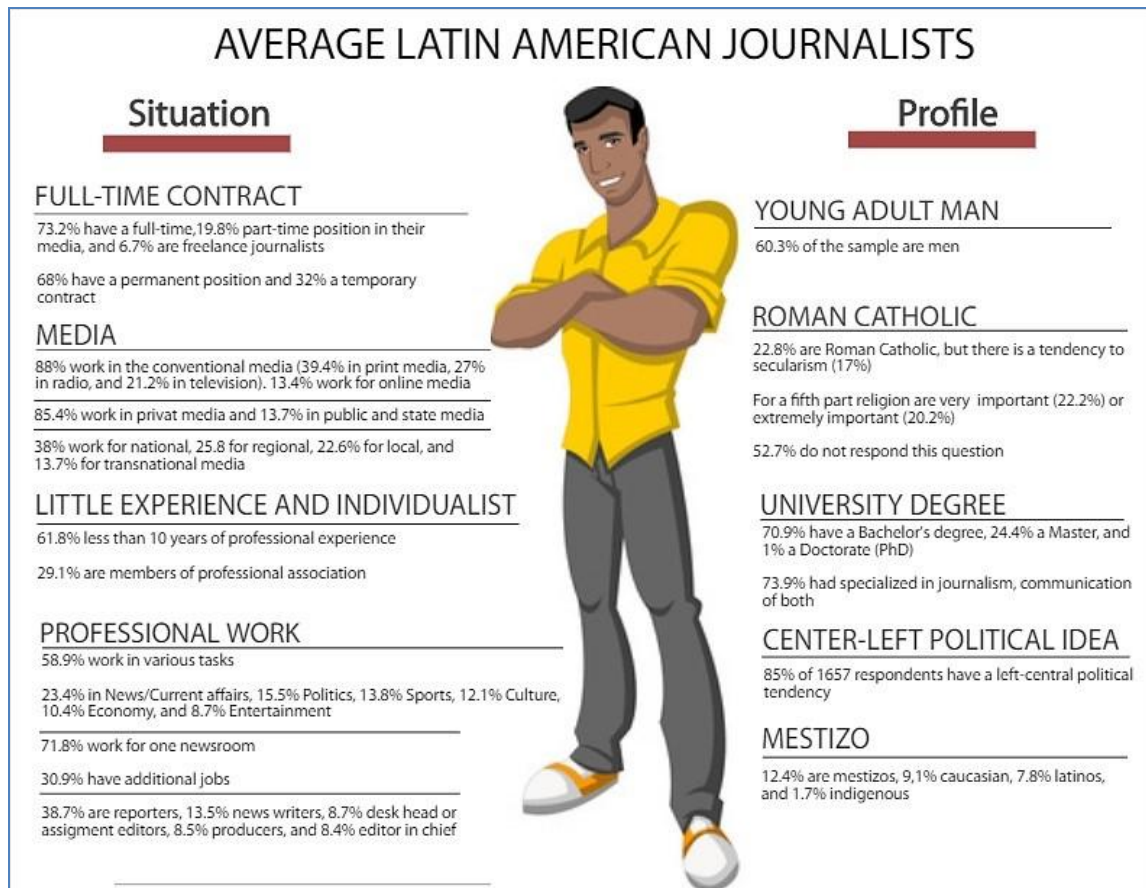
Less than a third of the interviewed journalists (29.1%) were members of a professional association. This masks a variation that reflect wariness of cooptation in organizations (Mexico, for example, where 25% of journalists are members of associations) and higher levels of membership in Brazil, where 41% are.

Regarding the type of media, the majority of Latin American journalists in the sample worked in mainstream/conventional media (88%). Concretely, most journalists worked for print media (30.3% for daily newspapers, 4.7% for weekly newspapers, and 4.4% for magazines), 27% for radio and 21.2% for television. Only 13.4% of them worked for online media (4.6% for online newsrooms of

traditional media, and 8.8% for stand-alone online news sites). Few journalists reported that they worked for news agencies (3.8%).

In terms of position in the newsroom, they were reporters (38.7%), news writer (13.5%), desk head or assignment editor (8.7%), producer (8.5%) and editor in chief (8.4%).

Figure 1. Profile and professional situation of Journalists in Latin America



Source: Prepared by the authors.

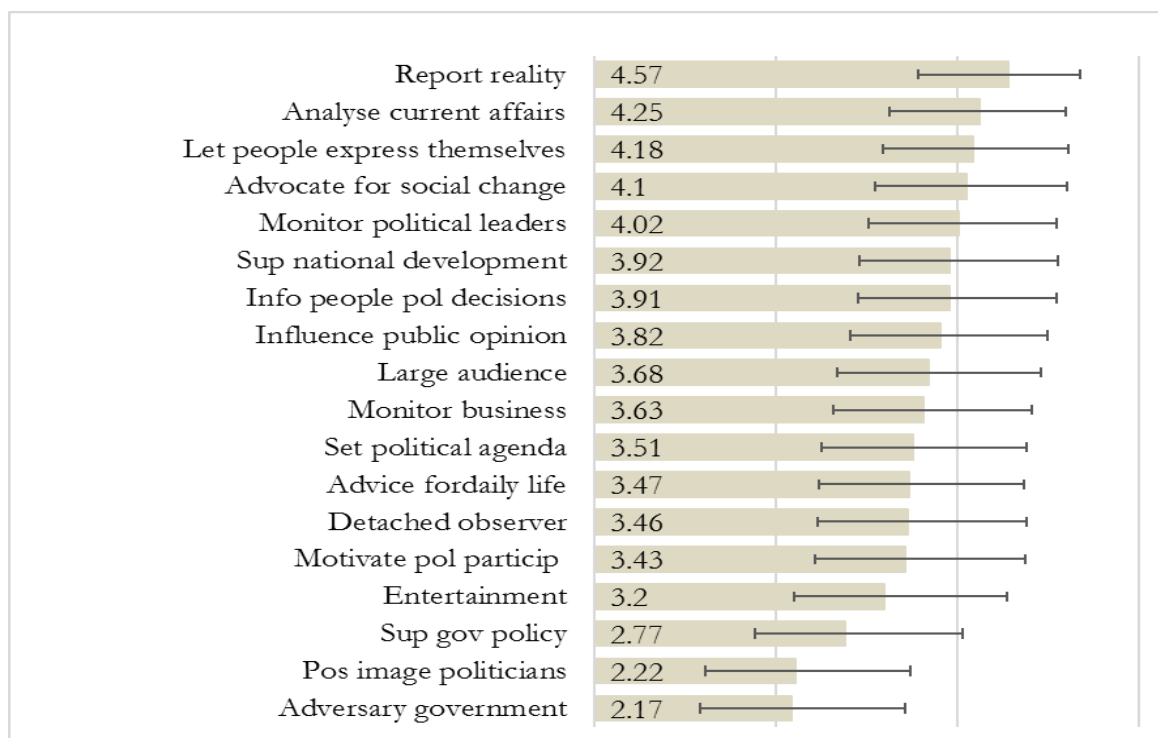
Regarding media ownership, more than three-quarters (85.4%) of interviewees worked for private media and 13.7% for public and state media. And, finally, regarding the reach of media, more than one third of journalists (38%) worked for national media, one quarter (25.8%) for regional media, 22.6% for local media and little more than one-tenth (13.7%) for transnational media [figure 1].

