

**BUSINESS TIES IN BOARDS: THE INFLUENCE OF
INSTITUTIONAL DIRECTORS ON FINANCIAL POLICY**

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Business Ties in Boards: the influence of institutional directors on Financial Policy

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Abstract

We propose that the type of business ties between institutional investors and firms is key to understand the corporate financial policy. We find that directors representing pressure sensitive investors (i.e., banks and insurance companies) have a preference for lower financial leverage, while pressure resistant directors (i.e., mutual funds and pension funds) do not seem to have a significant effect. Nevertheless, when analysed separately, bank and insurance firm representative directors show different attitudes: bank representatives in the board increase both the financial leverage and the banking debt, consistent with the resource dependence theory. We also find a sort of risk aversion among directors representing banks, so that the higher the fraction of shares they own, the more the companies refuse both financial leverage and banking debt.

Keywords: boards of directors, civil-law countries, corporate governance, institutional investors. **JEL codes:** G32, G34,

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1. Introduction

Recent research has highlighted the growing importance of institutional investors in corporate governance (Elyasiani and Jia, 2010; Ferreira and Matos, 2008; Gillan and Starks, 2003; Ruiz Mallorquí and Santana Martín, 2009; 2011). Theory suggests, and empirical evidence confirms, that institutional investors can provide active monitoring (Almazán, et al., 2005), and bring board members closer to strategic decision making (Hoskisson et al., 2002). The weaknesses of investor protection laws in European countries has resulted in the institutional investors being important controlling shareholders and taking up an active role in the corporate governance¹. Whereas in the common-law environment the corporate governance has been improved by enhancing directors independence (Aguilera and Cuervo Cazurra, 2009; Aguilera, et al., 2009; Duchin, et al., 2010; Masulis and Mobbs, 2011), the specific agency problems in civil-law countries has resulted in the high participation of institutional directors in boards. In fact, according to Heidrick and Struggles (2011), directors appointed by institutional investors account for 40 per cent of directorship in Spain, 35 per cent in Belgium, 24 per cent in Poland, and 22 per cent in France. On the contrary, they only account for 2 per cent of British firms directorships.

Despite the involvement of institutional investors in the European corporate governance, the academic research has often focused on their role as shareholders, so that the research about the engagement of such investors as directors is relatively unexplored. Moreover, although agency theory has dominated research about board of directors, other theoretical approaches such as the resource based theory, the stewardship theory, and the resource dependency theory can provide interesting insights regarding the role of institutional directors (Gabrielsson and Huse, 2005; Johnson, et al., 1996). According to the agency theory, institutional directors are useful in mitigating agency problems by improving managerial monitoring (Fama and Jensen, 1983; Jensen and Meckling, 1976). However, according to other theoretical lenses, boards of directors may support empowered managers in strategy implementation and formulation, reducing complexity and facilitating cooperation and coordination among stakeholders (Cuevas-Rodríguez, et al., 2012; Pugliese, et al., 2009). In line with van

¹ On 5 April 2011, the European Commission adopted a Green Paper and launched a wide-ranging public consultation on the EU corporate governance framework. Among other questions, the European Commission asked about the incentive structure of the asset managers managing long-term institutional investors' portfolios and about a more effective monitoring by institutional investors. The results of this consultation were published on 15 November 2011 and can be accessed at European Commission (2011).

Ees, et al. (2009) and Pugliese, et al. (2009) we propose that institutional directors may be more concerned with solving problems of coordination and managing the complexity and uncertainty associated with strategic and financial decision making rather than dealing with conflicts of interests (McNulty and Pettigrew, 1999; Rindova, 1999; Roberts, et al., 2005).

Consequently, in this paper we analyse the role of institutional directors in corporate finance decisions, integrating agency and other organisational control perspectives. Our analysis proceeds in two steps. First we study the impact directors who represent institutional investors on leverage. But, according to recent literature institutional investors cannot be considered as a homogeneous group due to their different incentives and ability to engage in the corporate governance (Almazán, et al., 2005; Cornett, et al., 2007; Chen, et al., 2007). We propose that the type of business relations between firms and institutional investors is a key issue to describe the role of institutional directors and, thus, the financial decisions taken by the board. Accordingly, we study the relation between capital structure decisions and institutional directors, making a distinction between those ones who keep business relations with the firm in whose board they sit, and institutional investors whose business activity is not related to the company in which they hold a directorship.

In a second step, we focus on the specific role of bank directors and analyse their effects on corporate finance when they act as shareholders and directors. According to Kroszner and Strahan (2001), when bankers are on boards, the fiduciary duty of directors to promote the interests of shareholders can lead to a conflict with the banker-director's role as lender or potential lender due to different payoff structures of debt.

We use a sample of Spanish listed firms between 2004 and 2010. Spain is a good paradigm to study the effectiveness of institutional directors due to two main reasons: First, Spain is the European country with the highest presence of institutional investors in the boards of large firms. Unlike the Anglo-Saxon capital markets, the ownership concentration and the lack of liquid capital markets in Spain have resulted in the board of directors as the prevalent mechanism of control and in the presence as directors of the large block-holders. This high proportion of institutional directors gives an idea of stability, so that these directors have ample opportunities to engage in financial strategic decisions (Elyasiani, et al., 2010).

Second, Spain has a bank based financial system in which financial intermediaries perform a wide range of financial services. Contrary to their Anglo-

Saxon counterparts, Spanish financial institutions have traditionally played a relevant role in the governance of non-financial firms. As a consequence of the deregulation process and the growing pressure from financial markets banks have recently widened their traditional lending-borrowing activities to others like asset management and shares issuance underwriting.

Our results suggest that institutional directors have diverse incentives to engage in the corporate governance. Consistent with the relevant role of business relations with the firm, we find that directors representing pressure sensitive investors (i.e., banks and insurance companies) have a preference for lower financial leverage. Pressure resistant directors (i.e., mutual funds and pension funds) do not seem to have any significant effect. Nevertheless, when analysed separately, bank and insurance firm representative directors show different attitudes. In this case, banks representatives in the board increase both the financial leverage and the banking debt. This result suggests that some types of institutional directors provide financial resources to the firms in whose board they sit, supporting the view of boards managing the uncertainty associated with strategic decision making, and bringing preferential access to resources and financial expertise (van Ees, et al., 2009).

Our results are robust to different metrics of the firm's financial policy, to additional identifications of the role played by institutional directors in the board committees and to different estimation methods.

In our analysis extension we also find that at low levels of director ownership, the benefits of providing financial access appear to dominate, while at higher levels, risk taking issues and lender liability concerns become more important. In these cases bank directors can prefer that the firm undertake actions that increase the probability of debt repayment rather than maximizing the expected return to shareholders. To some extent, it can be understood as a possible substitution effect between monitoring through the board of directors and insider ownership.

