

MEDIA COVERAGE OF ESTABLISHMENT AND NON-ESTABLISHMENT
CANDIDATES IN ARGENTINA'S 2003 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

In the aftermath of Argentina's December 2001 financial meltdown, the political class was widely blamed for the crisis that transformed this once predominantly middle-class country into a poor one. However, when new presidential elections were held in April 2003, establishment candidates generally placed higher relative to non-establishment candidates. To account for this puzzling election outcome, I examine the role that Argentine centrist print media may have played through their coverage of establishment and non-establishment candidates.

The research design involves content analysis of front-page news articles from large, centrist newspapers, *Clarín* and *La Nación*, over an eleven-month period. To analyze the data, I rely on count data and multi-linear graphs as well as correlation coefficients and tests of significance. Testing two hypotheses, namely media attention and framing, I find that establishment candidates received more media attention, and perhaps more name recognition, than did non-establishment candidates. I also find that centrist print media framed candidate strengths and weaknesses in particular ways. Establishment candidates were portrayed as having competency and electability as their strengths and integrity as their weakness. In contrast, their non-establishment rivals were presented as having integrity as their strength and competency and electability as their weaknesses.

This study shows that both the extensiveness and the slant in coverage may have advantaged establishment candidates over non-establishment candidates in terms of their ultimate standing in the polls. A discussion of pre-election and post-election survey results validate these findings by showing that media depictions of candidate competency and integrity were reasons named for candidate support. The value-added of this study is that it examines a macro level outcome in an original and systematic way by focusing on candidate information that voters may have relied on when making a voting decision. This, in turn, helps to shed light on the failure of democratic accountability in the aftermath of Argentina's worst financial crisis. It also highlights how subtle yet significant media-supplied candidate information may have had in a crisis-driven election.

To my parents

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I warmly thank those whose support, encouragement, and feedback kept my spirits high during this soulful journey of writing a thesis. I am extremely grateful for the help that I received during the four and a half years it took to finish it. It certainly proved to be a challenging yet a valuable learning experience.

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I started my project in 2001 by first seeking out help from experts in the field of Argentine politics. From Quebec, Canada, Pierre Ostiguy generously provided me with detailed information of polling centers and research institutions in Buenos Aires. He

also put me in contact with his Argentine friend and pollster Carlos Gervasoni. My initial attempt at face-to-face interviews would not have turned out as well as it did without Carlos's comments on my first prospectus draft in December 2001. The rapidly changing political, economic, and social climate during that month forced me to quickly change my project. On short notice, Carlos helped to revise and translate my questionnaire in July 2002 for my fieldwork.

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It was not until after I returned home from my fieldwork did I have an opportunity to learn more about interviewing techniques from reporters and editors in a two-day writers' workshop sponsored by my hometown newspaper *The St. Louis Post*

Dispatch. Interestingly, the many snappy and bright reporters that I met, now at the top of their field, began their careers as grief and tragedy reporters, covering the police or bumper beat. I learned a great deal about conducting interviews and writing reports from reporters and editors that led the workshops. I look forward to using their interviewing techniques and writing tips in future projects.

A heartfelt appreciation goes out to a couple of careful readers whose expertise in Argentine politics clearly showed through in their feedback. Nancy Powers and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán provided valuable comments on chapters that I sent them. I thank Mark Jones for facilitating those contacts.

Although I began graduate school in 1995, my first research trip abroad came in the summer of 2001. I thank my parents for funding my preliminary dissertation research, which made it possible. This trip allowed me to take an Argentine Social History course taught by Mirta Zaida Lobato at the Facultad de filosofía y letras at the Universidad de Buenos Aires. The notes that I took for her course came in handy when writing the first two chapters of my dissertation.

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During my fieldwork in 2002, I stayed with an Argentine family that I met a year earlier at a sleepover at their house. I thank the Bottos and the in-laws who lived next door for opening up their homes. I learned much about Argentine life from the

dinners and conversations that we had together. One of the best sources for information about new trends in Buenos Aires came from an in-law and neighbor, Patricia, an astute 16-year old who told me about recovered factories and youth squatter movements long before Argentine media covered them.

Financial support for writing my dissertation came from available jobs in St. Louis. I worked as a sales associate at four retail stores, a mail clerk at an engineering and architectural firm, a scanner for an insurance company, a production assistant at a graphics company, a child-care provider to an infant and a toddler, a non-profit fundraiser, an admissions assistant at a small business college, a baker and a barista at a coffeehouse, and a receptionist at an insurance company.

Finally, and most importantly, I thank my parents for their love and support. Throughout the many obstacles and challenges that I experienced in graduate school, as there were many, they were behind me. I would not have attained my doctoral degree without them.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

SECTION 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The 2003 presidential election in Argentina presented voters with an opportunity to hold accountable establishment politicians and parties that were widely blamed for the country's worst financial crisis. However, the election outcome showed that establishment candidates generally placed higher relative to their non-establishment rivals. The purpose of this dissertation is to address this puzzling outcome by focusing on media-supplied candidate information that voters may have used in their decision making. Of key interest is to compare patterns in centrist print media coverage of major establishment and non-establishment candidates and to relate these patterns to their standing in the polls.

Argentina's worst crisis began in early December 2001 when the De la Rúa government imposed a bank freeze, *el corralito*, to prevent capital flight¹. Social unrest in the form of protest, looting, and rioting, exploded throughout the country. To maintain public order, President De la Rúa decreed a 30-day state of emergency. Angry, dispossessed Argentines filled neighborhood streets in the federal capital. Beating on pots and pans, they chanted, "*¡Que se vayan todos!*", equivalent to "Down with them

¹ In early December 2001, the De la Rúa government ordered a partial freeze on accounts to prevent a bank run. It set withdrawal restrictions of \$1000 pesos (US \$1000) per month. As a result, people began to hoard their money, particularly U.S. dollars. According to a December 2001 study, Argentines had US\$28 billion "under the mattress" or in security boxes (*Clarín* 8/1/02).

all!” or “Throw the rascals out!”, alluding to all incumbent politicians and traditional parties, commonly known as the political class (Farmelo and Cibils 2003, p.1)².

This massive uprising, *el Argentinazo*, led to the ouster of De la Rúa who fled the Casa Rosada via helicopter (Aníbal Montoya 2003, p.4)³. Thirty people were dead, hundreds wounded, and several hundreds shops and supermarkets looted (Natalio Botana, *La Nación* 12/10/02). Eduardo Duhalde became the interim president after a series of presidential successions and the country defaulted on part of its US\$141 billion foreign debt. De-pegged from the U.S. dollar, the Argentine peso eventually devalued by 70% and inflation increased by 41% (*Wall Street Journal*, 3/20/03). Overall, the December 2001 crisis transformed this predominantly middle class country into a poor one, with 58% of Argentines living in poverty (*La Nación* 2/1/03)⁴.

Argentina’s deep and sudden crisis could have led to a dictatorship much like its first democratic collapse in 1930 in the midst of the Great Depression⁵. In fact, by the end of 2002, the country’s economic contraction of –10.9% was comparable to the negative growth experienced during the Great Depression (*Wall Street Journal*

² According to a national survey done by polling outlet Analogías with 1500 respondents over the period February 12-18, 2002, those that participated in the pot-banging protests were individuals with a high socioeconomic status, older than 30 years, and with a bank account frozen (*Clarín* 2/24/02). Many pot-banging protests became frequent thereafter.

³ President De la Rúa resigned on December 20, 2001, following the resignation of Economy Minister Domingo Cavallo and other members of his cabinet the day before. Following De la Rúa’s departure, the presidential successors included: the governor of San Luis Adolfo Rodríguez Saá, senate president Ramón Puerta, and congressional deputy Eduardo Camaño.

⁴ The study by INDEC focused on 31 major urban areas of the country, including provincial capitals and cities with more than 100,000 residents (*La Nación* 2/1/03). The reported poverty rate is an underestimate since poor rural areas were not included in the study. An estimated 10% of the Argentine population lives in rural locales.

⁵ The 1930 coup is significant since it began a period of growing division between elites who favored economic liberalism (capitalism) and the masses who grew disenchanted with it. Emphasizing industrialization, nationalism, and populism, the military government during the thirties sought to better incorporate groups into politics. In the post-Depression period from 1930 to 1983, there were 23 presidents of which 15 were military and 8 were civilian presidents (Rosendo Fraga, *Nueva Mayoría* 2002). As noted by sociologist and pollster Mora y Araujo, leaders during this period generally did not accept limits to their rule (Mora y Araujo 1988).

3/20/03)⁶. While rumors of a possible military coup began to spread following De la Rúa's departure, these were quickly dispelled in January 2002 when Army General Ricardo Brinzoni announced that the military would work within a constitutional framework, supporting democracy (*Página12* 2/7/02). Surprisingly, the crisis eventually led to orderly elections with massive participation and high affirmative voting in favor of establishment candidates, essentially members of the political class.

The aim of this dissertation, then, is to obtain a better handle on this counterintuitive outcome. I do so by focusing on what candidate information voters may have used from centrist print newspapers, specifically *Clarín* and *La Nación*. I focus not only on media attention to candidates, namely the volume of coverage, but also the substantive content, specifically the different ways media portray or frame candidates. Framing is defined as “selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution” (Entman 2004, p.5). In short, framing focuses on the slant in coverage.

Two key questions guide this research. How does the volume of media coverage compare across establishment and non-establishment candidates? In terms of media framing, how does the type and tone of coverage compare across these two groups? By the type of coverage, I mean media framing of candidate competency, electability, and integrity. By the tone of coverage, I mean how and to what degree do media frame candidates in either a favorable or unfavorable light for the three types of frames under analysis. These research questions are important since they potentially speak to the subtle yet powerful effects of the media to influence an election outcome, even in a context of a deep and sudden economic crisis in which the political class was widely blamed for the crisis.