Journalistic roles

The survey asked journalists to express their level of support for alternatives roles for journalism in society, on a scale from 1 least

support to 5 most support. The professional functions most valued by journalists in Latin America are: report things as they are (M = 4.57); provide analysis on current issues (M = 4.25); let people express their views (M = 4.18); promote social change (M = 4.1); and monitor political leaders (M = 4.02). In addition, there is a relatively high level of consensus among respondents regarding the exercise of these professional roles, as shown by the low standard deviation indices of these variables (SD = 0.78, SD = 0.95, SD = 1.04, SD = 1.11, SD = 1.08, respectively). Although these results coincide with those of Mellado *et al.* (2012) obtained in the first wave of the WJS project (2007-2011) in Latin America, confirming that the most supported roles by Mexican, Chilean and Brazilian journalists were the professional values of detachment, being a watchdog of the government and business elite, our results show more consensus between countries.

Figure 2: Professional roles of journalists in Latin America



Importance given by the journalist in his work to each of the following aspects: 5 Extremely important; 4 Very important; 3 More or less important; 2 Little important; 1 Not important. Source: Prepared by the authors.

At the other extreme, professional activities with lower acceptance rates are related to: being an adversary of the government (M = 2.17);

give a positive image of political leaders ($M = 2.22$) and support government policies ($M = 2.77$). The amplitude of the standard deviation indicates that they are also some of the professional functions with the highest levels of dissent among journalists ($SD = 1.26$, $SD = 1.26$, $SD = 1.29$, respectively).

Of all the proposed functions, providing entertainment and relaxation to the public was one of the least supported ($M = 3.2$) and the most controversial ($SD = 1.35$). This result reflects the perceptual differences of Latin American journalists from journalists from countries like Great Britain, where Thurman *et al.* (2016) noted within their national analysis in the WJS project, that providing entertainment and relaxation to the public was one of the five most important functions among journalists [figure 2].

In Latin America, the professional actions attached to interventionist roles, associated with the participation of journalists in political affairs, show some diversity. Although none of them are among the most valued by journalists when determining their main functions in journalism, supporting national development ($M = 3.92$), influencing public opinion ($M = 3.82$) and setting the political agenda ($M = 3.51$) are the ones most supported by the respondents. On the contrary, acting as an adversary of government ($M = 2.17$), giving a positive image of political leaders ($M = 2.22$) and supporting government policies ($M = 2.77$) are the least accepted.

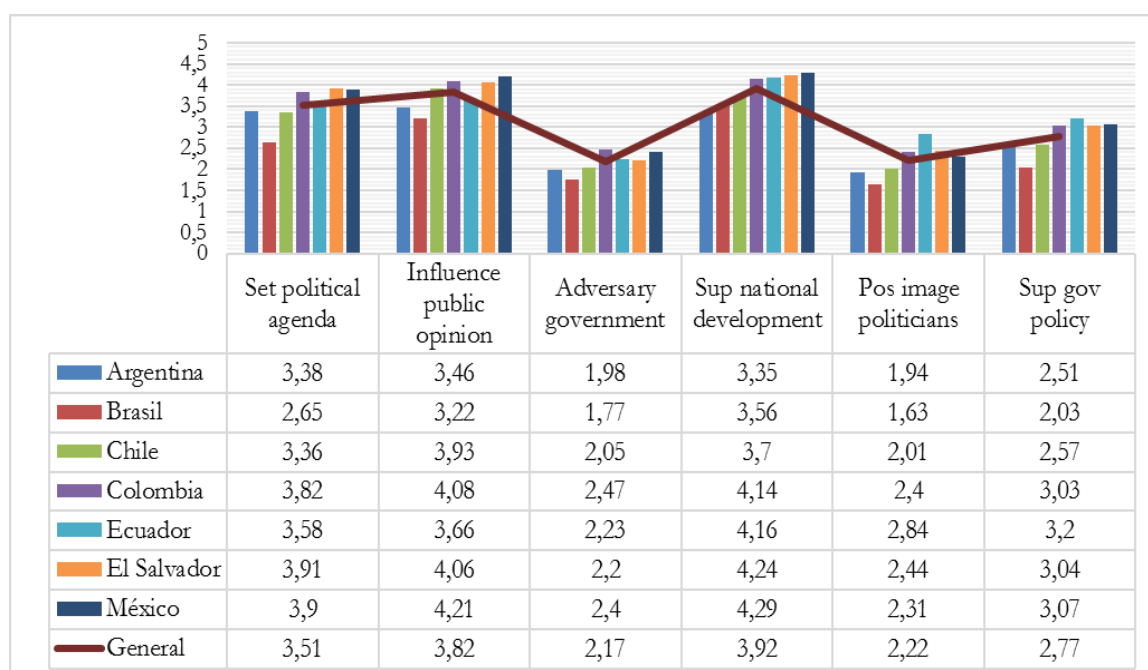
Journalists choose to act as supporters for national development through their ability to influence citizens and establish the political agenda, abandoning positions aimed at adopting a political orientation that defines them as allies or opponents of the government.

Regarding the relationship between journalists and political actors, there are certain differences in perceptions of the interventionist role among journalists from different countries. Ecuador is shown as the country where journalists offer greater support to the government and in Brazil are the least supporters of interventionism and, therefore, in favor of neutralism. In Colombia, El Salvador and Mexico journalists are defined as more active, standing above the average of countries. The activism of the journalists from these

countries shows an antagonistic position with respect to their respective governments and their attempts to set the political agenda and influence public opinion. This attempt of government control is more extreme in El Salvador, where journalists must reveal their sources if the “national interest” is at stake (Hughes & Lawson, 2005).

In spite of the small differences between countries, the formation of two groups differentiated by the level of support for interventionism in politics can be seen. A first group is formed by the countries of the Southern Cone -Argentina, Brazil and Chile-, in which journalists support a neutral professional role and do not lean clearly on any of the political alternatives and oppose a system of confrontation. This result reveals the gap between the perception and performance of journalists in these countries, as Mellado *et al.* (2016) found in their content analysis of the press in Argentina, Brazil and Chile a greater presence of the interventionist model.

Graphic 1. Journalists with policy intervention



Importance given by the journalist in his work to each of the following aspects: 5 Extremely important; 4 Very important; 3 More or less important; 2 Little important; 1 Not important. Source: Prepared by the authors.

A second group is constituted by Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador and Mexico, in which journalists are much more interventionist, both for and against the government and its policies.

This result shows that ideas of journalists from Chile did not change during the last years, as to Wilke (1998) found in the 1990s that advocate like motives were less dominant in Chile and journalists were more likely to see themselves as neutral reporters and entertainers of the public [graphic 1].

Compared to traditional models of journalism and professional roles of journalists, it can be observed the slight differences that expose the divergence of criteria in the form of reporting the information related to the power(s). This principle of professional action fits into what is known as a monitoring, or watchdog, role for journalism.