This paper contributes to the literature in three different ways. First, we complement the empirical evidence regarding the different types of institutional investors and the different ways they can engage in corporate governance (Almazán, et al., 2005; Ruiz Mallorquí and Santana Martín, 2009). Although considerable research has been conducted on institutional ownership, research has failed so far to reach a consensus on whether institutional investors perform a specific role in boardrooms. Second, we provide new evidence on the link between boards of directors

and firms' financial strategy. Capital structure is a financial mechanism of managerial discipline and, thus, institutional directors can improve managerial monitoring in a complementary/substitute way. Besides, our results support the literature that emphasizes the strategic advisory role of board members, in addition to exercising independent control, in line with the board of directors literature that concludes that resource dependence theory is supported more often than other board perspectives (Barroso, et al., 2009; Hillman, et al., 2008; Johnson, et al., 1996), including agency theory. Third, we extend previous research, mainly focused on the Anglo-Saxon environment, to a bank-oriented system with lower legal investors' protection. Our results go one step further to test the role of financial intermediaries when they do not only act as traditional creditors but also sit at the board of directors and even own significant equity stakes. Spain is then a unique opportunity to analyse the conflicts of interests due to banks being simultaneously shareholders, creditors and directors.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. In the next section, we review the main theoretical ideas and state our hypotheses about the influence of institutional directors on capital structure. In Section 3, we describe the sample, data and empirical method. Section 4 contains the empirical results. We summarize and conclude in Section 5.

2. Institutional investors, boards of directors, and corporate finance

2.1. Institutional directors types

Prior research on the effects of institutional investors often addresses shareholders and bondholder wealth, and is commonly based on the framework of the conventional US/UK model of corporate control (Elyasiani et al., 2010). These studies generally focus on institutional investors just as shareholders (Roberts and Yuan, 2006), and, when they address the role of boards of directors, usually focus on independent directors (Anderson, et al., 2004; Bhojraj and Sengupta, 2003; Ertugrul and Hegde, 2008; Fields, et al., 2012; Piot and Missonier-Piera, 2007). However, the analysis of independent directors in Europe has not provided conclusive results, with some authors highlighting that, contrary to the UK and US based research, the monitoring role does not seem to be played by independent directors but by grey

directors representing the controlling shareholders (García Osma and Gill de Albornoz Noguera, 2007)².

Given the conflicting relation in Continental Europe and in many other countries between minority shareholders and controlling shareholders (La Porta, et al., 1997; Morck, et al., 2005), institutional directors can have a significant influence in the wealth distribution of shareholders and even of bondholders. Although previous research has addressed the influence of the board of directors on the managerial relation, relatively little is known about the relation between board composition and the shareholders-bondholders conflict. As far as we are aware, Bhojraj and Sengupta (2003), Roberts and Yuan (2006) and Ashbaugh-Skaife, et al. (2006) are among the few authors who analyse how institutional ownership is related to debt cost and find that institutional investors have a significant influence in the risk faced by debtholders.

In spite of their influence, not all the institutional investors are equally willing or able to serve this function (Almazán, et al., 2005). Different authors note that business relationships with the firm can critically affect the incentives and preferences of the institutional investors to control corporate decisions. Agrawal and Mandelker (1990), Almazán, et al. (2005), Borokhovich, et al. (2006), Brickley, et al. (1988), Bushee (1998), Ferreira and Matos (2008), Hartzell and Starks (2003), and Ramalingegowda and Yu (2012) show that institutional investors have different attitude towards antitakeover amendments, R&D investment decisions, CEO compensation, profitability, and earnings conservatism. Taken together, this literature underlines that some institutional investors choose monitoring firms and exerting influence on managers whereas others focus on information gathering and short-term trading profits (Elyasiani, et al., 2010). In other words, the differences across institutional investors are not only legal or regulatory but also in terms of investment strategy and their incentives and resources to gather information and to engage in the governances of companies (Bennett, et al., 2003).

Consistent with this heterogeneity across institutional investors, some authors have classified institutional ownership into two groups: pressure-resistant and pressure-sensitive institutional investors (Bhattacharya and Graham, 2007; Brickley, et al., 1988; Dong and Ozkan, 2008; Kochhar and David, 1996; Pound, 1988). Pressure-

² The Unified Code of Corporate Governance in Spain distinguishes three types of directors: executive directors, independent directors and grey directors. Grey directors are non-executive directors representing block-holders, most of the times banking and insurance companies or investment funds.

resistant investors are institutional investors that only keep an investment relation with firms whose shares they own. These institutional investors include pension funds, mutual funds, venture capital firms, endowments, and foundations. They have a more independent position in the firm. On the contrary, pressure-sensitive investors keep both an investment and business relations with firms. These institutional shareholdings include equity holdings by insurance companies, banks, and nonbank trusts. Their ability to control may be weakened by keeping business and financial relations simultaneously with firms (Brickley, et al., 1988).

2.2. Theoretical background and hypotheses development

The corporate governance literature recognizes different roles of boards of directors in decision making (Barroso, et al., 2011; Knapp, et al., 2011; Maassen, 2002). The resource dependence theory argues that board members are in a good position to contribute to strategic decision making by providing access to resources (Pfeffer, 1972; 1973). In this sense, the presence of institutional investors in boards can moderate the loss of independence giving access to debt funds and providing with financial resources, services and business connections. Moreover, pressure sensitive directors (banks and insurance companies) usually have additional information over the investment opportunities of the firm and are likely to have better chances of raising external funds (Hoshi, et al., 1990; Kang, et al., 2000; Morck, et al., 2000).

The involvement of institutional directors in the strategic course of the corporation is mainly understood by the stewardship theory, which underlines the directors' experience in order to complement the experience, knowledge and skills of managers (Castaldi and Wortman, 1984). Consistent with this view, directors appointed by institutional investors provide expertise on financial issues.

However, consistent with the agency theory, pressure sensitive directors pose a problem of conflicting interests since they may be focused mainly on the firm's long-term viability and debt payoffs. Hence, we pay special attention to this kind of directors. From the agency theory perspective, the board of directors can work as an information system for external stakeholders to monitor managerial behavior and firm leverage. Trying to limit managerial opportunism and lowering the risk faced by lenders, financial institution representatives may restrict further borrowing, acting as enabled monitors. Regarding insurance companies, they are also likely to have incentives to minimize the probability of default, so they may encourage small level of leverage. Jia, et al. (2012)

and MacMinn (1987) point out that the insurance coverage allows debtholders' payoffs to become relatively independent of project selection and so limits the ability of borrowing firms to shift business risk onto debtholders. As a result, corporate control by insurance companies can help to mitigate potential agency problems such as borrowers' assets substitution and thereby lowers lenders' risk exposures, reducing leverage capacity.

Given the reasons both for a positive and for a negative relation between capital structure and pressure sensitive directorships, we pose the first hypothesis in a dual way:

H1a: Pressure sensitive investor directors increase the level of leverage.

H1b: Pressure sensitive investor directors decrease the level of leverage.

Nevertheless, even within pressure sensitive investors (insurance companies and banks) there are some differences. Banks have a special financial relation with firms. In the bank oriented systems, as Spain, banks are largely the main financial suppliers of non-financial firms, so they are directly involved in the capital structure decisions of the firm, acting simultaneously both as lenders and as shareholders.