In the next section, I provide background information about the deteriorating economic conditions in Argentina prior to its financial meltdown in December 2001. This contextual description paints a picture of a society undergoing rapid economic and

⁶ Argentina felt the effects of the Great Depression toward the end of 1929. The peso had devalued by 25%, unemployment was around 20 to 30% (Rock 2002, p.179).

social change. While the 2003 presidential election, unlike any other election in the contemporary period, can be described as a crisis-driven election, it failed to lead to a major political change.

SECTION 1.2 BACKGROUND: THE 1998 ECONOMIC RECESSION AND THE 2001 CRISIS

The poster child of neoliberal economics, the Argentine economy expanded from \$141 billion to \$298 billion from 1990 to 1998 (World Bank 2000). However, the economic boom in the first half of the nineties, as reflected in the 12% growth from 1990 to 1995, coincided with a series of economic shocks, including the Mexican peso crisis of 1994 and 1995, the Asian crisis in 1997 and 1998, and the Brazilian currency devaluation of January 1999. With this last shock, Argentina lost exports and foreign capital as a result of Brazil's currency devaluation. This caused Argentina to enter into an economic recession in July 1998 (Rodrik 2001). The December 2001 crisis marked a sharp downturn in an economic deterioration that was already under way.

A sign of this deterioration is seen in growing unemployment. In a 2002 report by the National Institute of Statistics and Census, Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censo (INDEC), three of every ten industrial workers had lost their jobs since July 1998. In the construction industry alone, half had lost their jobs in this four-year period; the 300,000 construction workers in the middle of 1998 had been reduced to 150,000 in 2002 (*Clarín* 7/20/02). According to a report by the national shopkeepers federation, Fedecámaras, roughly 10,000 businesses had closed in July 2002, alone, and over 350,000 people had lost their jobs over the previous seven months (*La Nación* 8/1/02). By July 2002, the national unemployment rate was 25%, which was probably an underestimate since many had given up searching for work (*La Nación* 8/1/02). While there were 308,943 new jobs created between May 2002 and May 2003 in the federal capital and Gran Buenos Aires, these were mainly informal jobs with no labor rights or access to social security (*Clarín* 8/15/03).

Those who remained in employment generally experienced decreased salaries. According to another government study by the National Institute of Statistics and

Census, INDEC, conducted in May 2002, the crisis caused salaries to fall by 25% nationally. In terms of regional differences in average salaries, the northeast region Corrientes, Formosa, Resistencia, and Posadas had the lowest average salary while the Patagonian region with Ushuaia, Río Gallegos, Neuquén and Comodoro Rivadavia had the highest average (*Clarín* 8/22/02). Argentines from the northeast region had difficulty in weathering the crisis since unemployment and poverty rates there exceeded more than 70%.

According to the International Labor Organization, the average real salary in 2003, \$550 pesos per month, was 60% less than the average real salary in 1970 (*Clarín* 9/2/03). Nationally, income inequality also worsened so that the top 10% in income made fifty times more than the bottom 10% (*NPR* 8/14/02). This marks a sharp increase in inequality since the top income decile during the 1970s earned only twelve times more than the bottom income decile (*La Nación* 10/8/02). Concern over this disparity was reflected in a Pew study in which 58% of Argentines stated that the rich-poor gap is the greatest challenge that the world faces (*What the World Thinks in 2002*, The Pew Global Attitudes Project 2002, p.58).

Of Argentina's 37 million people, the recession and crisis hit the poor the hardest. Between October 2001 and 2002, there were roughly 7 million who became "the new poor", essentially former members of the middle classes. Of the 21 million living in poverty in 2003, 10 million of these were classified as indigents, unable to secure food (*La Nación* 2/1/03). According to INDEC's May 2003 survey, a family with two children and an income of less than \$707 pesos (US\$235) per month in the federal capital or Greater Buenos Aires was classified as poor (*Clarín* 8/18/03). Nationally, in 2002 the average industrial salary for a worker was roughly \$730 pesos per month (US\$209). For police officers and members of the military in 2002, the 13% salary reduction enacted in 2001 had left half of law enforcement officials living below the poverty line with an income of \$650 pesos per month (US\$186) (*Clarín* 7/20/02).

Both the federal and provincial governments stopped payment on government salaries, pensions, and bonuses. Many people resorted to bartering, *el trueque*. An important aspect among barter club participants was the feeling of producing goods and

services that were valued by society. Barter clubs in Argentina first formed in 1995 and increased thereafter (Pearson 2003, p.216). By mid-2002, barter organizers had 3 million direct members and 7 million indirect members, involving a fourth of the Argentine population (Powell 2002, p.645). Thus, bartering became a means of economic survival.

One indication of this growing struggle to survive was that from 2000 to 2003, the number of child laborers had increased from 500,000 to 1,500,000 according to the International Labor Organization. By 2003, 22% of children between 5 and 14 had left school to work in recyclable trash recollection, food and artisanal production, construction, and agricultural and livestock work (*Clarín* 6/13/03). Eleven provinces in the northern region of Argentina had more than 80% of children under the age 14 living in poverty. Two provinces Corrientes and Chaco in this region had the worst child poverty rates of 95% and 93%, respectively (*Clarín* 8/18/03).

To cope with the crisis, Argentines turned to community vegetable gardens, scavenging food from the trash, and looting grocery stores and supermarkets. Several thousand *cartoneros* emerged; they extracted recyclable cardboard, paper, plastic, and other items found in the trash in exchange for a very small wage. The government eventually instituted a National Food Security Plan, *Plan Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria*, to target, according to a World Bank figure, 17.5% of all households that suffered from extreme hunger (*Clarín* 7/10/03). This plan stemmed from a citizen initiative that sought to provide food directly to poor families, children, and pregnant women. In addition, it helped to establish neighborhood gardens, school meal programs, and community meal centers (*La Nación* 7/17/03).

Neighborhood assemblies emerged in the aftermath of the crisis⁷. As noted by social historian Mirta Zaida Lobato (Lobato email correspondence 2/6/03), the appeal of a neighborhood assembly was that it enabled individuals to express their opinions and to vote directly on problems that confronted them such as food shortages, the need for medicine, trash removal, and neighborhood security. In a large, traditional barrio such as Caballito in the federal capital, the first inter-neighborhood assemblies drew more than 10,000 participants every Sunday in Parque Centenario. According to a Gallup Argentina poll taken in the first week of April 2002 with 1045 respondents, 37% of those interviewed stated that neighborhood meetings and assemblies could improve the country's course (*La Nación* 4/15/02). While neighborhood assemblies quickly formed and attracted many middle class members in early January 2002, many eventually dissolved in the months thereafter⁸.

The crisis also brought a wave of crime. Compared to 1995, theft had doubled by 2003. Similarly, the murder rate had increased by 50% compared to 1998. For every 100,000 inhabitants, there were roughly 10 murders—a figure matched during the last

⁷ In Germany during the 1930s, unbridled capitalism began to atomize society such that disenfranchised groups began to assault their governing elites (Arendt 1968). With fear and anxiety, citizens sought help from intermediate layers of associations such as neighborhood assemblies to fulfill their demands unmet by the government (Undergraduate class notes, Authoritarian politics, UCSD, 1992). This populist experiment failed and, eventually, led to the rise of authoritarianism. As Antonio Gramsci warns, authoritarianism grows in a weak civil society—one that is atomized, alienated, and vulnerable (Gramsci 1973). As noted by Philippe Schmitter, corporatism has the advantage of preventing society from atomizing since interests are channeled into the political decision making process, which, in turn, helps to minimize conflict (Schmitter 1979).

⁸ As noted by Cavarozzi and Palermo, the challenges faced by neighborhood assemblies include the co-optation of the neighborhood leader by political parties, clientelism, and a lack of resources. During the eighties and early nineties, assembly “leaders often credit[ed] their personal success to the circumstance of being co-opted by the party machines or to holding offices in the local government” (Cavarozzi and Palermo 1995, p.42).

dictatorship from 1976 to 1983 (NYT 6/3/03)⁹. A wave of quick robberies, *robos exprés*, was a cause for much frustration as the Minister of Justice and Security of Buenos Aires province, Juan Pablo Cafiero, acknowledged: “the criminal today has the advantage” (*La Nación* 7/19/02). In cases of express kidnapping, *secuestro exprés*, kidnappers would demand an immediate ransom payment from the victim’s family in exchange for the victim’s release. In more severe cases, kidnappers often requested multiple ransom payments, engaged in cruelty and torture, or killed their victim (*Clarín* 5/3/03; *CNN* 6/15/03).

The end of the *corralito* officially came in December 2002. Economy Minister Lavagna announced the elimination of restrictions on savings and checking accounts. By that time, withdrawal restrictions had been set at \$500 pesos (US\$163) per week (*EIU Country Report: Argentina*, 2003, p.23). At the start of the *corralito*, \$21 billion pesos, equivalent to US\$21 billion when the peso was equivalent to the U.S. dollar, were frozen. When the restrictions were lifted, this amount was reduced to \$6 billion dollars due to the de-pegging of the peso from the dollar and the subsequent currency devaluation (NYT, “Argentina Lifts Its Freeze on Most Bank Accounts”, 12/3/02). Despite an end to the freeze, hardships remained.