For journalists surveyed, their aspiration to report things as they are stands out above the rest and has the highest support and consensus, there being a very slight difference among Latin American countries (less than 0.21 points out of 5). However, while Brazilian journalists clearly perceive themselves as impartial observers, journalists in the other countries describe their activities from a more monitorial point of view. The results in Brazil confirms the trend towards neutrality predicted by Herscovitz & Cardoso (1998: 431) in the 1990s:

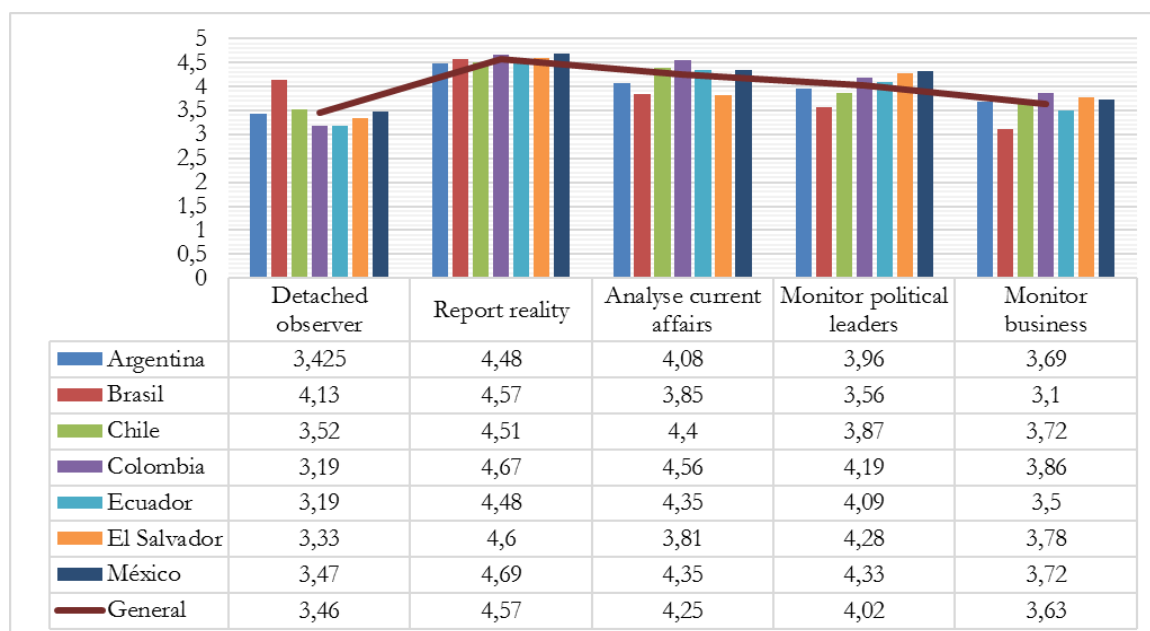
[Brazilian journalists] embrace both an interpretive/investigative role and an adversary role, with the latter mainly directed to politicians and business. They certainly are moving toward the consolidation of attitudes and practices that will allow for more balance in their roles.

In Colombia, Mexico, Ecuador and Chile journalists consider that they should analyze the main current issues that concern all citizens (M = 4.56, M = 4.35, M = 4.35, M = 4.4, respectively) and, in turn, Colombia, Mexico and El Salvador highlight the importance of monitoring the work of the main political (M = 4.19, M = 4.33, M = 4.28) and economic leaders (M = 3.86, M = 3.72, M = 3.78, respectively). This professional role assumed by the journalists in Colombia could be a response to the situation of journalists in the last decades when political violence and control from media owners

meant “the press as a watchdog is being held on a short leash [by the economic and political actors]” (Virtue *et al.*, 1994: 47).

In Brazil, Argentina and Chile journalists show greater detachment from the more committed professional roles, as can be seen by their attempt to remain impartial observers. Despite this, Argentine and Chilean journalists are less confident about economic leaders⁷. These results confirm the differences of journalists, journalism and tendencies in both in some of these countries, consolidated during the last decades, due to, firstly, “journalists in Mexico conceived their professions as more active and more adversary than those in Chile, although the journalists in Chile were in favor of criticizing abuses” (Wilke, 1998: 440) and, secondly, the populist mobilizer, disseminator, and interpreter roles are associated the most with the daily digital media and social media tasks in countries like Mexico, Argentina, Brazil and Colombia (Schmitz Weiss, 2015) [graphic 2].

Graphic 2. Level of support for neutral, analytical and monitorial roles



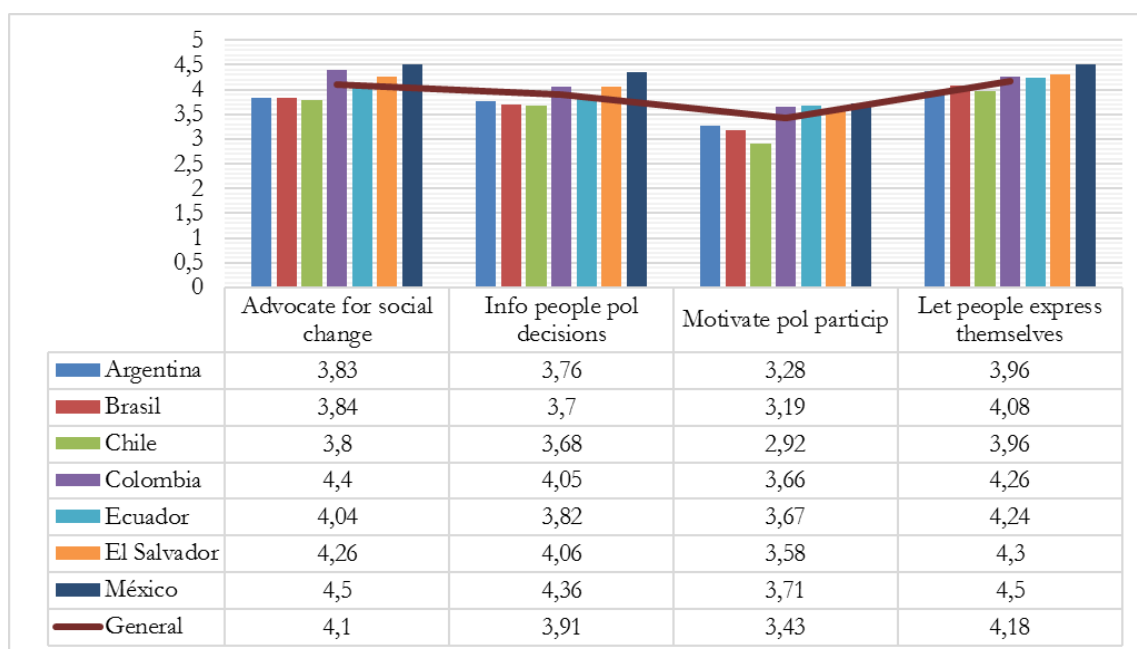
Importance given by the journalist in his work to each of the following aspects: 5 Extremely important; 4 Very important; 3 More or less important; 2 Little important; 1 Not important. Source: Prepared by the authors.

⁷ In both countries, almost all media are privately owned. In Chile, there are no public or state media, the only public is *TVN*, although private with respect to advertising, and in Argentina, *Channel 7*, *Radio Nacional*, *Telam* and a few more are state and non-public media because citizens do not pay for their services.

Among Latin American journalists, roles that support the construction of a solid citizenry have general acceptance, such as allowing people to express their points of view (M = 4.18), fomenting social change (M = 4.1), and informing citizens about political decisions (M = 3.91).

Again, the countries of the Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile and Brazil) are less committed to journalism that supports citizenship. Whereas journalists in Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador and El Salvador perceive their civic role as one of the most important. This aspect places them with countries where journalists are more aware and oriented towards citizens, thus highlighting the social value of journalism. This trend was appreciated by Wilke (1998) in Ecuador, a country where journalists thought that one of the most important tasks of the media in their country was educating and instructing the population, and they were in favor of the “developmental journalism” orientation.