Banks usually have representatives at the boards of non-financial firms in many bank-oriented countries. Previous literature has highlighted four main reasons of to have a bank on the board (Baysinger and Butler, 1985; Booth and Deli, 1999; Diamond, 1991; Dittmann, et al., 2010; Fama and Jensen, 1983; Kroszner and Strahan, 2001; Rosenstein and Wyatt, 1997): 1) Bankers can improve the information flow between the bank and customer firms, helping the firm to raise funds from the bank. The information advantage noted by the resource dependence theory permits a better assessment of a firm's creditworthiness and eases loans from the incumbent banks. In this case, bankers might seek board seats in order to sell debt to the firm. 2) According to the stewardship theory, the board of directors, and especially the bank directors, may be considered as a bundle of strategic resources to be used by and within the firms as a source of timely advice in areas where in-firm knowledge is limited or lacking . As a consequence, financial executives could be appointed to the boards of non-financial firms as financial experts to raise funds. Bankers on the board overcome adverse selection and credit rationing problems so that firms with a banker on their board should be more leveraged and use more bank lending. 3) Bankers can play a certification role on the board since a banker joining the board of a firm can signal to

the market that the firm is unlikely to experience financial distress, and it lowers the costs of external finance. 4) Finally, bankers on boards can take advantage of their monitoring abilities and play a controlling role of managers, aligning their interests with shareholders'.

Regarding this last characteristic, Fama (1985) suggests that banks costs of monitoring can be lower than the other intermediaries costs (for example, insurance and finance companies). The ongoing history of a borrower as a depositor provides information that allows a bank to identify the risks and to monitor at a lower cost. Likewise, signals from bank loans about a firm credit worthiness can lower the information costs of other contracts. Hadlock and James (2002), Johnson (1997) and Lummer and McConnell (1989) further document that banks are special since, unlike other security offerings, bank loan announcements are associated with positive abnormal returns. They conclude that banks provide some special service not available from other lenders. Long-term relations between banks and non-financial firms reduce the asymmetric information and allow banks to control firm's investment decisions. Thus, they diminish the adverse selection and moral hazard problems. But banks can acquire bargaining power over the firm's profits, once projects have begun (Rajan, 1992). This power comes in part because of a variety of control rights they receive when firms default or violate debt covenants and in part because they typically lend short term, so borrowers have to come back at regular, short intervals for more funds.

Despite the advantages of having a bank on board, when banks act simultaneously as directors, investors, and creditors, conflicts of interests arise. Bankers on boards could simply protect their interests as shareholders, or could safeguard their loans and get involved in the governance of the companies in which their loans have a significant probability to be distressed. Thus, the fiduciary duty of directors to promote the interests of shareholders can lead to a conflict with the banker-director's role as lender or potential lender. According to Adams and Ferreira (2007), institutional directors may spend a significant portion of their time advising rather than monitoring. This advisory influence can be problematic when directors are affiliated with financial institutions and pursue the interests of those institutions rather than maximizing all shareholders' value.

These diverse roles have direct consequences in the capital structure of the firm. Ramírez (1995) was the first author to provide evidence that bank directors may help raise capital by showing that the presence of bankers on corporate boards reduced the sensitivity of investment to cash flow. In the same vein, Stearns and Mizuchi (1993)

found that the types of financial institutions represented on firm's boards (commercial banks, insurance companies or investment banks) were associated with different types of funds raised by the firms. Morck, et al. (2000) show that banker directors emphasize policies that favor creditors over shareholders in Japan. Also, Booth and Deli (1999) find that the presence of commercial bankers on the board is positively related to firm debt. Interestingly, according to these author's results, while the presence of unaffiliated bankers (those whose banks have not business relationships with the firm) on the boards is positively related with bank borrowing, the presence of affiliated ones is not. They conclude that these results are consistent with the view that commercial bankers supply bank debt market expertise (resource dependence theory), but do not play a monitoring role (agency theory). Also Byrd and Mizruchi (2005) find that the presence of lending bankers on a firm's board negatively affects the debt ratio, while the impact of non-lending bankers depend on the firm's probability of financial distress. Notwithstanding this finding, Güner, et al. (2008) show that a company including an affiliated banker on its board is able to raise larger loans. More recently, Slomka-Golebiowska (2012) shows that firms with a banker on the board rely more heavily on bank loans than on internal funds. However, Kroszner and Strahan (2001) show no significant relation between debt ratios and affiliated bank presence on the board of non-financial firms.

To summarize, the empirical evidence remains inconclusive about the relation between the presence of banker-directors and the availability of debt finance. On the contrary, there is a wide consensus about the banks potential influence on firms' financial decisions due to the close relation between banks and non-financial firms, especially in bank-oriented countries.

Therefore, we state our second hypothesis in a dual way:

H.2a: Bank directors increase the level of leverage of non-financial firms.

H.2b: Bank directors reduce the level of leverage of non-financial firms.

3. Empirical design

3.1. Sample

The sample is drawn from the population of Spanish non-financial firms listed on the Spanish Stock Exchange during 2004-2010. Financial companies have been

excluded both because they are under a special scrutiny by financial authorities that constrains the role of their board of directors and because of their special accounting practices.

We have combined two databases. Financial information and firms' market value have been drawn from Amadeus database³. The corporate governance information has been collected from the Annual Corporate Governance Reports that all the listed companies must publish since 2003.

We build an unbalanced panel of 627 firm-year observations from 162 firms. Roughly, our sample accounts for more than 95 percent of the capitalization of Spanish non-financial firms. The panel is unbalanced since some firms have become public during this period but some other firms have been delisted as a consequence of mergers and acquisitions. Nevertheless, the estimations based on unbalanced panels are as reliable as those based on balanced panels (Arellano, 2003).

3.2. Variables

We define two dependent variables: LEV is the financial leverage, measured as the ratio of book value of debt to total assets; BKLEV is bank leverage, defined as the proportion of bank debt (both short term and long term) over total debt.

We operationalize the board of directors through a number of variables. First, we define SENSIT as the proportion of the board members who are representative of pressure sensitive institutional investors (i.e., banks and insurance companies). We also define RESIST as the proportion of the board members who are representative of pressure resistant institutional investors (basically mutual funds and pension funds). Given our special attention to the roles played by the different institutional investors we define BANK variable as the proportion of directors who are representative of banks (both commercial banks and saving banks) and INSUR as the proportion of directors appointed by the insurance companies.

As a robustness analysis we check the validity of our results when the audit and compensation and nominating committees are taken into account. Thus, we define analogous variables concerning the presence of such directors in the audit committee:

³ Amadeus is a product of Bureau van Dijk Electronic Publishing and provides comparable standardized financial information for companies across Europe.

SENSITAC is the proportion of pressure sensitive representatives at the audit committee, RESISTAC is the proportion of the pressure resistant representatives at the audit committee, BANKAC is the proportion of members of the audit committee appointed by banks and INSURAC is the proportion of the audit committee members appointed by insurance companies. We define similar variables for the nomination and compensation committee (SENSITNC, RESISTNC, BANKNC and INSURNC). As it will be explained later on, we interact some boards of director variables with the insiders ownership (INSOWN), i.e. the proportion of shares held by the directors.