Many Argentines struggled financially due to the currency devaluation combined with other factors, like decreased salaries, unemployment, overcrowding in living conditions, high indebtedness, and destitution. Also, access to easy credit and the opportunity for monthly installment payment, popular in the nineties, were now

⁹ The process of national reorganization marks the dictatorship period from 1976 to 1983. During *el proceso*, the military’s goal was to eliminate individuals or groups who were perceived as internal subversives, threatening national security. The process of removing enemies of the state involved imprisonment, interrogation, torture, and assassinations. Targeted individuals were typically anarchists, communists, Peronists, members of a leftist guerrilla group Los Montoneros, journalists, and student protesters. Detainees were typically held in torture centers much like the one described by tortured journalist Jacobo Timmerman in *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number* (Timmerman 1981). The military’s rationale was that “society was sick”, having lost its morality. By eliminating enemies of the state, “the threat” would no longer exist. This way of thinking was used to justify state violence against civilians. In total, the military’s “dirty war” led to an estimated 30,000 missing or disappeared individuals (Classnotes, Historia Social Argentina, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2001). According to a recent interpretation by psychologist Hugo Vezzetti, “[t]he 1976 coup was carried out with the passive acquiescence of a paralysed and conformist society” (Vezzetti 2002, p.163).

eliminated¹⁰. Enjoyment of the comforts of life, *los confortables*, namely small domestic electronics, and the taking of family vacations, decreased considerably¹¹. Many Argentines felt that their parents' generation had had a better standard of living than they did (Graciela Römer 2003).

To deal with the crisis, Argentina obtained a World Bank loan of US\$600 million, for a Heads of Household program, *Plan Jefes de Hogar*, which gave \$150 pesos per month (US\$45) to 2 million unemployed heads of households with children under 18 or with a disabled person of any age (*Clarín* 1/29/03). In early April 2003, First Lady Hilda Duhalde announced a new government social program, called the Elderly program, *Plan Mayores*, which allowed individuals 70 years or older a monthly subsidy of \$150 pesos. This plan targeted an estimated 360,000 elderly individuals without a retirement or a pension plan. The subsidies were targeted for distribution to the 12 poorest provinces first: Formosa, Misiones, Jujuy, Chaco, Corrientes, Salta, San Juan, Entre Ríos, Catamarca, Tucumán, La Rioja, and Santiago del Estero (*La Nación* 4/3/03).

The recession and crisis also brought about much psychological and social stress. The demand for psychiatric services in public hospitals increased by 30% as Argentines sought help in coping with their unanticipated struggles and new identities in their role as unemployed and poor (Plotkin 2003, p.217). The economic recession along with the devastating crisis brought about national disappointment: many felt that Argentina had lost ground since the early nineties. According to Felipe Noguera, “[t]he illusion that we were on our way to becoming a First World nation [was] dead” (Goodman 2003). Resentment, depression, and a sense of confusion about their lives and their country's future were some common reactions to this major setback.

¹⁰ I thank Lisandro Boggio for his insight about the popularity of monthly installment payment.

¹¹ According to Thornstein Veblen, economic values have a strong influence over social life such that people compare their relative success to what others accumulate in wealth and property. Advancing the idea of conspicuous consumption, Veblen argues that people are driven to increase their material consumption as a means to demonstrate their belonging to a particular social class (Veblen 1912).

While the crisis was collectively experienced, several different interpretations emerged in its aftermath. The Argentine media presented various perspectives on who or what was to blame, holding accountable Washington, President George W. Bush, the IMF, globalization, ex President Carlos Menem, Economy Minister Domingo Cavallo¹², ex President De la Rúa, and caretaker President Eduardo Duhalde. The chain of blame even stretched back to the military during the last dictatorship (*Clarín* 1/13/02). In a national survey conducted by the Centro de Estudios para la Opinión Pública (CEOP), 44.6% of those polled assigned crisis responsibility to Menem and his decade of rule during the nineties, 40% blamed political corruption in general, 29.2% blamed Alianza, the coalition party led by the radical party¹³ and the leftist coalition FREPASO, 25.7% blamed Duhalde, and 5% blamed the IMF (*Clarín* 6/2/02)¹⁴. Thus, crisis blame was dispersed, though concentrated largely on domestic leaders.

In the next section, I describe conditions and events surrounding the 2003 presidential election as well as describe the major candidates in the election. As the reader will see, popular support for the major establishment candidates generally exceeded support for the major non-establishment candidates.

SECTION 1.3 BACKGROUND: THE 2003 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Faced with pressure to solve the country's problems, interim President Duhalde called in July 2002 for new elections. This came a day before a massive anti-government protest was to be held. As speculated by many, the call for a new election

¹² The economic stability that Argentina experienced was a result of the Convertibility Plan of 1991. This plan had pegged the peso to the dollar. Conceived by Economic Minister Domingo Cavallo, he envisioned this plan to remain in place for at least sixty years.

¹³ The radical party (UCR), was a party based on Krausian ideology that stressed morality. It sought to rid politics of corruption, particularly vote fraud. The radical party is considered the first mass-based party, expanding its membership to non-elites. Contrary to its name, it became a centrist or a moderate party, predominantly representing the middle classes (Rock 2002a; Classnotes, Historia Social Argentina, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2001).

¹⁴ These figures exceed 100% when summed due to multiple answers per respondent.

was probably an escape valve, allowing the politically weak Duhalde to remain in power for ten more months¹⁵.

A widely held concern was that public disenchantment with corrupt politicians and poorly functioning institutions would deter voter turnout. In fact, neighborhood assemblies, grassroots organizations, and politicians, such as Luis Zamora, called for massive abstention to protest the election (Farmelo and Cibils 2003). Other prominent leaders, such as perónist governor of Buenos Aires, Felipe Solá, and the city's mayor, the leader of FREPASO, Aníbal Ibarra, argued in favor of holding concurrent elections for all major offices (*La Nación*, 7/4/02). One month prior to the election, polls estimated that only 16 of the 25 million registered voters would turn out to vote, despite Argentina's compulsory voting law (*La Nación* 3/27/03). Contrary to such a dismal prediction, actual turnout in the 2003 presidential election was a substantial 77.6% of the national electorate¹⁶. According to Rosendo Fraga, this figure represented a decline of only 2% on the average turnout for elections in Argentina since 1983 (*Nueva Mayoría* 5/7/03)¹⁷.

Another concern was that the election would be fraught with violent protest and vote fraud. In general, Argentines were expecting much more violence in 2002-2003 than there actually was (Carlos Acuña 5/7/03, email correspondence). While we do find people engaged in such acts of social rebellion as protests, strikes, riots, and the blocking of major roads and highways (Iñigo, Carrera and Cotarelo 2003), there was no such rebellion in the form of political violence on the day of the election. Polling locales were not damaged or destroyed. The election, itself, was transparent, clean, and without

¹⁵ I thank Mark Jones for this point.

¹⁶ By historical comparison, the Perón years during the forties and fifties were “times of high government-induced political-electoral mobilizations” such that turnout was roughly 90% (Canton and Jorrat 2003).

¹⁷ Riker and Ordeshook argue that people with a sense of civic duty are likely to vote (Riker and Ordeshook 1986).

any incident. Moreover, no party filed a claim to contest the election results as fraudulent (*La Nación* 5/8/03). This latter is remarkable, given that only a handful of elections have been free and fair in Argentina's history.

Still another concern was that there would be a high percentage of null or blank votes, indicative of protest voting¹⁸, *el voto bronca*, against the political class. This prediction was based on a pattern found in the 2001 congressional elections in which blank and null votes were the highest since 1983. A Gallup Argentina poll taken in June 2001 in Buenos Aires showed that 60% of those polled believed that corruption of the political class was the country's most pressing problem (*Página 12* 7/8/01). In the October 14, 2001 congressional election¹⁹, at most 21% submitted a negative vote, essentially a blank or null vote (Bavastro and Szusterman 2003). Negative votes were most common in big urban hubs and among people with higher educational and socio-economic levels. Fraga surmises that the reasons for such votes were a lack of faith in the political system, a lack of trust in candidates, and a protest against both of these (Nueva Mayoría 10/16/01).

Bavastro and Szusterman speculated that the protest vote in 2001 came from disgruntled members of the middle classes and predicted an increase in negative voting for the 2003 presidential election (Bavastro and Szusterman 2003). This did not pan out since negative voting was only 2.5%. Specifically, 75.51% of eligible voters and 97% of those who did vote cast an affirmative vote in favor of a candidate. Overall, affirmative voting increased by 17% in the 2003 presidential election compared to the 2001 congressional elections (Rosendo Fraga, Nueva Mayoría 5/7/03). In comparative perspective, affirmative voting was 83% of eligible voters in the 1983 and 1989

¹⁸ In the 1958 election, the null votes won. Arturo Frondizi was the candidate with the second most votes.

¹⁹ The midterm election of October 14, 2001 was unique in that all seventy-two seats in Argentina's senate were chosen for the first time by popular vote as specified by constitutional reform in 1994. Also, half of the seats in the chamber of deputies were contested (Mark Falcoff, AEI, November 2001). According to Escolar et al., the parties of the left gained votes while Alianza and APR lost votes (Escolar et al. 2002). The opposition peronist party won control of the Senate and a plurality of the lower house.

elections and 76% in the 1995 and 1999 elections (Marcelo Leiras, *Clarín* 5/3/03).

Again, these high voting figures take into account Argentina's compulsory voting law.

Voters had many choices in the 2003 election as there were eighteen candidates vying for the presidency. To name some, they included businessman Manuel Herrera of the Christian Democratic party, human rights advocate and former union leader Alfredo Bravo of the Socialist party, trash recollection worker Juan Mussa, and Patricia Walsh of the United Left. Given public demand for strong political leadership as well as for an end to rampant crime, military candidates Gustavo Breide Obeid, Ricardo Terán, and Enrique Venturino might have been expected to appeal to voters. These fascist candidates favored concentrating extraordinary power in the hands of the president, and, in the words of Venturino, “triple zero tolerance with delinquents” (*Clarín* 3/13/03)²⁰.

Surprisingly, in the final election outcome, the lowest thirteen candidates garnered less than 10% of the popular vote between them. Of this 10%, career politician Leopoldo Moreau of the radical party captured 2% of the vote, which was his party's worst electoral showing in history²¹. Thus, this signaled the downfall of one of Argentina's long-standing establishment parties, specifically the radical party.