Graphic 3. Journalists oriented towards citizenship



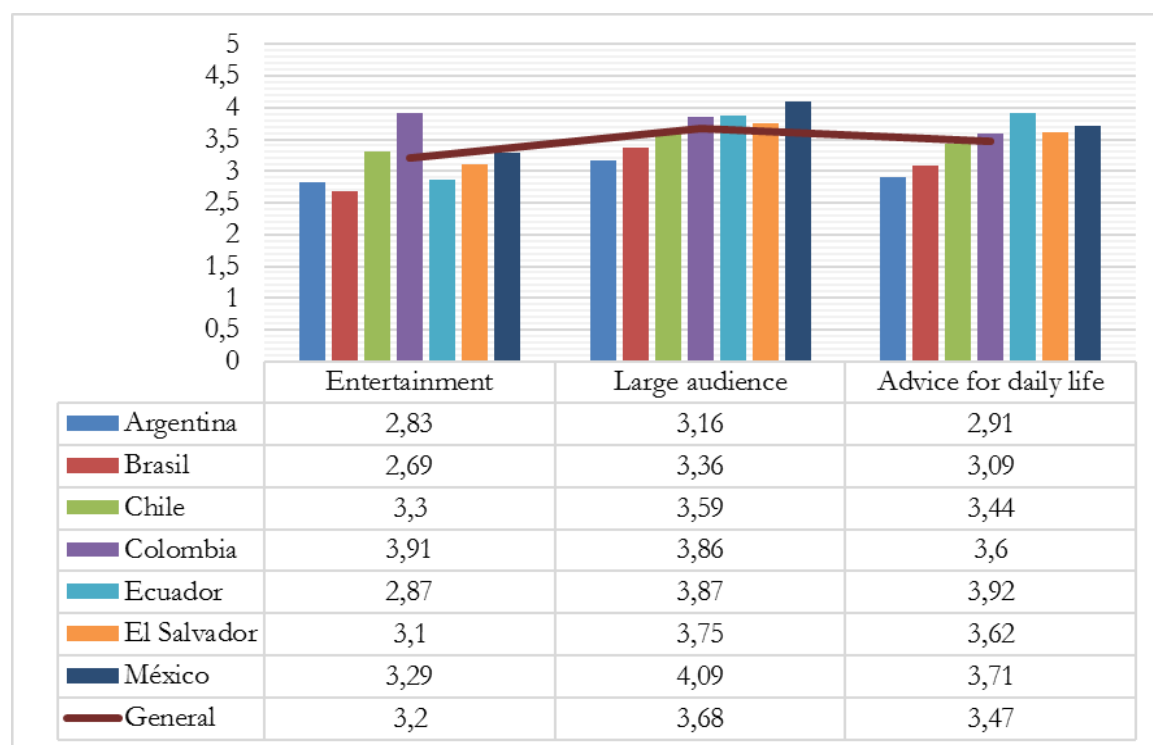
Importance given by the journalist in his work to each of the following aspects: 5 Extremely important; 4 Very important; 3 More or less important; 2 Little important; 1 Not important. Source: Prepared by the authors.

The major difference between professional actions oriented towards citizenship is related to the function of motivating citizens to

participate in political activities ($M = 3.43$). This result confirms the fact that although journalists show a high degree of commitment to their public, their role is limited to informing and allowing citizens to express themselves and make up their own minds; not so much to promote an attitude or concrete political action [graphic 3].

The practices aimed at attracting audiences ($M = 3.62$), such as providing attractive services or content, from a perspective that prioritizes the business, are widely accepted among Latin American journalists, highlighting especially Colombia ($M = 3.86$), Ecuador ($M = 3.87$) and, above all, Mexico ($M = 4.09$). Likewise, with regard to professional actions focused on advising to the public on matters concerning their daily activities, journalists in Colombia ($M = 3.6$), Mexico ($M = 3.71$), El Salvador ($M = 3.62$) and, above all, Ecuador ($M = 3.92$) are above average.

Graphic 4. Journalists oriented towards audiences



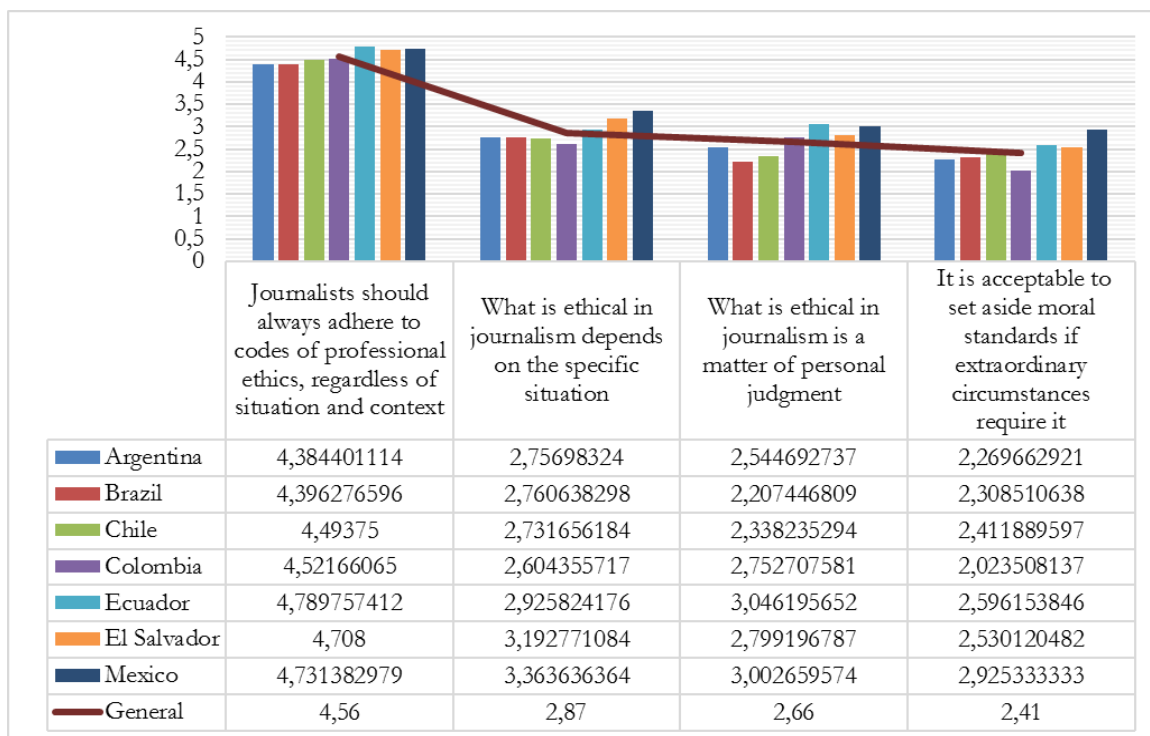
Importance given by the journalist in his work to each of the following aspects: 5 Extremely important; 4 Very important; 3 More or less important; 2 Little important; 1 Not important. Source: Prepared by the authors.

Despite the fact that in the Southern Cone countries journalists generally support a neutral attitude, and are not interested in the role

of infotainer, in Chile they offer a greater orientation towards the market. In this regard, it is particularly relevant, and even incongruous, that although journalists in Argentina and Brazil are below average in relation to the role of info-entertainer, they are the countries with the largest media conglomerates in the region, the *Clarín* group and *O Globo* respectively. This aspect could be explained due to, firstly, the link between political and/or economic powers and the media in Chile and Brazil generating contractual and patrimonialist practices that often go to the detriment of audience-oriented journalism (Waisbord, 2013; Guerrero & Márquez Ramírez, 2014; Mellado *et al.*, 2016) and, secondly, the clear institutional attempts to fortify the balance criteria and journalistic quality standards in countries like Brazil (Matos, 2009) [graphic 4].