We control for a number of factors that potentially could impact on corporate leverage and that make our research comparable to previous studies (Antoniou, et al., 2008; Frank and Goyal, 2009; Kayo and Kimura, 2011; Leary, 2009; Lemmon, et al., 2008). ASMAT is the assets maturity, defined as the ratio of fixed assets to annual depreciation expenses. MTB is the equity market to book value which proxies both growth opportunities and market expectations about the firm. SIZE is the log of total assets and is a measure of firm size. TANGIB is the proportion of tangible assets over total assets; it is supposed to be informative about the debt collateral. We also control for the return on assets (ROA), the age of the firm as the log of the number of years since the firm constitution (AGE), and the tax advantages of debt (TAX) defined as tax payments to costly total debt. See Table 1 for a summary of all the variables.

Table 1: Variable definition

Variables	Description
LEV	Ratio of book debt to total assets.
BKLEV	Bank debt to total debt.
SENSIT	Proportion of the directors who represent pressure sensitive institutional investors.
RESIST	Proportion of the directors who represent pressure resistant institutional investors.
BANK	Proportion of the directors who represent banks.
INSUR	Proportion of the directors who represent insurance companies.
SENSITAC	Proportion of the audit committee members who represent pressure sensitive institutional investors.
RESISTAC	Proportion of the audit committee members who represent pressure resistant institutional investors.
BANKAC	Proportion of the audit committee members who represent banks.
INSURAC	Proportion of the audit committee members who represent insurance companies.
SENSITNC	Proportion of the nomination and compensation committee members who represent pressure sensitive institutional investors.
RESISTNC	Proportion of the nomination and compensation committee members who represent pressure resistant institutional investors.
BANKNC	Proportion of the nomination and compensation committee members who represent banks.
INSURNC	Proportion of the nomination and compensation committee members who represent insurance companies.
INSOWN	Insiders ownership, i.e., proportion of shares held by the directors
ASMAT	Assets maturity, i.e., ratio of fixed assets to annual depreciation expenses
MTB	Equity market to book ratio
SIZE	Total assets (log)
TANGIB	Tangible assets over total assets
ROA	Gross profit to total assets
AGE	Years since the firm constitution (log)
TAX	Tax payments to costly debt

3.3. Empirical method

We first report a descriptive analysis to show the main characteristics of our sample. This step provides preliminary evidence about a possible effect of institutional directors on corporate finance and about possible differences among the type of institutional investors who appointed the directors. Then we perform an explanatory

analysis to test our hypotheses. We run the following baseline model, where CORPGOV stands for the variables of corporate governance above mentioned:

$$\text{LEV}_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 \cdot \text{LEV}_{it-1} + \beta_2 \cdot \text{ASMAT}_{it} + \beta_3 \cdot \text{MTB}_{it} + \beta_4 \cdot \text{SIZE}_{it} + \beta_5 \cdot \text{ROA}_{it} + \beta_6 \cdot \text{TANGIB}_{it} \\ + \beta_7 \cdot \text{AGE}_{it} + \beta_8 \cdot \text{TAX}_{it} + \sum \beta_j \cdot \text{CORPGOV}_{it} + \eta_i + \eta_t + \varepsilon_{it}$$

In this equation η_i represents the individual effect, η_t represents the time effect, and ε_{it} represents the stochastic error. The time effect includes the macroeconomic factors that impact on all the firms in the same period.

Our database combines time series with cross-sectional data, allowing the formation of panel data, estimated with the appropriate panel data methodology (Arellano, 2003). In the estimation of our model, two problems could arise: constant and unobservable heterogeneity and the problem of endogeneity.

Constant and unobservable heterogeneity refers to specific characteristics of each firm that remain constant over time as represented by the fixed-effects term η_i . Because they are unobservable, they become part of the random component in the estimated model. Panel data methodology enhances the control of this constant and unobservable heterogeneity introduced by the fixed-effects term.

The literature and the practitioners have shown the existence of target debt ratios, with firms trying to adjust every year their financial leverage to the target (Bancel and Mittoo, 2004; Flannery and Rangan, 2006; Graham and Harvey, 2001; Hovakimian, et al., 2004). Consequently, we propose an auto-regressive model in which lagged financial leverage is among the right-hand-side variables.

The endogeneity problem might appear because lagged financial leverage can be affected by the structure of the board of directors (Demsetz and Villalonga, 2001; Hermalin and Weisbach, 1998; Villalonga and Amit, 2006). To address this problem, Blundell and Bond (1998) and Bond (2002) suggest the use of the panel data system estimator. This procedure is an improved version of the generalized method of moments given the possibility that weak instruments could induce poor asymptotic precision (Alonso-Borrego and Arellano, 1999). This method provides efficient estimates whose consistency depends critically on the absence of second-order serial autocorrelation in the residuals and on the validity of the instruments (Arellano and Bond, 1991). Accordingly, we report the m_2 test. To test the validity of the instruments, we use the Hansen test of overidentifying restrictions, which allows us to test the

absence of a correlation between the instruments and the error term and, therefore, to check the validity of the selected instruments.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive statistics

Table 2 presents the mean value, the standard error, and the quartiles of the main variables. As it can be seen, representatives of institutional investors account for around 21 percent of directorships, with pressure resistant directors being twice as important as pressure sensitive ones. Consistent with the international trend to increase the importance of institutional investors (Li, et al., 2006) the proportion of directors appointed by institutional investors in our sample has increased from 19.6 percent in 2004 to 21.7 percent in 2010.

Table 2: Main descriptive statistics

Mean, standard deviation and quartiles of the main variables. LEV is the book value of debt over total assets; BKLEV is the proportion of total debt lent by banks; RESIST, SENSIT, BANK, INSUR is the proportion of the directors who represent pressure resistant, pressure sensitive institutional investors, banks or insurance companies; INSOWN is the proportion of shares held by directors; ASMAT is assets maturity, MTB is equity market to book ratio, SIZE is the log of total assets, TANGIB is tangible assets over total assets, ROA is gross profit over total assets, AGE is the log of the number of years since the constitution of the firm, and TAX is taxes paid over costly debt.

	Mean	Std. Dev	Q25	Q50	Q75
LEV	0.593	0.183	0.483	0.611	0.729
BKLEV	0.478	0.214	0.343	0.511	0.642
RESIST	0.137	0.182	0.000	0.083	0.200
SENSIT	0.072	0.110	0.000	0.000	0.125
BANK	0.063	0.102	0.000	0.000	0.111
INSUR	0.009	0.051	0.000	0.000	0.000
INSOWN	0.275	0.264	0.026	0.195	0.505
ASMAT	17.094	19.672	8.988	13.015	19.440
MTB	2.656	2.529	1.310	1.984	3.117
SIZE	13.592	2.021	12.192	13.471	14.862
TANGIB	0.568	0.193	0.425	0.586	0.706
ROA	0.041	0.076	0.013	0.041	0.077
AGE	3.804	0.630	3.434	3.807	4.263
TAX	0.173	1.189	0.110	0.244	0.309

In Table 3 we report the correlation matrix among the variables. With the exception of the relation between SENSIT and BANK, all of them present low correlation coefficients, so that multicollinearity should not be a concern. In any case, we also provide a vector inflation factor (VIF). Our VIF scores are below 3, and, thus, we confirm that multicollinearity does not skew our results (Belsley, et al., 2004; Kutner, et al., 2005).