²⁰ While it is argued that the appeal of the extreme right, fascism, is that it protects the middle-classes against both the problems of socialism and capitalism (Lipset 1960), fascist candidates had garnered the least number of votes in the 2003 presidential election in Argentina.

²¹ Involved in politics since age fourteen, Moreau was a founder of the student arm of the radical party, *franja morada*, purple fringe. Moreau won his party's nomination in December 2002 after beating Senator Rodolfo Terragno in the primaries. Scandal in the election forced party president Angel Rozas to resign and three provinces held new elections due to vote fraud allegations.

What was unprecedented about the election was that the peronist party²², traditionally a working class party, ran three candidates due to a cancelled primary election that had been scheduled for February 23, 2003. Duhalde successfully pushed through a measure before the 900-member governing council of the peronist party that allowed for the *ley de lemas*, thereby selecting the party's nominee with the presidential election (NYT, "Peronist Party Losing Its Grip on Argentine Politics, 2/9/03, p.12; Regúnaga 2003, p.2). Regúnaga and Diaz reflect that with a primary election, Duhalde's archrival Carlos Menem would have won the party's nomination (Regúnaga and Diaz 2003)²³. They speculate that President Duhalde's purpose in suspending the open primary requirement and using a *neolemas* scheme was to allow the peronist party to run their nominees as independent candidates through third parties or coalitions whose

²² Colonel Juan Domingo Perón was named head of the Labor Department in October 1943. Later, he changed this position to Secretary of Labor and Social Welfare. Both Perón and his wife Eva Duarte Perón drew support from workers and the poor, appealing to the concerns of *los descamisetas*, the unshirred ones. Perón forced industrial businesses to give workers, *el aguinaldo*, an extra bonus or 13-month salary. From 1941 to 1944, the number of workers affiliated with unions rose by 17.7% (Rock 2002b, p.216). Unlike workers two decades earlier, workers during the forties were able to obtain subsidy for sickness, extra pay, paid vacation, and accident compensation. Viewed as a threat by the military, Perón was put in jail on October 8, 1945. A popular uprising, which led to a mass protest against the military government, took place on October 17 and 18 of 1945. These massive assemblies pressured the military government to release him. According to Daniel James, this mass protest was carnival-like such that workers mocked the dominant upper-class values by becoming rowdy, drunk, and disheveled in appearance (James 1995). Perón capitalized on both the 17 of October, the day of his release and May Day, workers' day, by orchestrating mass demonstrations. Workers, in turn, would engage in a kind of political ritual, demonstrating their loyalty to his leadership (Plotkin 2003). Promising a new Argentina to address unemployment, economic inequality, and precarious living conditions, Perón created his own party, later renamed Partido Justicialista, Justice Party. Emphasizing nationalism in his *Doctrina Peronista* in 1948 and later 1954, he advocated: 1) economic independence; 2) social justice; and 3) political sovereignty (Classnotes, Historia Social Argentina, Summer 2001).

²³ Duhalde served as Vice President under President Menem from 1989 to 1991 but stepped down due to a conflict with Menem. He ran in the 1999 presidential election against De la Rúa and received 38% of the vote. Prior to 1999, he was governor of Buenos Aires, elected to serve two terms. In the October 2001 midterm elections, he was elected as senator for Buenos Aires, beating former President Alfonsín of the radical party.

votes would be non-additive. In this way, Duhalde's pick would stand a better chance to defeat his rival Menem²⁴.

As in previous elections, political parties chose candidates as they saw fit, given that there was no national legislation for candidate selection. The cancellation of the primary election meant that the peronist vote would split among three contenders in which the vote share of any one of them could have fallen short of beating any of the other contenders. Also, it increased their chances of having to contest in the second round election, called *ballottage*. This is because Argentine electoral laws stipulate that the plurality winner must attain a simple majority, 50%+1, of the votes or hold a 10% advantage over the second place finisher; otherwise, the top two contenders would have to meet each other in the second round election.

SECTION 1.4 THE MAJOR CANDIDATES

There were five major candidates in the 2003 Argentine presidential election. These were Carlos Menem, Néstor Kirchner, Ricardo López Murphy, Elisa Carrió, and Adolfo Rodríguez Saá. While all five were mainstream politicians at the national level, they differed significantly in their campaign style. Specifically, Menem, Kirchner, and Rodríguez Saá relied heavily on traditional machine politics to win popular support. In contrast, the other two candidates, namely López Murphy and Carrió, ran their campaigns on a programmatic, or an issue-based, agenda. Thus, their campaign style was essentially non-machine based. I classify Menem, Kirchner, and Rodríguez Saá as establishment candidates and López Murphy and Carrió as non-establishment candidates in terms of this dichotomy. I take each of these candidates in turn.

Representing the peronist faction called *menemismo*, Carlos Menem had pushed through neoliberal economic policies during his two terms as president from 1989 to 1999, though his policies ran contrary to the goals of the peronist party as a working class party. Many perceived him as having created “artificial prosperity” with the

²⁴ In 1999, the coalition party Alianza chose its candidate via a semi-open primary, as did FREPASO in 1995. In contrast, the radical party used a closed primary for 2003, 1995, and 1989. Similarly, the peronist party used a closed primary system in choosing its candidate in 1989.

privatization of state-owned enterprises (*NPR* 4/27/03). Palermo argues that Menem “exploited the anti-status quo political biases of the public to legitimize the exclusion of the congress and his own party from the decision-making process” (Palermo 1998, p.163). This, in turn, gave rise to the acceptance of his *decisionismo*, a unilateral approach to his decision-making.

Political scandals plagued Menem. In June 2001, he had been placed under house arrest for illegal arms shipment to Ecuador and Croatia. Rather than being sent to prison, he was allowed to serve his sentence under house arrest because of his age. In July 2002, a political scandal broke out, suggesting that Menem had taken a bribe of 10 million dollars to keep quiet about Iran’s role in bombings of Jewish cultural centers in Buenos Aires in 1992 and in 1994 (*NPR* 8/22/03). Also, he had been implicated in having an undeclared Swiss bank account where his bribe money was deposited. During the campaign, the media focused on Menem, age 72, and his wife, ex Miss Universe Cecilia Bolocco, age 36, because they were having a baby.

Campaigning on the slogan “Under Menem We Lived Better” in reference to his presidency during the nineties, Menem pushed for public works projects while promoting free trade and foreign investment. He also promised tax cuts for consumers and employers as well as the return of U.S. dollars for those who initially had dollar accounts and announced his plan to request \$10 billion dollars in loan aid (*Clarín* 4/27/03). In his party platform entitled “10 propositions to get out of the crisis”, Menem proposed to create a new federalism to form six regions (Carlos Menem: *Alianza frente por la lealtad*, p.11). He emerged as the plurality winner in Neuquén, La Pampa, Córdoba, Santa Fe, Entre Ríos, Santiago del Estero, La Rioja, Catamarca, Tucumán, La Salta, Chaco, Corrientes, and Misiones.

Néstor Kirchner, “the candidate that nobody knows”, was the second peronist candidate. He represented the Duhalde faction, *duhaldismo*, namely traditional peronism that was pro-labor. Kirchner had served twelve years as governor of oil-rich Santa Cruz, a southern province in Patagonia. He was credited with having safeguarded his province’s oil revenue by placing it in foreign banks during the economic crisis. Prior to the bank freeze in December 2001, Kirchner had transferred provincial money

to the value of US\$527 million to foreign banks in Luxembourg. His province of 200,000 residents, representing a mere 1% of the electorate, was able to access funds, weathering the crisis better than any other province in the nation. Kirchner also took credit for Santa Cruz having the lowest unemployment rate and no deficit (Bradley Brooks 2/4/03, p.2). In his party platform, he assigned blame for the external debt, the dismantling of the national productive sector, and the financing of capital to the process initiated in 1976, namely the last dictatorship (Plataforma Electoral “Frente Para la Victoria” 2003, p.3). The implication was that he blamed the country’s economic problems on the previous military government’s handling of the economy.

Kirchner’s economic plan emphasized the promotion of consumer spending by increasing salaries for those currently employed and the promotion of public works projects for those unemployed. He promised to build 3 million housing units to generate 5 million jobs (*CNN en Español* 4/29/03). Also, he called for an increase in exports so as to generate revenue for debt repayment and to pay for imports. Kirchner stated that the peso would continue to float free and the Central Bank would intervene in the market when necessary. Further, the country’s external debt would be renegotiated with private creditors and international organizations, though no additional funds would be requested. One of his main campaign slogans was *Un país en serio*, “A serious country” with sub-slogans such as “Industry is national”, “Delinquents go to jail”, and “Hunger does not exist”. He won in Tierra del Fuego, Santa Cruz, Chubut, Río Negro, and Buenos Aires. In the north, he won in Jujuy and Formosa. Kirchner was successful in winning votes in Buenos Aires province, relying heavily on Duhalde’s political organization to mobilize support since many voters in Buenos Aires province generally were not familiar with him (Fraga, *Nueva Mayoría* 4/28/03)²⁵.

A third peronist presidential contender was Adolfo Rodríguez Saá, a career politician who had served five terms as governor of San Luis in central Argentina. President for only a week in late December 2001, “the smiling populist” was widely

²⁵ Since the 1853 Constitution, 28 of Argentina’s 50 presidents assumed power by using a support base not of their own. Referred to as *los presidentes vicarios*, these 28 “vicarious” presidents have had mixed results with 15 failing and 13 succeeding in finishing their term in office (*La Nación* 5/4/03).

criticized for announcing triumphantly the country's default on its debt when public sentiment was that of national disgrace. Representing Movimiento Nacional y Popular, "el Adolfo" promised to create a new currency and a million jobs. His campaign for a state oil company was framed in campaign graffiti as "El Adolfo or Repsol" with the latter in reference to the privatized state-owned oil company Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales (*Latin America Weekly Report* 2/11/03, p.62).