Professional Ethics

Graphic 5. Ethical orientations of journalists



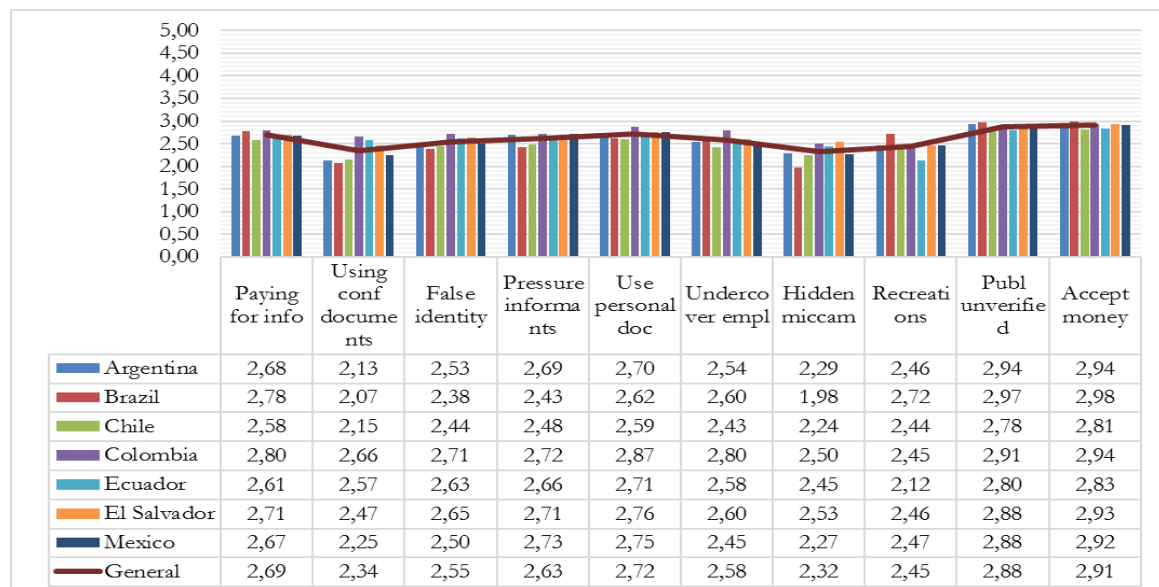
Approaches offered by the journalist towards journalism: 5 Strongly agree; 4 Somewhat agree; 3 It is not decided; 2 Somewhat disagree; 1 Strongly disagree. Source: Prepared by the authors.

The journalists almost unanimously ($M = 4.56$) agree that journalists should always adhere to the codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context, particularly in Ecuador ($M = 4.79$), Mexico (M

= 4.73) and El Salvador (M = 4.7). Nonetheless, the results in these three countries are incongruous because journalists also show major acceptance of individual ethical codes.

The ideas that ethics in journalism depend on the specific situation (M = 2.87) and that ethics in journalism are a matter of personal judgment (M = 2.66) are relatively accepted among Latin American journalists, especially in Mexico (M = 3.36). Least accepted by journalists is to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it (M = 2.41), although journalists in Mexico are the most flexible concerning this issue (M = 2.93) [graphic 5].

Graphic 6. Justification of controversial reporting methods by journalists



Professional practices that according to journalists can be justified: 1 Always justified; 2 Justified on certain occasions; 3 Do not approve under any circumstances. Source: Prepared by the authors.

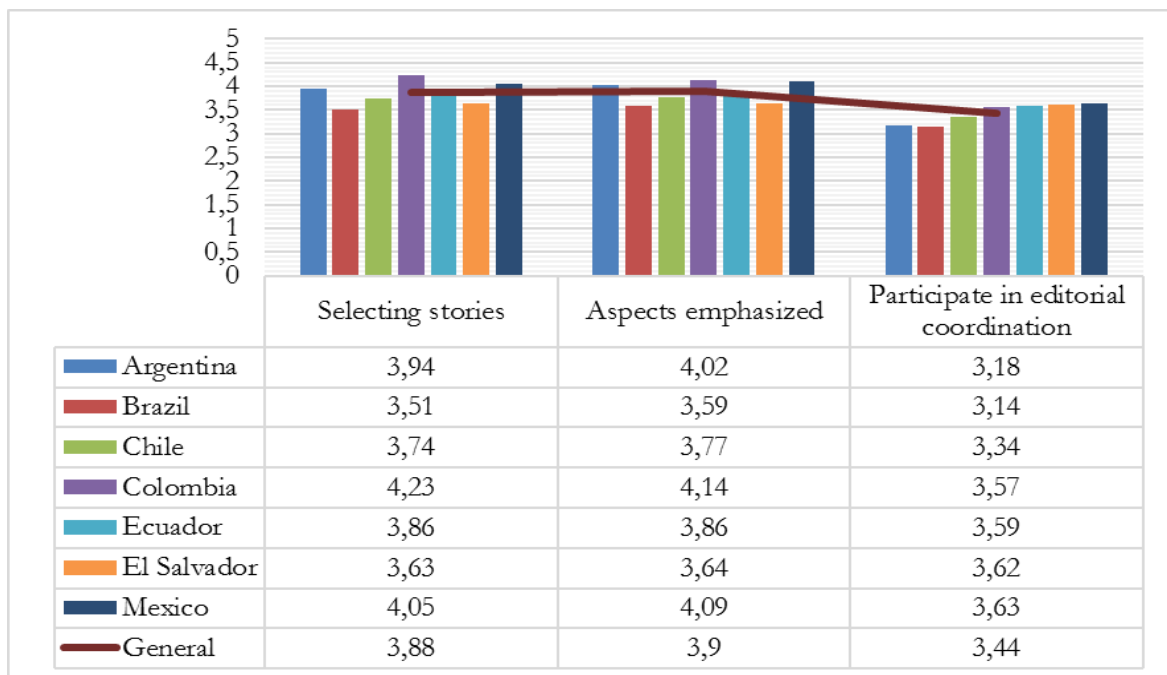
Regarding the justification of controversial reporting methods such as accepting money from sources (M = 2.91) and to publish stories with unverified content (M = 2.88) they have the lowest acceptance and agreement among journalists in all countries, particularly in Brazil (M = 2.98; M = 2.97, respectively) and Argentina (M = 2.94; M = 2.94, respectively). On the other extreme, the use of hidden microphones or cameras (M = 2.32) and the use of confidential business or government documents without authorization (M = 2.34) are practices considered justified on certain occasions, especially in Brazil (M = 1.98; M = 2.07, respectively), Chile (M = 2.24; M = 2.15),

Argentina (M = 2.29; M = 2.13, respectively) and Colombia (M = 2.50; M = 2.66). The results obtained in Brazil corroborate those obtained by Weaver & Wilhoit (1996), since 83% of the respondents considered this last practice acceptable.

Further, Colombian journalists most strongly reject the use of controversial reporting methods in general. This result shows that journalists in this country today keep a critical trend with respect to ethical standards like in the last decade of the 20th century, when, according to Virtue *et al.*, 1994), 78% of journalists interviewed found serious ethical problems among their colleagues, while 22% said ethical standards were high with a few exceptions [graphic 6].