Table 3: Correlation matrix

Pearson's correlation matrix. LEV is the book value of debt over total assets; BKLEV is the proportion of total debt lent by banks; RESIST, SENSIT, BANK, INSUR is the proportion of the directors who represent pressure resistant, pressure sensitive institutional investors, banks or insurance companies; INSOWN is the proportion of shares held by directors; ASMAT is assets maturity, MTB is equity market to book ratio, SIZE is the log of total assets, TANGIB is tangible assets over total assets, ROA is gross profit over total assets, AGE is the log of the number of years since the constitution of the firm, and TAX is taxes paid over costly debt

	LEV	BKLEV	SENSIT	RESIST	BANK	INSUR	INSOWN	ASMAT	MTB	SIZE	TANGIB	ROA	AGE
BKLEV	0.213												
SENSIT	0.070	0.134											
RESIST	0.186	0.107	-0.205										
BANK	0.130	0.133	0.967	-0.224									
INSUR	-0.225	0.014	0.189	0.061	-0.068								
INSOWN	-0.083	-0.028	-0.062	0.367	-0.074	0.044							
ASMAT	0.064	0.196	0.026	-0.036	0.025	0.004	0.071						
MTB	0.080	-0.210	-0.084	-0.063	-0.067	-0.073	-0.036	-0.085					
SIZE	0.383	0.152	0.285	-0.066	0.331	-0.157	-0.268	0.182	-0.020				
TANGIB	0.007	0.468	0.229	-0.100	0.221	0.044	-0.077	0.227	-0.242	0.401			
ROA	-0.293	-0.365	-0.014	-0.138	-0.014	-0.003	-0.110	-0.080	0.442	0.122	-0.130		
AGE	0.239	0.010	0.046	0.187	0.008	0.149	-0.099	-0.030	0.053	0.207	-0.079	-0.031	
TAX	-0.090	0.020	0.053	-0.016	0.039	0.057	0.050	0.027	0.005	0.034	0.036	0.099	-0.005
VIF			1.25	1.39	1.50	1.19	1.33	1.15	1.11	1.73	1.66	1.27	1.22

For an exploratory analysis, we divide the sample into two groups depending on the proportion of institutional investors in the boardroom. Thus, we have the group of firms with the proportion of pressure sensitive directors over the SENSIT median value and the group of firms with the proportion of pressure sensitive directors under the median value. The same pattern applies to BANK, INSUR and RESIST variables. Then, we conduct a test of means comparison in order to explore whether capital structure and bank debt are different between both groups. The results reported in Table 4, although not concluding, suggest that grey directors appointed by institutional investors are related to differences in corporate finance. More specifically, directors representing pressure resistant investors and banks increase both the leverage and the proportion of bank debt. Furthermore, the insignificant effect of directors representing pressure sensitive investors seems to be due to the opposing influence of banks and insurance companies in corporate finance.

Table 4: Test of means comparison

Proportion of directors who represent pressure sensitive investors (SENSIT), pressure resistant investors (RESIST), banks (BANK) or insurance companies (INSUR) conditional on the financial leverage (LEV) or bank debt (BKLEV). p-value is the significance level to accept the null hypothesis of equality of means between groups.

	LEV			BKLEV		
	Under median	Over median	p-value	Under median	Over median	p-value
SENSIT	0.591	0.598	0.646	0.455	0.492	0.039
BANK	0.579	0.616	0.016	0.454	0.497	0.017
INSUR	0.604	0.391	0.000	0.468	0.503	0.409
RESIST	0.555	0.608	0.002	0.439	0.493	0.005

4.2. Baseline regression results

Table 5 provides the estimates for the first hypothesis. In column 1 we test the effects of institutional directors (both pressure sensitive and pressure resistant ones) on financial leverage along with the control variables. The results are in line with our hypothesis H1b, since the proportion of pressure sensitive directors has a negative influence on corporate leverage. This result could be understood as a sign that this kind of directors exercises such control that deters the risk taking through debt, supporting the managerial monitoring role by directors representing pressure sensitive investors.

In Column 2 of Table 5 we unravel the different types of pressure sensitive directors (banks and insurance companies) along with pressure resistant directors. We

find a different role for bank representative directors relative to insurance companies' representatives. Whereas bank representatives have a positive impact on firm leverage, directors appointed by insurance companies try to avoid the use of debt. These results are in line with Booth and Deli (1999), Güner et al. (2008) and Kroszner and Strahan (2001). These findings confirm the hypothesis H2a and suggest that directors who represent banks provide financial expertise and access to financial funds, as the stakeholder and resource dependence theories suggest. They are also consistent with the idea of bankers in boards of non-financial firms to promote their own business (debt selling hypothesis). The negative coefficient of insurance companies representatives can be understood as showing their interest in reducing firm's risk taking by minimizing the default probability. Results note that pressure resistant directors (i.e., mutual funds and pension funds) do not seem to have a consistent effect.

The coefficient of the lagged leverage is consistent with previous research about the speed of debt adjustment (Flannery and Rangan, 2006; González and González, 2011; Hovakimian and Li, 2011; Vallelado and Saona, 2011). The estimates of our control variables also show that firms with longer asset maturity, higher market-to-book ratios and larger size have higher leverage. On the contrary, the assets tangibility, firm's profitability and the effective tax rate are negative determinants of corporate leverage.

Antoniou, et al. (2008) and Psillaki and Daskalakis (2009) show that decisions on the firm's leverage are quite country- and institutional setting specific, so that the consistency of our estimates has to be checked against estimates from the same country or institutional environment. The results reported by Acedo-Ramírez, et al. (2012), Sogorb Mira (2005), López Gracia and Sogorb Mira (2008), and González and González (2011) for Spanish firms, and by Psillaki and Daskalakis (2009) for civil law firms in the framework of the trade-off and the pecking-order theories of capital structure are coherent with ours in terms of tax rate, firm size, firm age, profitability, asset tangibility and growth opportunities.

The specification proofs of our model are satisfactory. According to the m_2 test, there is no second order correlation among the residuals, so our estimates are efficient. The Hansen test of over-identifying constraints supports the selection of instruments.

In Table 6 we report the estimates of the baseline model when we replicate the analysis using bank debt. As shown in Column 1, the proportion of pressure sensitive

directors is positively related to bank debt. This is in line with the view that these directors reinforce commercial ties with banks (i.e., access to critical resources). Our results hold when we introduce the distinction between banks and insurance companies as reported in Column 2: the presence of directors representing banks has a positive effect on bank debt. Again, these findings support the resource dependence hypothesis regarding the access to financial resources (i.e., bank debt) when pressure sensitive investors are on the board. Pressure resistant directors do not show a consistent effect on bank debt either.

4.3. Analysis extension

We now analyse if insider ownership moderates the relationship between institutional directors and firms financial leverage. Agrawal and Knoeber (1996), Bozec and Bozec (2007), and Rediker and Seth (1995) suggest that firms form internally efficient sets of controls, so that deficiencies in one mechanism can be counterweighed by the action of the alternative ones. Since ownership structure and the board of directors can be substitute mechanisms, the influence of institutional directors in capital structure can be conditional on the shares held by the members of the board.

Column 3 of Table 5 provides interesting insights about the interaction between insider ownership and directors representing institutional investors. We have interacted the proportion of ownership owned by directors (INSOWN) with SENSIT and RESIST. Contrary to our initial result, the proportion of directors appointed by pressure sensitive investors has a positive effect on firm's leverage. Nevertheless, the coefficient of the interacted variable is negative and significant. According to this result, the effect of institutional directors must be analysed conditional on the stake of the directors in the ownership.