Rodríguez Saá's economic plans called for a minimum salary of \$500 pesos and a retirement income of at least \$300 pesos to reactivate spending. Supporting state interventionism, Rodríguez Saá further proposed to create a national petroleum and rail system. He also stated that he would renegotiate the debt, requesting a combination of debt release, grace periods, and lower rates (*Clarín* 4/27/03). His government plan outlined 125 measures during his first 100 days, which critics charged was overly ambitious in terms of promising to do more than he realistically could. Rodríguez Saá won in three western provinces, namely Mendoza, San Juan, and San Luis.

Ricardo López Murphy was the leader of his own party called Movimiento Federal Recrear. Considered one of the "Chicago boys", López Murphy remained a staunch advocate of neoliberal economic ideology. A former defense minister and economics minister for President De la Rúa's administration, his affiliation to a traditional party, namely the radical party, did not hurt his campaign. The expectation is that his association with the previous administration may have influenced voters to assess some blame on him for the crisis. Also, one would expect his connection to an unpopular president would weaken his own candidacy. Though he did not benefit from an existing party organization, López Murphy's long government service may have helped him. "Bulldog" López Murphy surged in the polls during the last few weeks prior to the election, appearing on television in his attempt to appeal to undecided voters.

Running as a reform candidate, López Murphy promised to rid of government corruption, waste, and inefficiency. A major topic in his party platform dealt with reestablishing cultural values, emphasizing shared ethics and improving institutions (Plataforma, Alianza Movimiento Federal Para Recrear el Crecimiento, 2003). He promised to increase GDP by 14% within two years of taking office, to increase prices

gradually over two years, and to renegotiate the external debt so that the repayment period would be lengthened by 30 years and with low interest rates (*Clarín* 4/27/03). Challenging voters to turn away from establishment candidates, one of his campaign ads states: ““If you are going to vote the same way (as in the past), things are going to be worse”” (*Agence France Presse* 4/24/03). López Murphy was the plurality winner in the federal capital with roughly 26% of the national vote (*La Nación* 4/28/03).

Anti-corruption campaigner and national deputy Elisa “Lilita” Carrió emerged as a popular candidate in mid-2002 when polls indicated that that she stood a good chance of winning the presidency (Sophie Aire, www.womensnew.org, 12/2/03). Pushing for new concurrent elections for all major offices, she capitalized on public sentiment by incorporating the protest mantra “Down with them all!” as a campaign theme²⁶. Carrió was former head of an anti-mafia commission. A former militant radical party member who in 2001 formed her own party *Afirmación para una República Igualitaria* (ARI), she refused to accept any private contributions for her campaign and fell behind in the polls in the weeks prior to the election.

Carrió’s economic plan called for the provision of citizen incomes for those under 18 and over 65 years as well as an increase in real salaries. In addition, she proposed to implement a progressive fiscal policy that would increase the minimum wage. Her plan also called for getting rid of all unjustified business tax exemptions and for encouraging profits to be reinvested in business. Further, she planned to lower the value-added tax, IVA (*Clarín* 4/27/03). One of her most controversial proposals was to deny foreigners the right to purchase Argentine land (Plataforma Electoral, Alianza ARI, 2003). She failed to win a plurality in any of the provinces and placed fourth overall.

SECTION 1.5 RESULTS OF THE 2003 ARGENTINE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The results of the April 27, 2003 presidential election showed that Argentines generally favored the five major candidates, namely Menem, Kirchner, López Murphy,

²⁶ A poll taken May 10-15, 2002 showed that 82% of 1256 respondents in a Gallup Argentina national survey expressed support for total renewal of all the major political positions at the national, provincial, and municipal levels (*La Nación* 5/30/02). This call for renewal was a call for new elections to be held concurrently across all major political offices.

Carrió, and Rodríguez Saá. Together, they received 90% of the vote: Menem with 24.36% of the total vote, Kirchner with 22%, López Murphy with 16.34%, Carrió with 14.14%, and Rodríguez Saá with 14.12% (*Clarín* 4/29/03). Presidential candidates of the peronist party won in every district in the nation with the exception of the federal capital, which was won by López Murphy. Despite bearing much blame for the economic crisis, Menem emerged as the first round winner. Since he failed to clinch either 45% of the affirmative vote or 40% of the affirmative vote with a 10% margin over the second-place finisher, Kirchner, Menem was required to face Kirchner in a run-off election, *ballottage*, within 30 days. However, five days prior to the run-off election on May 18, 2003, Menem withdrew his candidacy, making him the first plurality winner in history to withdraw. Many polls had predicted that Menem would suffer a defeat in the second round. By default, then, Kirchner became Argentina's 49th president. Table 1.1 below shows the election results.

2003 Presidential Candidates	Party	Votes	Votes (%)
1.Carlos Saúl Menem	Frente por la Lealtad/ Unión del Centro Democrático	4,686,646	24.36
2.Néstor Carlos Kirchner	Frente para la Victoria	4,232,052	22.00
3.Ricardo López Murphy	Movimiento Federal Recrear para el Crecimiento	3,144,528	16.34
4.Elisa María Avelina Carrió	Alianza Afirmación para una República Igualitaria	2,720,692	14.14
5.Adolfo Rodríguez Saá	Frente Movimiento Popular	2,715,799	14.12
6.Leopoldo Raúl Guido Moreau	Unión Cívica Radical	450,489	2.34
7.Patricia Walsh	Izquierda Unida	337,285	1.75
8.Alfredo Pedro Bravo	Partido Socialista	217,670	1.13
9.Enrique Venturino	Que se vayan todos	146,318	0.76
10. José Saúl Wermus (also known as Jorge Altamira)	Partido Obrero	143,013	0.74
11.Guillermo Alejandro Sullings	Partido Humanista	106,859	0.56
12.José Carlos Arcagni	Tiempo de Cambios	66,575	0.35
13.Mario Mazzitelli	Partido Socialista Auténtico	51,371	0.27
14. Manuel Eduardo Herrera	Partido Demócrata Cristiano	49,247	0.26
15. Carlos Alberto Zaffore	Movimiento Integración y Desarrollo	48,956	0.25
16. Gustavo Breide Obeid	Partido Popular de la Reconstrucción	47,930	0.25
17. Juan Ricardo Mussa	Unidos o Dominados	40,337	0.21
18. Ricardo César Terán	Movimiento por la Dignidad y la Independencia	33,636	0.17
Total		19,239,403	100.00
Total affirmative votes		19,239,403	97.00
Blank		176,253	0.89
Null		321,252	1.62
Contested and Appealed		38,390	0.19
Total votes		19,775,298	100.00
Total votes (turnout)		19,775,298	77.61
Absenteeism		5,704,068	22.39
Total of registered voters		25,479,366	100.00
Source: <i>La Nación</i>			

Table 1.1 2003 Argentine Presidential Election: First Ballot Results

SECTION 1.6 ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation uses a five-chapter format. In chapter two, I critically appraise the economic voting and party politics literature as well as the media and politics literature with the goal to explore possible explanations. While many arguments made in the literatures shed some light on the puzzle, they fail to tell the whole story. Discussion of a second literature suggests that an investigation of media attention and framing of candidates may prove fruitful to better understand the election outcome. In particular, initial evidence shows a high correlation between each candidate's share of the vote and the volume of media attention that they received. After reviewing current studies and initial evidence of media effects, I argue that a macro level approach to media effects that focuses on media message emission would yield a better handle over the election outcome than a micro level approach that focuses on media message reception. The former better suits my purpose to offer a better handle on the election outcome, which is essentially a macro level focus.

Chapter three lays out the steps I took to investigate media coverage of the five major candidates. Extending from prior research in Argentina and the U.S. that examines media attention and framing, the methodology involves content analysis of two centrist print newspapers, *Clarín* and *La Nación* over an eleven-month period. Specifically, I use count data, correlation analysis, and tests of significance along with interpretations that are heavily contextualized. To measure media attention, I counted the number of cover stories to determine the extensiveness of coverage across establishment and non-establishment candidates. I then examined the type and tone of candidate coverage by counting the number of key words or phrases that made reference to each candidate's competency, electability, and integrity, both favorably and unfavorably.

Chapter four provides analysis and interpretation of the results which, in general, support established theories about media effects. The findings show that media attention and the slant in coverage seem to have impacted the election outcome in terms of candidate placement. Establishment candidates received more media attention on the front pages of *Clarín* and *La Nación*, which probably gave them more name recognition

in a tight race. Moreover, competency and electability were presented as their strengths and integrity was framed as their weakness. In contrast, the reverse held true for non-establishment candidates such that their integrity was accentuated as their strength while competency and electability were framed as their weaknesses.

Finally, chapter five presents the major findings of the dissertation study along with its implications, limitations, and extensions for future research. In particular, I point out that while the 2003 Latinobarómetro survey shows that a paltry 8% of Argentines stated that they trust political information from newspapers, the two centrist print newspapers in this study probably were influential. This is because reproductions of national print media typically are found in television and radio news as well as provincial dailies, suggesting that the contents of large, national newspapers set the agenda for other media outlets (Waisbord 2004; Casermeiro de Pereson 2003). Media attention and framing of candidates may have been more influential due to this inter-media agenda setting effect.