Workplace Autonomy

Graphic 7. Journalistic autonomy



Freedom of the journalist to select and decide the aspects emphasized in the stories / news in which he works: 5 Complete freedom; 4 Much freedom; 3 Some freedom; 2 Little freedom; 1 No freedom.

Capacity of participation of the journalist in the editorial or editorial coordination within his media: 5 Always; 4 Very often; 3 Sometimes; 2 Rarely; 1 Almost never. Source: Prepared by the authors.

Journalists in Latin America perceive a relatively high degree of workplace autonomy regarding their capacity to select stories (M = 3.88) and decide which aspects to emphasize (M = 3.9). In this

regard, in Brazil (M = 3.51; M = 3.59, respectively), El Salvador (M = 3.63; M = 3.64, respectively) and Chile (M = 3.74; M = 3.77, respectively) the journalists perceive the lowest level of freedom and autonomy with respect to their capacity to select and decide about their stories. Conversely, in Colombia (M = 4.23; M = 4.14) and Mexico (M = 4.05; M = 4.09) journalists perceive the highest grade of freedom and autonomy.

The capacity of Latin American journalists to participate in editorial coordination activities (M = 3.44) is considerably reduced. In particular, in the countries of the Southern Cone: Argentina (M = 3.18), Brazil (M = 3.14) and Chile (M = 3.34) [graphic 7].

Contextual Influences

Latin American journalists are influenced by a variety of context factors, both internally within their newsrooms and externally. The principal source of influences mentioned by interviewees was journalism ethics (M = 4.31). Journalists in Mexico (M = 4.54) and Ecuador (M = 4.47) stand out above the rest of their colleagues in the other analyzed countries by highlighting the importance of their ethical convictions.

Below is a group of contextual influences with a similar rating range. First, the access to information (M = 3.89) has a great influence for journalists, particularly in Ecuador (M = 3.07) and El Salvador (M = 3.01). Second, the editorial policy of the media company (M = 3.76) is valued as very influential, highlighting El Salvador (M = 3.98) and Mexico (M = 3.95). Third, the influence of editorial supervisors (M = 3.7) is considered as very important by Salvadoran journalists (M = 4.06). Fourth, the time limits and deadlines (M = 3.66) influence the information production processes that affect, fundamentally, the journalists in Brazil (M = 3.86) and Chile (M = 3.79). Fifth, the personal values (M = 3.6) are highlighted by journalists in Argentina (M = 3.98) and Ecuador (M = 3.92). Sixth, the manager of news organizations (M = 3.54) and seventh, the owners of the media (M = 3.51). These last two influences are more appreciated by journalists in El Salvador (M = 3.94; M = 3.99, respectively) and Mexico (M = 3.7; M = 3.72, respectively), while journalists in the Southern Cone value them much less.

Of these seven influential factors highlighted by journalists, six come from within the newsrooms of the media and the professional ideas and values of journalists themselves. Only the access to information of journalists, related to information sources, comes from outside of the newsrooms. These results confirm that, in particular in Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and México the most conditioning factors are derived from the institution itself (Odriozola-Chéné *et al.*, 2016) and, in general, “in developed countries, the newsroom environment and journalistic training appear as the strongest influences in shaping their professional values and ethical perceptions” (Herscovitz & Cardoso, 1998: 431).

Graphic 8. Internal influences perceived



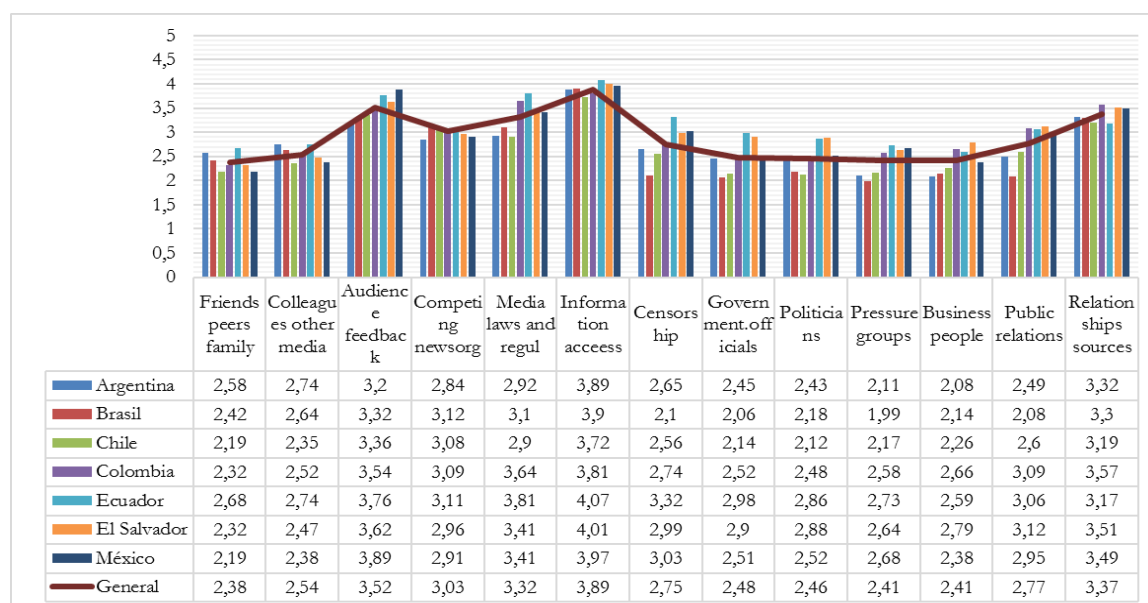
Degree of contextual influence perceived by the journalist from internal contextual sources of influence: 5 Extremely influential; 4 Very influential; 3 More or less influential; 2 Little influential; 1 Not influential Source: Prepared by the authors.

However, as will be noted in the following paragraph, most of the influence factors with the least impact on journalists originate outside the newsrooms of the media, and only one comes from the interior of newsroom. This situation has not changed in the last decades in the Latin American region, since in the 1990s Brazilian journalists perceived themselves as a professional group that socializes mainly

among themselves and were very independent from external influences (Herscovitz & Cardoso, 1998: 431) [graphic 8].

At the other extreme, the influence factors with the least impact on Latin American journalists are, firstly, friends and family (M = 2.38) and colleagues of other media (M = 2.54), highlighting the low perception of these influences of journalists in Chile (M = 2.19; M = 2.35, respectively); and Mexico (M = 2.19; M = 2.38, respectively). In a second group of influences, we found business people and pressure groups (both M = 2.41), politicians (M = 2.46), government officials (M = 2.48), advertising considerations and censorship (both M = 2.75), which journalists from the Southern Cone perceived to a lesser extent compared to the journalists of the other countries –there is the same tendency in more than half of the influence factors analyzed [graphic 9].

Graphic 9. External influences perceived



Degree of contextual influence perceived by the journalist from external contextual sources of influence: 5 Extremely influential; 4 Very influential; 3 More or less influential; 2 Little influential; 1 Not influential. Source: Prepared by the authors.

Journalism in Transition

Journalists in Latin America are aware that journalism is technological changes are making journalism much more interactive as media channels transition from analog to digital in this region. According to

the respondents, the most important changes in journalism are related to the influences from social media (M = 4.53), the feedback of the audience (M = 4.15), the material produced by the audience as blogs, videos, etc. (M = 4.14) and the involvement of the audience in news production (M=4.09).