The results suggest a possible substitution effect between institutional directorship and institutional ownership: the higher the proportion of shares owned by directors, the more reluctant the pressure sensitive investors to high leverage levels are. This means that when insiders own a significant fraction of shares, the ownership structure becomes an relevant mechanism of corporate control and the disciplinary effect of debt can become less necessary (Jensen, 1986).

Table 5: GMM estimates of the baseline model (financial leverage)

Estimated coefficients (t-stats) of the estimation of the baseline model through the generalized method of moments. The dependent variable is always LEV, i.e., the book value of debt over total assets; RESIST, SENSIT, BANK, INSUR is the proportion of the directors who represent pressure resistant institutional investors, pressure sensitive institutional investors, banks or insurance companies, respectively; INSOWN is the proportion of shares held by directors; ASMAT is assets maturity, MTB is the equity market to book ratio, SIZE is the log of total assets, TANGIB is tangible assets over total assets, ROA is the return on assets, AGE is the log of the number of years since the constitution of the firm, and TAX is taxes paid over costly debt. m_2 is a test of second order serial autocorrelation, Hansen test is a test of overidentifying restrictions which distributes as χ^2 (degrees of freedom). *** for 99 percent confidence level, ** for 95 percent and * for 90 percent.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
LEV _{t-1}	0.747 (59.35) ***	0.729 (65.09) ***	0.737 (63.63) ***	0.702 (37.51) ***
SENSIT	-0.031 (2.03) **		0.075 (4.39) ***	
SENSIT·INSOWN			-0.004 (8.59) ***	
RESIST	0.085 (3.44) ***	0.053 (1.97) *	0.046 (1.41)	0.034 (0.77)
RESIST·INSOWN			-0.001 (0.95)	-0.001 (1.76) *
BANK		0.039 (2.81) ***		0.096 (4.85) ***
BANK·INSOWN				-0.004 (7.65) ***
INSUR		-0.320 (2.47) **		-1.148 (1.95) *
INSUR·INSOWN				0.019 (1.48)
ASMAT	0.001 (11.48) ***	0.001 (9.22) ***	0.001 (10.63) ***	0.001 (7.89) ***
MTB	0.005 (15.10) ***	0.005 (11.22) ***	0.005 (14.78) ***	0.004 (10.17) ***
SIZE	0.015 (8.94) ***	0.012 (9.32) ***	0.010 (5.19) ***	0.011 (4.87) ***
TANGIB	-0.054 (5.83) ***	-0.042 (4.90) ***	-0.043 (4.72) ***	-0.031 (2.80) ***
ROA	-0.279 (12.16) ***	-0.265 (9.32) ***	-0.315 (13.08) ***	-0.300 (7.20) ***
AGE	-0.017 (2.91) ***	0.001 (0.12)	-0.015 (2.78) ***	0.001 (0.24)
TAX	-0.011 (9.71) ***	-0.012 (7.00) ***	-0.010 (8.48) ***	-0.008 (5.37) ***
Observations	413	417	411	415
m_2	0.85	-0.18	0.81	-0.20
Hansen test (d.f.)	61.71 (215)	65.49 (207)	60.28 (213)	63.92 (206)

In Column 4 we report the results when we take into account the types of pressure sensitive institutional investors (i.e., banks or insurance companies) and introduce the directors' ownership as interacted variables. We can see a dual impact of directors representing banks. Although bankers in boards exacerbate financial leverage, their influence is conditional on the proportion of shares owned by directors. The negative sign of the interacted variable shows that banks as directors avoid taking too much financial risk. Then, banks are not interested in high levels of leverage that could threaten the viability of the firm whose shares they own. This result also could imply that the ownership structure is a mechanism of control alternative to the board of directors. Thus, the higher the fraction of shares held by directors, the less prone the firm to borrow. The substituting relation among internal mechanisms of control has been also noted by Fernández and Arrondo (2005).

In Column 3 of Table 6 we reproduce the analysis concerning bank debt. Once again, pressure sensitive directors seem to reinforce the relations with banks and have a positive effect on bank debt. Nevertheless, the negative sign of the interacted variable suggests that they avoid taking too much financial risk when they are shareholders on top of directors.

Results reported in Column 4 of Table 6 corroborate the dual role of banks: although bankers in boards increase banking debt, the joint effect of bank ownership and bank directorship is negative. There seems to be an interaction among the different roles as they may be simultaneously directors, shareholders (and probably lenders). If this is the case, banks are concerned about the viability of their firm and avoid taking too much financial risk.

As regards the control variables, we find that arm's length funds are positively related to the maturity and tangibility of assets, and to growth opportunities. On the contrary, it is negatively affected by firm's performance. These results are consistent with the asymmetric information approach (Haque, et al., 2009; James and Smith, 2000; Yosha, 1995) and the moral hazard approach (Dennis, et al., 2000; Dewaelheyns and Van Hulle, 2010; Johnson, 1997) of financial intermediation.

Table 6: GMM estimates of the baseline model (bank debt)

Estimated coefficients (t-stats) of the estimation of the baseline model through the generalized method of moments. The dependent variable is always BKLEV, i.e., the proportion of bank debt over total debt; RESIST, SENSIT, BANK, INSUR is the proportion of the directors who represent pressure resistant institutional investors, pressure sensitive institutional investors, banks or insurance companies, respectively; INSOWN is the proportion of shares held by directors; ASMAT is assets maturity, MTB is the equity market to book ratio, SIZE is the log of total assets, TANGIB is tangible assets over total assets, ROA is the return on assets, AGE is the log of the number of years since the constitution of the firm, and TAX is taxes paid over costly debt. m_2 is a test of second order serial autocorrelation, Hansen test is a test of overidentifying restrictions which distributes as χ^2 (degrees of freedom). *** for 99 percent confidence level, ** for 95 percent and * for 90 percent.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
BKLEV _{t-1}	0.653 (24.61) ***	0.545 (18.33) ***	0.601 (24.08) ***	0.538 (16.88) ***
SENSIT	0.172 (4.68) ***		0.331 (6.54) ***	
SENSIT·INSOWN			-0.008 (10.53) ***	
RESIST	0.093 (3.31) ***	0.035 (1.52)	0.056 (1.40)	-0.021 (0.44)
RESIST·INSOWN			0.001 (1.70) *	0.001 (1.35)
BANK		0.166 (5.11) ***		0.326 (5.89) ***
BANK·INSOWN				-0.010 (13.13) ***
INSUR		0.728 (3.53) ***		0.360 (0.57)
INSUR·INSOWN				0.004 (0.31)
ASMAT	0.001 (1.51)	0.000 (2.80) ***	0.000 (3.49) ***	0.001 (3.60) ***
MTB	0.004 (7.18) ***	0.004 (7.60) ***	0.005 (8.94) ***	0.004 (8.20) ***
SIZE	-0.001 (0.52)	0.003 (0.78)	-0.007 (2.47) **	0.001 (0.15)
TANGIB	0.178 (8.37) ***	0.183 (8.61) ***	0.203 (8.00) ***	0.179 (7.19) ***
ROA	-0.190 (3.98) ***	-0.160 (3.33) ***	-0.140 (2.55) **	-0.180 (2.62) **
AGE	-0.012 (1.98) **	0.001 (0.14)	-0.014 (1.86) *	-0.010 (0.93)
TAX	-0.001 (0.64)	-0.006 (2.48) **	-0.001 (0.74)	-0.003 (1.10)
Observations	417	417	411	415
m_2	0.27	0.18	0.32	0.37
Hansen test (d.f.)	69.2 (215)	56.71 (207)	61.68 (213)	60.34 (204)