SECTION 1.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has introduced the reader to a systematic study of centrist print media coverage of candidates in the 2003 presidential election in Argentina. The proposed methodology involves newspaper content analysis. The findings suggest that establishment candidates generally placed higher relative to non-establishment candidates because they were presented as more newsworthy, having received more media attention, than their non-establishment rivals. Moreover, centrist print media framed establishment strengths and weaknesses in ways that seemed to advantage them over their non-establishment rivals. The significance of this research is that it examines information in an original way by focusing on both the volume and content of media-supplied candidate information that voters may have relied on when making a political decision. This, in turn, highlights the subtle yet profound impact media attention and framing may have had in influencing a crisis-driven election in which establishment politicians and parties seemed to have escaped electoral punishment.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

SECTION 2.1 INTRODUCTION

From the onset of the financial crisis in December 2001 to the months leading to the presidential election, public opinion was in favor of voting establishment candidates out of office. According to a national poll conducted by the Centro de Estudios Nueva Mayoría with 1200 respondents during the first week of November 2002, 66% of Argentines agreed with the idea of “Down with them all!” (Nueva Mayoría 11/02). A deep and sudden economic crisis makes for an interesting context to explore why establishment candidates generally placed higher in the election than did non-establishment candidates, despite a devastating crisis and public outrage against “the institutional corruption of the political class” (Lewis 2002, p.176). The goal of this chapter is to critically appraise different explanations of electoral reactions that may shed light on Argentina’s puzzling election outcome.

Of the top five finishers, the first and second plurality winners, Menem and Kirchner, along with fifth-place finisher Rodríguez Saá, belonged to the long-standing peronist party, essentially a traditional party. Non-establishment candidates López Murphy and Carrió, both of whom formed their parties under their own individual leadership, placed third and fourth, respectively. While the expectation is that non-establishment candidates would place higher relative to the establishment candidates, this expectation only held true for Rodríguez Saá who placed fifth behind López Murphy and Carrió.

In general, voters did have choices among the major candidates. Similar to Menem, López Murphy supported free market policies and held a pro-U.S. stance. He could have been a viable alternative for those voters who disapproved of Menem's corrupt behavior yet who wanted a president that would support a pro-market economic model. Also, Carrió, an anti-corruption campaigner, could have been a viable alternative for those voters who were first and foremost concerned about excessive government corruption. Further, even among the peronist candidates, there were choices. As noted by Levitsky and Murillo, "[w]hereas Rodríguez Saá cast himself as a traditional Peronist, with a nationalist and populist appeal, Kirchner positioned himself as a modern progressive, adopting a center-left 'neo-Keynesian' platform" (Levitsky and Murillo 2003, p.157). Thus, there were choices available to peronist supporters who were anti-Menem.

This chapter proceeds with a review of possible explanations. I focus on economic voting and party politics because their strong presence in the current literature. While many of these explanations offer some insight, they fail to tell the whole story. The discussion points to a fruitful area of research that focuses on what media-supplied information voters may have relied on when basing their voting decision. This is followed by a second literature review on media and politics, focusing on agenda-setting, media attention, priming, and framing as well as literature that describes Argentine media.

SECTION 2.2 POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

A general economic voting theory posits that when the economy declines, voters vote against the government (Lewis-Beck 1988; Key 1966). In the comparative politics literature, this general theory is captured in Przeworski's formal model, summarizing how market-oriented reforms may be carried out in a democratic context (Przeworski 1991). Przeworski argues that citizens are less likely to support reforms because of their immediate focus on their negative consequences such as inflation, job loss, and changes in relative income. Highlighting a tension in political and economic liberalization, he

predicts that popular opposition to radical economic reforms is likely to lead to the electoral punishment of the leaders who ushered them in (Przeworski 1991).

But while this model is intuitively appealing, the empirical evidence does not bear it out. Putting Przeworski's model to the test, Gervasoni analyzes the vote share of Latin American presidential leaders from 1982 to 1995 (Gervasoni 1999). The expectation is that orthodox leaders, those that pursued neoliberal reforms, should suffer more in terms of vote share loss for the president's party, than should heterodox or statist leaders, those that pursued moderate pro-market reform or no reform at all. Results show that orthodox leaders did not have electoral performances that were worse than statist or heterodox leaders; in fact, their electoral performances were roughly equal if not better when considering four factors: the fiscal deficit, the growth of monetary offer, the protectionism level, and the level of state participation in the production of goods and services. Instead, Gervasoni finds the key factor affecting electoral punishment is inflation. Specifically, an administration that finishes its term with an inflation rate of 200% is likely to endure a vote share loss of 8.16% in the next election compared to an administration that finishes its term with an inflation rate of 20%, all else constant (Gervasoni 1999, p.34). While hyperinflation and a government's ability to control it may very well account for electoral punishment during the "lost decade" of the eighties, it fails to fit the scenario for Argentina's December 2001 financial crisis. Specifically, the inflation rate for 2002 was a modest 41%, relative to those hyperinflationary years, suggesting that inflation probably was not a significant factor affecting a candidate's level of support (*Wall Street Journal* 3/20/03).

In general, Argentine presidential elections typically reflect an "anti-political business cycle" such that economic conditions tend to deteriorate in the pre-election period (Remmer 1993, p.402). According to economist Luciana Díaz Frers, the Argentine economy, particularly the deficit, tends to worsen in the two years prior to an election (*La Nación* 4/27/03). Indeed, the presidential election years of 1989, 1995, 1999, and 2003 were plagued by economic downturns²⁷. At the time of the 1989

²⁷ Since we are dealing with a predominantly two-party system, I treat government and the party that controls the presidency as synonymous.

election, hyperinflation soared to 3079% and the growth level was -6.2% (Wilkin, Haller, and Norpoth 1997, p.305)²⁸. Unemployment reached 17.5% in 1995. By 1999, the national external debt was nearly \$122 billion dollars. Most recently, the country experienced unprecedented levels of poverty and unemployment in 2003 following its debt default in 2001 (*La Nación* 4/27/03). Incumbent Carlos Menem won in 1995 and Peronist candidates captured 60% of the vote in 2003. With the exception of the 1989 and 1999 elections in which Argentine voters did vote against the government, the overall empirical evidence is mixed and less than satisfying when accounting for the 2003 presidential election outcome. What may be more telling, perhaps, is how candidates were presented to voters as viable alternatives to deal with the economic crisis.

A prospective economic voting perspective suggests that voters who are optimistic about the economy's future vote in favor of candidates that promote reform (Palermo and Torre 1992; Stokes 2001; Echegaray and Elordi 2001). This argument is very much in line with Mackuen, Erikson, and Stimson's argument (Mackuen, Erikson, and Stimson 1992). Specifically, voters are characterized more like bankers as opposed to peasants such that bankers engage in prospective economic voting and peasants engage in retrospective economic voting (Mackuen, Erikson, and Stimson 1992). Their argument captures an expectancy element such that voters evaluate a candidate in terms of how they think he or she will handle the economy in the future. While this is not drastically different from the sociotropic argument, which also rests on subjective assessments of the economy and attributions for personal economic situation, it is, nonetheless, distinct in that it portrays voters as downplaying current economic conditions. The question that it raises is whether Argentine voters were likely to

²⁸ In May 1989 hyperinflation reached as high as 20,000% and food riots were common. Shortages of goods led to price increases. Rapidly fluctuating prices led Argentine consumers to spend much of their time calculating the optimal time to buy scarce goods, particularly food. To control looting and public disorder, the government called a state of emergency. The poverty rate was roughly 40% in 1989 (World Bank 2000). Also, income disparity worsened. Over the period from 1983 to 1989, the incomes of the top 10% increased by 60% while the incomes of the poorest seven deciles decreased by 30% (*PBS*, accessed 4/30/03).

downplay post economic conditions, focusing instead on how they think a candidate will handle the economy once in office.

Scholars of Argentine politics have advanced this prospective economic voting view. Palermo notes that Menem won two elections because voters had “a confidence in the future and a desire to escape the past” (Palermo 1998, p. 158). Describing this as an intertemporal belief, namely the acceptance that “if things get worse they will later get better”, Stokes argues that Argentine voters supported neoliberal or free market reform because they believed that it would improve the economy (Stokes 2001, p.14). While this perspective may offer some insight into Argentina’s 2003 presidential election outcome, it certainly does not offer a satisfying answer, particularly given the steady public protests throughout 2002 and early 2003 that came in reaction to economic conditions. Specifically, it does not seem plausible that voters would continue to subscribe to this belief when their neoliberal experience did not bear it out. Instead, we would expect voters to discount this intertemporal belief, giving it less credence. At the same time, it raises the question as to how voters may have perceived their choices among candidates in terms of which one would best handle the economy. This, of course, depends on how non-establishment candidates such as López Murphy and Carrió were presented as credible alternatives to a pro-neoliberal agenda.

Further, the evidence for prospective economic voting is less than satisfying. On one hand, in a Gallup Argentina poll taken in November and December of 2002, 49% of respondents stated that 2003 would be better than 2002, 25% said that it would remain the same, and 17% believed that it would worsen (*La Nación* 1/5/03). On the other hand, it marks a stark contrast to the responses from a poll taken earlier in 2002. According to a survey conducted by Centro de Estudios de Opinión Pública (CEOP) with 1000 respondents nationally from February 26 to March 7, 2002, 68.7% of respondents agreed that they were more pessimistic about the country’s condition while 30.2% were optimistic (CEOP, *Clarín*, 3/10/02). Of the top two worries, 62.2% mentioned unemployment and 51.9% mentioned the general economic situation. With respect to this last, 35% stated that the country would worsen, 31.6% believed that it would stay the same, while 28.5% said that it would get better. Another indication of

growing national desperation was that 70% stated the belief that unemployment would worsen. Still another 70% believed that inflation would increase as well (CEOP, *Clarín*, 6/2/02). Further, 38.4% stated that their personal economic situation would be the same, 34.8% stated that it would get worse, while 21.4% said that it would improve (CEOP, *Clarín*, 3/10/02). Also, in a 2003 national survey study, only 26% of Argentines agreed with the position that people are better off in free markets while 56% disagreed with it (The Pew Global Attitudes Project 2003, p.104). Taken together, it does not seem that Argentine voters continued to believe in the neoliberal promise, though they may have been more optimistic about their future over time²⁹.