Proof of this is that from the foundation in 1998 of *ElFaro.net* in El Salvador -becoming the first online/native, or born online news site in Latin America- (Harlow & Salaverría, 2016), this transition from analog to digital in Latin America has continued unstoppably (Schmitz Weiss, 2015): *La Nación* (Argentina) started with digital and data-driven journalism working with public data; in Brazil, media and journalists began to implement conferences, hacking festivals, data-driven investigations; *El Tiempo* (Colombia) has recently embarked on a digital, crowd-sourced initiative to map de crime and corruption using specific digital technologies; and in Mexico, journalists are creating new journalism entities, or non-legacy organizations via digital and print platforms such as *Animal Politico* (2010).

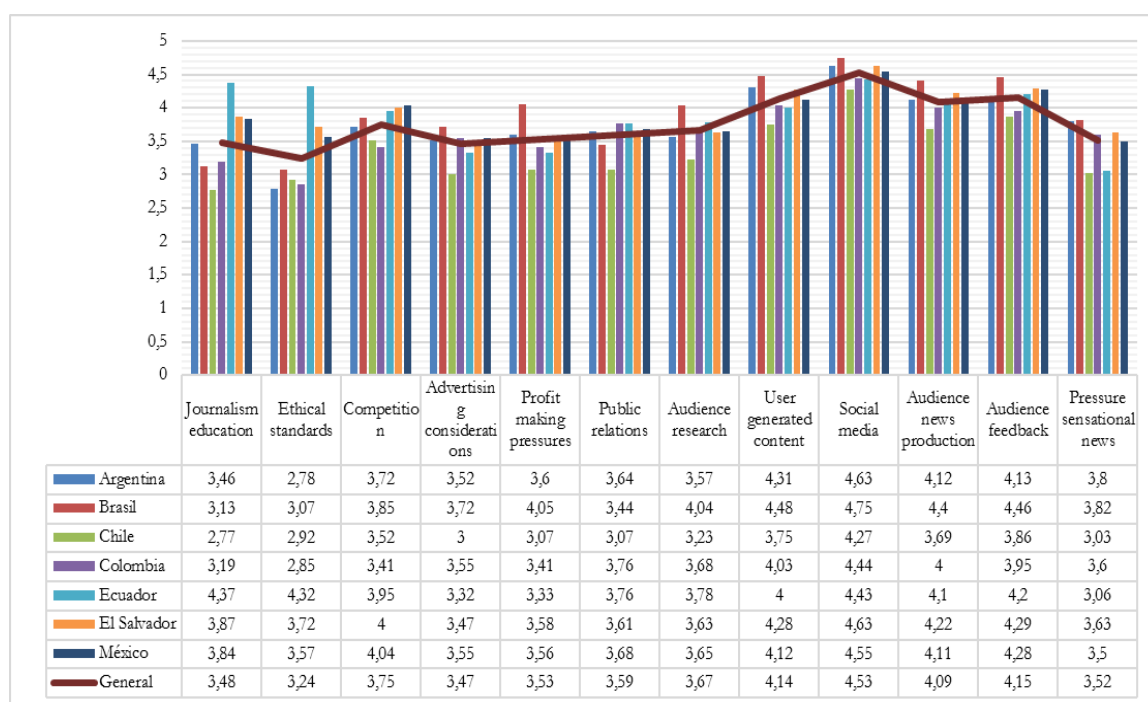
In Brazil, the journalists perceive to a greater extent the strengthening of influences related to the use of social media and the interaction with the audience and their contents. This result coincides fully with the one obtained by Saldaña *et al.* (2016), which underline the impact of social media in different regions and local journalistic cultures in Latin America, especially in the case of Brazil. Conversely, journalists in Chile and Colombia are shown as the least adapted to the digital environment and the new, more active role of the audience - although, in general, in these countries journalists perceived the least number of changes in the influence factors in journalism.

Although Latin American journalists highlight the changes related to the importance of the use of social media and the new role of audience within journalism, Ecuadorian journalists perceive, to a greater extent than the rest of their colleagues in the other countries, the strengthening of journalism education (M = 4.37) and ethical standards (M = 4.32) as one of the influences that have changed the most in their professional activities. These changes are related to some of the major problems found by the Ecuadorian journalists during the 1990s: lack of independence, pressure from owners or

political interests, low wages, professionalization and training, access to news, ethical problems, personal safety, job opportunities and lack of solidarity among peers (Virtue, 1994).

In the same way, in El Salvador and Mexico journalists point out the strengthening of the influence of competition among media (M = 4; M = 4.04, respectively), and in Brazil it is the influence from the pressures of economic expectations (M = 4.05).

Graphic 10. Changes in influences on journalism



Measure in which according to the journalist the following influence factors have been strengthened or weakened in the last five years: 5 It has strengthened a lot; 4 It has strengthened something; 3 It has not changed; 2 It has weakened in something; 1 It has greatly weakened. Source: Prepared by the authors.

Although in this chapter we do not analysis how contextual violence, public insecurity and economic inequality influence journalists' work environments (Hughes *et al.*, 2017) in the Latin American countries analyzed due to a lack of questions in the global and regional questionnaires. However, Colombia and Mexico did include such questions and Hughes *et al.* (2016) found journalists in Mexico and Colombia felt less free to report and disseminate news about criminal organizations and the armed forces. A problem, like the previous one,

in Latin America that projects like *Journalism in the Americas*⁸ try to show, due to its impact in many news organizations, journalists, and general press freedom (Schmitz Weiss, 2015) [graphic 10].

The aspects that have changed most in the work of journalists in Latin America are related to the increase of the use of internet search engines (M = 4.61), the importance of technical skills of journalists (M = 4.13), the importance of a university degree (M = 3.92) and the increase of the number of working hours (M = 3.82).

About the increase of the use of the search engines and of the importance of technical skills - with the exception of Chile - there is a unanimity among journalists in the Latin American countries. Regarding the importance of a university degree, journalists in Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador and Mexico (M = 4.13; M = 4.61; M = 4.28; M = 4.22, respectively) are above average. Additionally, only in Ecuador (M = 3.68) and Colombia (M = 3.25) journalists consider, clearly, that the number of working hours has not increased.