4.4. Sensitivity analysis

We now present some further analysis to check the sensitivity of our results to different estimation methods and different specifications of our model. First, we run new estimates using the two stages least square method (2SLS). Given the possibility of boards of directors being affected by corporate finance issues, Coles, et al. (2008) and Bhagat and Black (2001) use an instrumental variables model. Likewise, in Table 7 we report the estimates for our model. In Columns 1 and 2 the dependent variable is LEV and in Columns 3 and 4 the dependent variable is BKLEV. For simplicity we only report the most comprehensive models combining both the presence of grey directors and the ownership of the investors they represent.

The estimates of Table 7 corroborate the above reported ones. According to Columns 1 and 3, directors representing pressure sensitive investors have a positive influence on both leverage and bank debt, coherently with H1a. Nevertheless, this influence becomes negative when the ownership held by the institutional investors is taken into account. When we split up the effect of pressure sensitive directors into bank representatives and insurance companies representatives (Columns 2 and 4), the most remarkable result is the positive effect of BANK variable along with the negative effect of the interacted variable BANK·INSOWN. This result corroborates the ones reported in Tables 5 and 6.

Our second robustness check has to do with the role that grey directors play in the board. As it has been noted by a number of authors, the committee structure is an outstanding feature of the board of directors. Furthermore, there are three committees to which policy makers have paid special attention: the executive, the audit, and the compensation and nominating committees (Brick and Chidambaran, 2010; Cook and Wang, 2011; Reeb and Upadhyay, 2010). Since the Spanish Foundation of Financial Studies (2011) has shown that fewer than 46 percent of the Spanish quoted firms have an executive committee, we analyze the role of the institutional directors in the two other committees: audit and compensation and nomination.

The results reported in Table 8 (for the compensation and nomination committee) and in Table 9 (for the audit committee) corroborate our previous findings. As shown in Columns 1 and 3, directors representing pressure sensitive investors increase financial leverage, consistent with H1a. Nevertheless, Column 1 shows that, when the directors own a high proportion of shares, they refuse to reach high levels of financial leverage.

According to Columns 2 and 4, this combined effect is predominant among the directors representing banks and other deposit entities.

Table 7: 2SLS estimates of the baseline models

Estimated coefficients (t-stats) of the estimation of the baseline model through the two stages least squares method. The dependent variable is LEV (total debt to total assets) in Columns 1 and 2, and BKLEV (the proportion of bank debt over total debt) in Columns 3 and 4; RESIST, SENSIT, BANK, INSUR is the proportion of the directors who represent pressure resistant institutional investors, pressure sensitive institutional investors, banks or insurance companies, respectively; INSOWN is the proportion of shares held by directors; ASMAT is assets maturity, MTB is the equity market to book ratio, SIZE is the log of total assets, TANGIB is tangible assets over total assets, ROA is the return on assets, AGE is the log of the number of years since the constitution of the firm, and TAX is taxes paid over costly debt. *** for 99 percent confidence level, ** for 95 percent and * for 90 percent.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
LEV _{t-1}	0.781 (24.06) ***	0.747 (23.70) ***		
BKLEV _{t-1}			0.703 (19.23) ***	0.620 (7.98) ***
SENSIT	0.766 (3.65) ***		0.738 (2.74) **	
SENSIT·INSOWN	-0.017 (3.66) ***		-0.016 (2.73) **	
RESIST	0.125 (2.92) ***	0.146 (3.55) ***	0.143 (2.26) **	0.292 (2.07) **
RESIST·INSOWN	0.001 (0.18)	-0.000 (0.61)	-0.001 (0.26)	0.000 (0.12)
BANK		0.653 (3.52) ***		2.278 (1.86) *
BANK·INSOWN		-0.014 (3.27) ***		-0.050 (1.90) *
INSUR		-0.137 (0.41)		-0.295 (0.34)
INSUR·INSOWN		-0.004 (0.41)		0.016 (0.51)
ASMAT	0.001 (4.05) ***	0.001 (4.05) ***	0.001 (1.92) *	0.003 (1.86)
MTB	0.009 (4.43) ***	0.009 (4.42) ***	0.005 (1.83) *	0.008 (1.55)
TANGIB	-0.051 (1.73) *	-0.039 (1.37)	0.145 (3.38) ***	0.155 (2.17) **
ROA	-0.233 (3.77) ***	-0.222 (3.90) ***	-0.109 (1.14)	-0.034 (0.22)
AGE	-0.021 (2.34) **	-0.010 (1.27)	-0.017 (1.42)	-0.025 (1.14)
TAX	-0.015 (3.04) ***	-0.014 (2.99) ***	-0.004 (0.59)	-0.010 (0.76)
Observations	415	415	415	394
Adj-R ²	0.5689	0.5029	0.4870	0.2212

Table 8: GMM estimates (compensation and nomination committee)

Estimated coefficients (t-stats) through the generalized method of moments. The dependent variable is LEV (total debt to total assets) in Columns 1 and 2, and BKLEV (the proportion of bank debt over total debt) in Columns 3 and 4; RESISTNC, SENSITNC, BANKNC, INSURNC is the proportion of members of the compensation and nomination committee who represent pressure resistant institutional investors, pressure sensitive institutional investors, banks or insurance companies, respectively; INSOWN is the proportion of shares held by directors; ASMAT is assets maturity, MTB is the equity market to book ratio, SIZE is the log of total assets, TANGIB is tangible assets over total assets, ROA is the return on assets, AGE is the log of the number of years since the constitution of the firm, and TAX is taxes paid over costly debt. m_2 is a test of second order serial autocorrelation, Hansen test is a test of overidentifying restrictions which distributes as χ^2 (degrees of freedom). *** for 99 percent confidence level, ** for 95 percent and * for 90 percent.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
LEV _{t-1}	0.765 (66.88) ***	0.776 (65.35) ***		
BKLEV _{t-1}			0.635 (24.49) ***	0.627 (20.92) ***
SENSITNC	0.072 (5.10) ***		0.025 (2.51) **	
SENSITNC·INSOWN	-0.001 (2.52) **		-0.001 (3.16) ***	
RESISTNC	0.027 (1.99) **	-0.002 (0.53)	0.038 (2.88) ***	0.037 (2.60) **
RESISTNC·INSOWN	-0.001 (2.18) **	0.001 (0.88)	-0.001 (2.36) **	-0.001 (2.44) **
BANKNC		0.088 (5.86) ***		0.100 (2.06) **
BANKNC·INSOWN		-0.002 (3.45) ***		-0.004 (2.85) ***
INSURNC		-0.786 (0.45)		-5.329 (1.79) **
INSURNC·INSOWN		0.373 (0.47)		0.261 (1.75) *
ASMAT	0.001 (9.40) ***	0.001 (6.61) ***	0.001 (0.76)	0.001 (1.81) *
MTB	0.005 (10.14) ***	0.004 (9.93) ***	0.005 (9.53) ***	0.004 (7.15) ***
SIZE	0.009 (4.73) ***	0.012 (6.11) ***	-0.002 (0.89)	-0.001 (0.10)
TANGIB	-0.028 (2.80) ***	-0.076 (5.78) ***	0.224 (10.61) ***	0.200 (8.09) ***
ROA	-0.199 (5.99) ***	-0.316 (7.54) ***	-0.116 (1.86) *	-0.014 (0.20)
AGE	-0.007 (0.89)	-0.025 (3.48) ***	-0.014 (1.47)	-0.029 (2.77) **
TAX	-0.009 (5.30) ***	-0.011 (6.81) ***	-0.003 (2.77) ***	-0.005 (1.89) *
Observations	378	378	378	378
m_2	-0.16	-0.16	0.28	0.68
Hansen test (d.f.)	45.51 (245)	50.73 (235)	65.24 (241)	56.25 (237)