In a different vein, scholars assert that the answer lies with clientelism and the operations of party machinery to dispense pork (Wilson and Manzetti 2004; Brusco & Stokes 2003; Jones and Hwang 2003; Levitsky and Murillo 2003). According to Carole Wilson and Luigi Manzetti, the dispensing of pork is what allows corrupt regimes to persist and even to thrive in democratic polities (Wilson and Manzetti 2004). Using data from the 1995 World Values Survey along with national level data for thirteen countries, they maintain that tangible benefits encourage people to support corrupt leaders. Similarly, Stokes finds support for her game-theoretic model that proposes vote buying parties target “weakly predisposed” voters, essentially leaning voters (Stokes 2003). Using survey data with 1920 respondents in three Argentine provinces over the period from December 2001 to January 2002, she finds that voting is strictly about receiving goodies from a peronist neighborhood broker. Similarly, according to Carlos Acuña, the surprising lack of violence during 2002 and 2003 was due to “the ability of the government of influencing the mobilized actors, authorizing benefits to some groups (the middle class), negotiating benefits with others (some picketing group) and repressing other groups . . . ” (Email reply by Acuña on 5/7/03). Further, Mariano Tommasi points out “many votes for Menem and Kirchner were votes mobilized by the

²⁹ The data discussed in this paragraph derive from individual level responses. Such data is best suited to address individual voting patterns. However, the research problem that I seek to address is a macro-level phenomenon.

political machines of distinct Peronist caudillos with a clientelistic structure as opposed to programmatic ones” (Email reply by Tommasi on 5/14/03).

While receiving tangible benefits may have motivated some peronist voters to vote a certain way, it certainly does not hold true for all voters. For one, it fails to account for those who supported Carrió or López Murphy, neither of whom was suspected of engaging in vote buying. Media attention to the radical party primary scandal may have made voters much more aware of the problem. Also, media attention to candidates who pleaded with voters to vote cleanly may have discouraged voters from selling their vote. For voters who were not motivated by tangible benefits, the question arises as to what other factors may have influenced them.

Still, other scholars examine economic voting in relations to the type of party system that is present in the country. The argument is that economic voting is more prevalent in a two-party system as opposed to a multi-party system because there are clearer lines of accountability in the former than in the latter (Nadeau, Niemi, and Yoshinaka 2002; Lewis-Beck 1988). While this may hold true for long-standing Western democracies, this version of the economic voting thesis does not altogether square with national economic conditions and voting elsewhere. In Latin America, Echegaray examines 41 presidential elections between 1982 and 1995 and finds that candidate attribute is a leading factor explaining vote choice (Echegaray 1996). That candidate attribute is a leading factor does not suggest that economic voting had no role in the election outcome. Taking into account Echegaray’s finding, it would be worth it to explore what information was available about candidates from the two major parties.

Another argument focuses on party identification. In a class-based society such as Argentine society, it is reasonable to expect that party identification could influence the election outcome. An example of this theory is Ostiguy’s dissertation study of vote choice among lower-class Argentines (Ostiguy 1998). Investigating why individuals voted for Menem for a second time, despite his enacting neoliberal economic reforms that ran counter to working class interests, he finds that voting is an expression of peronist identity in which individuals affirm their class consciousness in sociocultural terms as opposed to economic ones. Ostiguy finds that such voters elected Menem for

the simple reason that “he [Menem] is a Peronist”, thereby focusing on party affiliation. None of the respondents gave the answer that they voted for him because of his ability to control inflation or that they were better off materially. Thus, Ostiguy concludes that presidential evaluation in Argentina is based on one’s attachment to a social group. However, this limited explanation fails to shed light on why voters voted for the non-establishment candidate Elisa Carrió, a relative newcomer to the national political scene. Also, it fails to shed light on the distribution of votes across peronist candidates.

Recent scholars challenge Ostiguy’s argument by pointing out that attachment to a social group, in this case a political party, is less important than attachment to a party leader. Using public opinion data for mayoral, provincial, and national elections, Adrogué and Armesto argue that voting for a party was linked to a perceived favorable image of incumbent politicians and candidates of that party (Adrogué and Armesto 2001). They suggest that party identification is tied to images of party leaders such that electoral politics has become more personalized³⁰. In Argentina, democratic politics in the twentieth century has involved the rise of strong, charismatic leaders such as Perón and Menem. Both have been described as forging a charismatic bond between the masses and their respective leadership (Fernanda Arias 1995; Madsen and Snow 1991).

It stands to reason that personalization may have been present as well in the 2003 presidential election. All five major candidates ran on a non-traditional party or on new party labels, seeking predominantly the personal vote as opposed to the party vote. Much of the 2003 campaign was focused on individual candidates. Though there were three peronist candidates, each represented their own party faction. Independent candidates López Murphy and Carrió were not associated with any traditional party, given that they each had formed their own new, hence non-establishment, party. Thus, it would be interesting to examine what kinds of candidate information may have been

³⁰ McGuire notes that while efforts towards routinization within the peronist party took place after the 1955 coup, Perón and Menem prevented the party from becoming institutionalized because they wanted personal control over their party (McGuire 1997). The personalization of politics has its beginning in the post-colonial period in which various factions competed for political power. Within the interior, local bosses, called *caudillos*, held power by cultivating a personal following. With the military forces organized and led by caudillos, they fought against other *caudillos* to establish their dominance over a geographical area (Lynch 2001).

available to voters that described them as individual candidates as opposed to representing a party.

Review of possible explanations suggests that understanding what kinds of candidate information voters may have accessed may be significant to address why establishment candidates, particularly Menem and Kirchner, fared better than did non-establishment candidates López Murphy and Carrió. Voters may have accessed media information about candidates and that such information may have shaped their perceptions, preferences, and, ultimately, the election outcome.

In general, fears about economic uncertainty may have motivated Argentine voters to seek information so that they could choose a candidate that could best solve their country's problems. In a Gallup Argentina poll of 1256 respondents interviewed May 10-15, 2002 in 27 locales throughout the country, 64% feared that there would not be a solution to the economic crisis. In second place, 47% feared of not being able to make ends meet each month with their current salary. Following these two most popular concerns, 42% feared social explosions, 37% feared being assaulted, 31% feared hyperinflation, 23% feared a military coup d'état, and of those with a job, 19% feared losing their job (*La Nación* 5/19/02). Thus, it would be fundamental to investigate how media presented candidates to voters through their news coverage of them. I turn now to the next section where I discuss the media and politics literature, paying particular attention to key concepts such as agenda-setting, media attention, priming, and framing.

SECTION 2.3 MEDIA AND POLITICS LITERATURE REVIEW

A commonly held view among democratic scholars is that an informed citizenry is important for a democracy to function properly (Graber 2004; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Almond and Verba 1965; Schumpeter 1942). Information is said to enhance citizen capacity to engage in political decision-making by shedding light on what their choices mean and, more importantly, to hold elected leaders accountable for their actions. Given that much of the world cannot be directly experienced, citizens rely

on media to inform them of happenings in the world. Consequently, one's understanding of reality derives from filtered information.

One perspective is that media are viewed as “guardians of the public interest”, holding accountable political leaders to explain the rationale of their leadership decisions, or through vigorous and bold questioning, seeking to ascertain “the truth” on some matter (Ken Auletta, *NPR* 1/22/04; Graber 2004). In terms of election coverage, media function to explain issues, candidates, and parties, thereby empowering citizens. Voters, in turn, use this information to vote for a candidate. These paint an ideal picture in which media play an important role in informing an electorate about decisions that may have a profound impact on their lives.

On the other hand, a second perspective casts media as a special interest, motivated to increase profits (Auletta, *NPR* 1/22/04; Stacks 2003/2004). While some media outlets increase their circulation predominantly through serious coverage (Stacks 2003/2004), others use provocative headlines and entertaining news, the latter called infotainment. While the content of serious coverage may help to provide an accurate portrayal of events, the content of the latter may contain half-truths, ambiguities, distortions, and less than substantive information. News may focus on personality-driven news to create “sizzle” (Auletta, *NPR* 1/22/04). When media ownership is in the hands of a few, owners have the power to decide what information citizens are exposed to in terms of what they read, see, and hear (PBS 1/30/04). In this scenario of a media cartel, they can decide what information to include or to exclude, smacking of media machinery at work. This can erode information quality—the effect of which can color one's understanding of the world.

Argentine journalism encompasses both perspectives, though more of the latter than the former. That Argentine journalism falls short of an ideal journalistic standard is not surprising, given a lack of a long-standing democratic history. In fact, the 2003

presidential election marks only twenty democratic years in the contemporary period³¹. One indication of this less than ideal journalistic standard is that there are no journalism degrees or licensing requirements to work in Argentine media. Any individual can become a member of a journalistic professional association. Organizations such as the Inter American Press Association (IAPA) and the Asociación de Entidades Periodísticas Argentinas (ADEPA) offer some training to further journalism and media careers. Also, professional training is limited in that there are only two prominent journalism and communication schools, namely the University of Buenos Aires and the Universidad de La Plata, both in the province of Buenos Aires.

Second, another major barrier for Argentine journalism is that freedom of information does not exist. While Congress approved legislation for freedom of information in May 2003, the Senate failed to vote on the bill (Risley 2003, p.5). Access to government information is commonly obtained via personal connections and bribes. Consequently, reporters typically have to build a relationship with political insiders in order to obtain information. This dependent relationship is likely to influence reporters to moderate their reporting or to even censor certain information (Waisbord 1998; Lavieri 1996). Further, the federal government holds power to grant licenses for media operation. Critics argue that licenses typically are issued to those who share similar political views with those in power (Lavieri 1996).