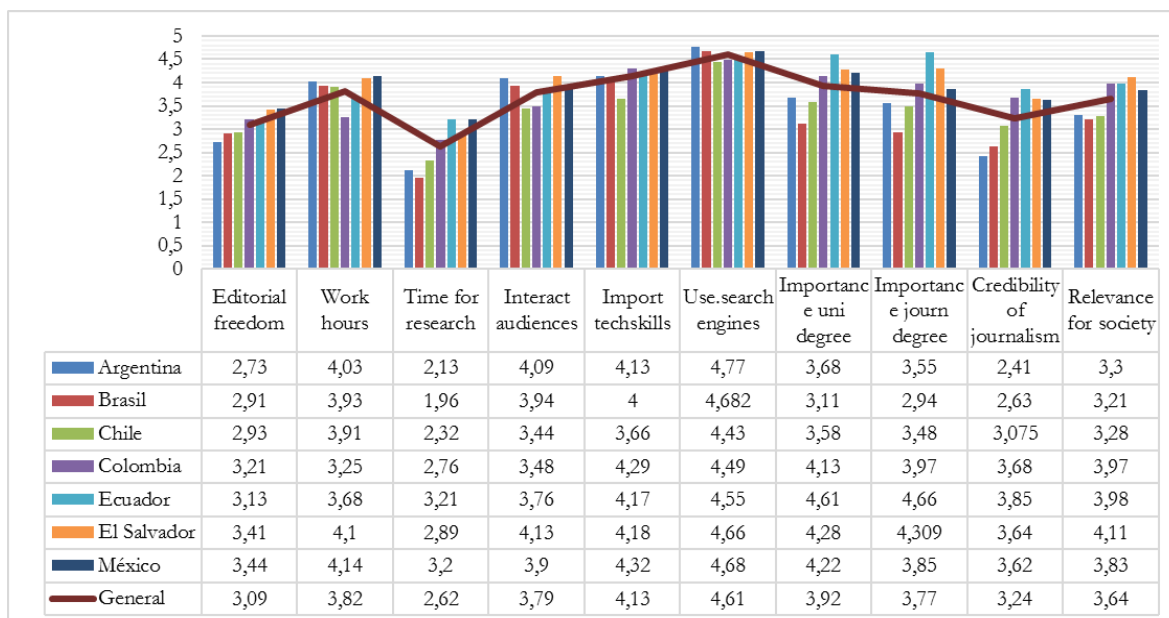
According to the results, there are two subgroups in the Latin American region. On the one hand, the Southern Cone countries - Argentina, Brazil and Chile- where journalists consider the credibility of journalism (M = 2.42; M = 2.63; M = 3.08, respectively), the time for research (M = 2.13; M = 1.96; M = 2.32, respectively) and the editorial freedom (M = 2.73; M = 2.91; M = 2.93, respectively) have decreased; and the relevance of journalism for society (M = 3.3; M = 3.21; M = 3.28, respectively) and the importance of a university degree (M = 3.68; M = 3.11; M = 3.58, respectively) and a journalism degree (M = 3.55; M = 2.94; M = 3.48, respectively) has not changed.

On the other hand, journalists in the group formed by Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador and Mexico point out that the editorial freedom (M = 3.21; M = 3.13; M = 3.41; M = 3.44, respectively) and the time for research (M = 2.76; M = 3.21; M = 2.89; M = 3.2, respectively) did not change; the relevance for society (M = 3.97; M = 3.98; M = 4.11; M = 3.83, respectively) and the credibility of journalism (M = 3.68; M = 3.85; M = 3.64; M = 3.62, respectively) have increased a

⁸ Website of Knight Center for the Journalism in the Americas.
<https://knightcenter.utexas.edu/taxonomy/term/10/www.dallasnews.com?page=2>
[recovered 16/05/17].

little, and the importance to have a university degree (M = 4.13; M = 4.61; M = 4.28; M = 4.22) and a degree of specialization in journalism (M = 3.97; M = 4.66; M = 4.32; M = 3.85) have increased quite - specially in Ecuador [graphic 11].

Graphic 11. Changes in journalism



Measure in which the journalist considers that there has been an increase or decrease in the following aspects of journalistic work in the last five years: 5 It has increased a lot; 4 It has increased something; 3 It has been no change; 2 It has diminished something; 1 It has decreased a lot. Source: Prepared by the authors.

Journalists' Level of Trust in Public Institutions

In general, Latin American journalists have a low level of trust in public institutions, reflecting general societal trends. However, they show more trust in the people, even though they consider that some people would try to take advantage of them (M = 1.41)⁹, most of them can be trusted (M = 1.86)¹⁰.

The journalists only have a moderate level of trust in the news media (M = 3.16). In all other institutions journalists have a low level of trust, especially in political parties (M = 2.11) and politicians (M =

⁹ Scale: 1= Most people can be trusted; and 2=It is best to be cautious when dealing with people.

¹⁰ Scale: 1= Most people would try to take advantage of me; and 2= They would try to be fair.

2.15). The Salvadoran journalists display the highest level of trust in the different institutions, particularly in the media (M = 3.25), the government and religious leaders (both M = 3.02), police (M = 3.01), trade unions (M = 3) and the military (M = 2.99). In contrast, Mexican journalists voice least trust in institutions, especially political parties (M = 1.83) and politicians (M = 1.93).

In Ecuador as in El Salvador, journalists have more trust -in addition to the media- in the state security forces, the police (M = 2.83) and the military (M = 3), although the levels are moderate to poor at best. Unlike these two countries, journalists in Argentina and Brazil have no trust in police (M = 1.96; M = 2.17) and military (M = 1.92; M = 2.20).

Regarding national branches of government, the executive power has a somewhat higher trust level (M = 2.61), followed by the judiciary power (M = 2.56) and the parliament (M = 2.36), but the averages are still negative (under a level of 3). In this regard, the low levels of trust must be highlighted of journalists in Argentina and Brazil in their parliaments (M = 1.62; M = 1.98) and of journalists in Mexico in their justice system (M = 2.23) [graphic 12].

Graphic 12. Journalistic trust in institutions



Level of confidence of the journalist in each of the institutions presented: 5 Total confidences; 4 Much confidence; 3 Some confidence; 2 Little confidences; 1 No confidence.

General Trust: 1 Most people are reliable; 2 It is better to be cautious when dealing with people

General Trust: 1 Most people would try to take advantage of me; 2 They would try to be fair. Source: Prepared by the authors.

Conclusions

News media are not black boxes that automatically follow external pressures or outlet owners' mandates. Latin American journalists play an important role in complex processes determining the nature of news produced and consumed in a country. Therefore, it is important to understand the perceptions, evaluations, ideas, interests, practices and experiences that shape their professional practice. Latin American societies have recently experienced various forms of authoritarianism and continue to be shaped by high levels of inequality and mixed records on protection of rights. Great political and economic dependency on the State, inadequate welfare organizations, and political party structures prone to populism and clientelism also abound. These circumstances have deeply affected journalism (Herscovitz & Cardoso, 1998)¹¹ and created a gap between the press and civil society (Waisbord, 2009).

Journalists' perception of their professional role, journalistic ethics, professional autonomy, confidence in the main institutions of a country, the changes in Latin American journalism and the contextual influences that act on all these factors, constitute journalistic models that guide the decisions they make in their daily work and provide the features that define the national and regional journalistic identities. Therefore, the data obtained in the surveys conducted in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador and Mexico allows us to establish, first, the journalistic identities of each country and, second, differences and similarities among the professional models that constitute the profession in each one of them. Even more so today, because "the digital and social media routines [...] play a role in the daily work of the journalists [...] that affordances and adaptations are being made in unique ways by country and journalist" (Schmitz Weiss, 2015: 96).

¹¹ These authors refer concretely to Brazil, but it is considered that it can be extrapolated to the rest of Latin American countries.

In Latin America, the discussion revolves around journalists and their relationship with media corporations. Journalists and researchers are debating about the influence from large private media conglomerates and, in the same way, government policies that affect their professional situation. Furthermore, according to Harlow & Salaverría (2016), the discussion revolves around their dedication to independent journalism, free from the interests of business and political elites, pillar of alternative and online media.

The comparison of journalists' perceptions in the region allows the delineation of a specific profile uniting the different models of journalism, capable of providing insightful data on the heterogeneity and diversity of circumstances in each of the countries analyzed. This exercise allows us to define the common and divergent features of each of the Latin American countries and sub-regions. Without aiming to define a homogeneous or definitive professional profile of the Latin American journalist, this chapter presents the situations and professional trends of journalists in the region, establishing a solid data precedent, not only for academic research but also for the self-perception and self-knowledge of journalists.

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