Table 9: GMM estimates (audit committee)

Estimated coefficients (t-stats) through the generalized method of moments. The dependent variable is LEV (total debt to total assets) in Columns 1 and 2, and BKLEV (the proportion of bank debt over total debt) in Columns 3 and 4; RESISTAC, SENSITAC, BANKAC, INSURAC is the proportion of members of the compensation and nomination committee who represent pressure resistant institutional investors, pressure sensitive institutional investors, banks or insurance companies, respectively; INSOWN is the proportion of shares held by directors; ASMAT is assets maturity, MTB is the equity market to book ratio, SIZE is the log of total assets, TANGIB is tangible assets over total assets, ROA is the return on assets, AGE is the log of the number of years since the constitution of the firm, and TAX is taxes paid over costly debt. m_2 is a test of second order serial autocorrelation, Hansen test is a test of overidentifying restrictions which distributes as χ^2 (degrees of freedom). *** for 99 percent confidence level, ** for 95 percent and * for 90 percent.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
LEV _{t-1}	0.771 (92.32) ***	0.757 (87.37) ***		
BKLEV _{t-1}			0.634 (25.73) ***	0.572 (21.76) ***
SENSITAC	0.017 (2.22) **		0.088 (4.00) ***	
SENSITAC·INSOWN	-0.002 (2.32) **		-0.001 (2.81) ***	
RESISTAC	0.002 (0.12)	0.014 (0.94)	0.066 (4.73) ***	-0.051 (0.90)
RESISTAC·INSOWN	0.105 (1.59)	0.001 (1.52)	0.164 (0.45)	0.000 (0.41)
BANKAC		0.088 (3.86) ***		0.244 (6.51) ***
BANKAC·INSOWN		-0.004 (8.35) ***		-0.008 (9.03) ***
INSURAC		-0.678 (1.08)		0.365 (0.27)
INSURAC·INSOWN		0.025 (0.69)		0.016 (0.23)
ASMAT	0.001 (8.94) ***	0.001 (6.61) ***	0.000 (3.40) ***	0.001 (5.09) ***
MTB	0.004 (12.07) ***	0.004 (9.93) ***	0.005 (9.72) ***	0.004 (7.15) ***
SIZE	0.013 (10.67) ***	0.012 (6.11) ***	-0.003 (0.95)	-0.007 (2.10) **
TANGIB	-0.054 (5.29) ***	-0.076 (5.78) ***	0.191 (10.14) ***	0.176 (8.27) ***
ROA	-0.308 (12.41) ***	-0.316 (7.54) ***	-0.052 (0.81)	-0.062 (0.90)
AGE	-0.014 (3.72) ***	-0.025 (3.48) ***	-0.004 (0.35)	0.004 (0.25)
TAX	-0.011 (11.69) ***	-0.011 (6.81) ***	-0.007 (3.03) ***	-0.007 (3.03) ***
Observations	414	414	414	414
m_2	-0.21	-0.14	0.39	0.52
Hansen test (d.f.)	69.15 (250)	59.77 (215)	61.57 (250)	57.47 (215)

5. Concluding remarks

Whereas recent studies have shown the prevalence of large institutional shareholdings around the world, the research about the influence of institutional investors as directors is still scarce. In this paper we propose that the type of business relations between firms and institutional investors is important to understand the incentives of these directors and, hence, the financial policy of the firm. We study the relation between the capital structure decisions of Spanish listed firms and institutional directors, making a distinction between those ones who keep business relations with the firm in whose board they sit, and institutional investors whose business activity is not related to the company in which they hold a directorship. We analyze the role of these directors under the agency theory along with other behavioral perspectives such as the resource dependence and the stewardship theory.

Our results suggest that institutional directors have diverse incentives to engage in the corporate governance. Consistent with the importance of business relations, the directors representing pressure sensitive investors (i.e., banks and insurance companies) have a preference for lower financial leverage, while the pressure resistant directors (i.e., mutual funds and pension funds) do not seem to have a consistent effect. This result suggests that pressure sensitive directors can provide managerial discipline alternative to the capital structure mechanism or prevent excessive financial risk taking. Nevertheless, when analysed separately, bank and insurance firm representative directors show different attitudes. Bankers in the board increase the financial leverage, which suggests that some types of institutional directors provide financial resources to the firms in whose board they sit. We also find a sort of risk aversion among directors representing banks, so that the higher the fraction of shares they own, the more the companies refuse both financial leverage and banking debt. It also can be understood as a possible substitution effect between the monitoring by the board of directors and the control through insider ownership.

The amplifying effect on the financial leverage of the bank involvement in boards of directors suggests that bank directors seems to provide financial expertise and access to financial funds as the resource dependence theory suggests. Nevertheless, the moderating effect of insider ownership on capital structure indicates that the role played by banks as providing critical resources is conditional on their stake in the ownership.

Our research sheds some light about the role played by financial intermediaries in the governance of non-financial firms. The supervision performed by these directors explains why, unlike US or UK systems in which board independence has been enhanced as a mechanism for managers monitoring, firms in Continental Europe have a significantly higher proportion of directors representing institutional investors. In addition, unlike the Anglo-Saxon countries, the concentrated ownership in Continental Europe firms results in interacted effects between institutional directorship and institutional ownership.

Overall, our research has interesting academic and policy implications for the debate over the proper degree of institutional involvement in corporate governance as witnessed by the public consultation recently launched by the European Commission on some corporate governance issues. First, when analysing the role of institutional investors one has to take into account not only their ownership stake, but their role in other mechanisms of corporate control such as the board of directors. Second, different institutional investors have different agendas and incentives for corporate governance, so both researchers and policy makers should no longer consider institutional investors as a whole. Third, the incentives of banks and, hence, the role that bank representative directors play in corporate governance could vary depending on other corporate variables, such as the ownership held by directors. Fourth, analysing the role of institutional directors under behavioural perspectives is necessary to better understand their involvement in effective corporate governance. Although the recent literature has shed some light on these issues, the research still has to deepen in the causes and implications of institutional investors involvement in the corporate governance of non-financial firms, particularly in bank-based economies.

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