³¹ Argentine print media's popularity comes from revealing the untold stories about illegal government activities. Horacio González describes the role of the Argentine journalist as "the people's detective" (González 2002, pp. 495-499). As noted by Silvio Waisbord, *Clarín's* journalistic coup was the investigation of the country's arms sale to Ecuador in 1995 (Waisbord 1998). At the time, Argentina's foreign policy stance on the war between Ecuador and Peru was neutral. *Clarín's* report on the country's illegal arms sale showed Argentina to be in violation of its embargo placed on both countries. Another coup by *Clarín* was the revelation of documents about *Operación Claridad* in 1996 (Waisbord 1998). These documents indicate that there were military plans to culturally repress dissidents during the last dictatorship. They contained descriptions of intellectuals and artists, the title of books to be banned, and instructions on how to infiltrate student organizations. Similarly, centrist newspaper *La Nación* made headlines when they uncovered a murder cover-up of an Army private. The story brought down high-ranking officers in the Armed Forces. Further, coverage of government corruption has been another stride of media progress. Waisbord notes that by the end of 1992, press coverage of corruption in the Menem government had led to the resignation of over 30 government officials and an entire provincial administration. By mid-1995, media reports showed that 71 government officials had been implicated in corruption, ranging from influence peddling, drug money laundering, bribe taking, murder, and cover-up (Waisbord 1998, pp.55-56).

Third, although the Argentine constitution guarantees press freedom, threats of government and legal action often deter the assertiveness of reporters. Politicians have been known to engage in retaliatory tactics with threats of libel suits and right-to-reply (Lavieri 1996). Physical attacks have occurred on the political beat. Further, journalists continue to face constraints that often prevent them reporting on more socially relevant topics such as corruption and poverty. Not surprisingly, Argentina is rated as partly free with a score of 35 out of 100 for media independence (Freedom of the Press 2004, p.56)³². Despite these challenges, print media have made headway for exposing corruption and this has helped to build public support for their efforts.

Media have power to direct the attention of individuals to particular information by making salient certain issues or personalities while ignoring others (Iyengar and Kinder 1987). Media can send a message that information that *they* raise is relevant to the public. In short, mere coverage can lead to the perceived importance of issues or personalities. Advertently or inadvertently, media hold power to set the agenda in public debate by determining which issues are newsworthy or not. This selection process over what media pay attention to is called agenda setting.

In general, agenda-setting can increase one's awareness and knowledge of concepts and issues, leading to a perception of their importance. For instance, in a set of assemblage and sequential experiments, Iyengar and Kinder find that lead American television news stories, namely stories shown at the beginning of a news program, were more influential than non-lead stories in terms of affecting viewers' priorities. This held true even after watching a single story such that the issue presented was perceived as more important than issues that were not covered. The significance of this research is that it suggests that issues encountered first were considered more important, indicative of an agenda setting effect. Also, target problems such as pollution, environment, defense, unemployment, nuclear arms, and civil rights were perceived as being more important with increased coverage and exposure, indicative of a priming effect, a

³² Freedom House rates countries according to three factors: 1) legal environment (0-30 points); 2) political environment (0-40); and 3) economic environment (0-30). A country is categorized as "free" with a score between 0-30, "partly free" with a score of 31-60, and not free with a score of 61-100 (Freedom House: A Global Survey of Media Independence 2004).

concept which shall be discussed later in this chapter (Iyengar and Kinder 1987, pp.63-72).

Media agenda setting power is significant since it can send a message that what they extensively cover is important. For example, in the 1997 legislative elections in Argentina, media agenda setting effects were found in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area such that an increase in coverage of corruption from September to October 1997 by five Buenos Aires newspapers led to a significant increase in correlation between the public's priority and print media coverage of it (Lennon 1998). Specifically, the correlation nearly doubled from 0.43 to 0.80, suggesting that Argentine voters in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area quickly learned what those newspapers deemed as an important issue, namely corruption.

Challenging the notion of media independence to set the public agenda, Jacobs and Shapiro argue that candidates, themselves, may have a hand in directing media coverage of their campaign activities (Jacobs and Shapiro 1994). Media "set the agenda" for the election through their coverage of what candidates say and do (Jacobs and Shapiro 1994)³³. Using public opinion data as well as interview and archival records, they find that John F. Kennedy was strategic in taking up issue positions that were a priority among the American public and that helped to construct a competent and caring image. Relying on private polls conducted by Louis Harris, they find that Kennedy became increasingly more responsive to the public's policy goals over the course of his 1960 presidential campaign.

Jacobs and Shapiro's study shows that candidates may have sought to manage media for their own political ends and that media agenda setting is, fundamentally, an elite-driven process. In other words, candidates shape media coverage of their campaign activities. As a result, they involve themselves in ways that highlight their strengths on particular issues that are then covered by the media. Semetko *et al.* describe this as "passing on the priorities of others" (Semetko *et al.* 1991, p.145). Thus, it would be worth it to explore what role Argentine presidential candidates may have had in

³³ Semetko et al. found that the British press incorporated predominantly party-initiated news for the 1983 general election (Semetko et al. 1991, p.173).

managing media through what they say and do to present a more favorable image. For instance, subjects may distort facts to fit their own policy goals, to enhance their self-presentation, or to convey their own messages. This, however, does not suggest that media are altogether slavish to what candidates say and do.

The power of media to influence the public is dependent upon its trust in media institutions as a reliable source for information. In general, there is substantial trust in Argentine media institutions compared to other institutions. In general, 51% agreed with the statement that the news media is a good influence in their country (*What the World Thinks in 2002*, The Pew Global Attitudes Project 2002, p.36). In a Gallup Argentina poll taken May 10-14, 2002, 53% expressed trust television news and while another 48% expressed trust in the press (Gallup Argentina and Consorcio Iberoamericano de Empresas de Investigación de Mercado y Asesoramiento, July 2002). The 2003 Latinobarómetro shows that 42% of Argentines trust television, 27% trust radio, and 8% trust newspapers for political information (Latinobarómetro 2003, pp.31-32). In a poll by the Centro de Estudios Nueva Mayoría, the institution with the highest favorable image with 40% of respondents giving it a positive view was the media. Another 41% gave media an “average” rating for image. In stark contrast, political parties and congress garnered favorable image responses of only 1% and 2%, each respectively. Moreover, 16% stated that the congress was “average” and 15% stated that political parties were “average” (Nueva Mayoría, *La imagen de las Fuerzas Armadas en la opinión pública*, 8/25/03).

While the 2003 Latinobarómetro reports that only 8% of Argentines trust newspapers for political information, the Argentine press still garners “broad credibility and influence” in contrast to discredited institutions and political parties (*Freedom in the World 2003*, country report Argentina, p.4). More importantly, reproductions of national print media content typically are found in television and radio news (Waisbord 2004, p.1078). Casermeiro de Pereson’s study shows a correlation of 0.986 between Argentine print news, namely *La Nación* and *Clarín*, at time 1 and television news, namely *Telefé* and *Telenoche*, at time 2. Here, time 1 and time 2 are designated as the first and last fifteen days of October 1998 (Casermeiro de Pereson 2003, p.211-212).

While Argentines have more trust in television and radio news compared to print news, perhaps due to its greater ease in accessibility, print news influences the agenda for television and radio news. As noted by Waisbord, “dailies still set the agenda for other media” (Waisbord 2004, p.1078). This phenomenon in which one media sets the agenda for another is commonly known as inter-media agenda setting (Neuendorf 2002, p.205).

To date, there are 181 daily newspapers in circulation in a country that has a 97% literacy rate (*PR Passport 2004*, www.prpassport.com/mediaargentina.htm, accessed 6/15/04; 2003 estimate, CIA World Factbook)³⁴. Print readership is substantial in Argentina. According to a TGI Argentina survey in which 9,097 individuals between the ages of 12 and 75 years old were interviewed in Gran Buenos Aires in 2000, 65% were primary readers, namely those that purchased or subscribed to a newspaper or read one by borrowing from a household member (“Passalong Newspaper Readership” from www.zonalatina.com/Zldata190.htm). In particular, two large centrist newspapers *La Nación* and *Clarín* are considered quality press. In Poder Ciudadano’s preliminary report of media coverage of candidates from February 24 to March 5, 2003, it found that there was substantially more coverage of candidates found in newspaper than in radio and television. It stands to reason that voters would rely on print media to obtain election information and that the content of such information is more likely to have influenced the election outcome.

Following the financial meltdown and social upheaval many Argentines identified themselves as non-partisans. In a Gallup Argentina poll with 1251 personal interviews taken June 20-24, 2002 in 26 locations throughout the country, more than 80% said that they did not feel represented by any party or political leader, identifying themselves as political independents (*La Nación* 6/30/02). According to an exit poll taken by Centro de Estudios para la Opinión Pública (CEOP), 27% made their decision for whom to vote for within a week of the election, another 14% made their decision within 15 days of the election, 11.1% within one month, 16.2% between one and three months ago, and 30.0% more than three months ago (*Clarín* 4/28/03). Taken together,

³⁴ Literacy is defined as having the ability to read and write for those 15 years old and over.

this meant that 68% of Argentine voters were undecided three months before the election³⁵. The fact that many Argentines identified themselves as independents strengthens the possibility that media did exert an influence over the election outcome through their news coverage of candidates.

The power of media to set the public agenda entails a subtle yet important process, namely priming. In general, priming “refers to any experiences or procedures that bring a particular concept . . . to mind” (Kunda 2000, p.22; Higgins 1996). Higgins demonstrates in his research that when a concept is primed, individuals are likely to incorporate it when making a judgment. That is to say, it can condition the kinds of interpretations that have been made accessible at the moment. To distinguish media priming from agenda setting, it is important to note that they are different in terms of the level of analysis. Priming research would involve tracking what thoughts came to mind when voters were exposed to candidate information offered by the media. As a result, it focuses on individual level thinking, essentially a micro level approach. In contrast, a study of media agenda setting would focus on the emission of media messages, essentially a macro level approach.

The 1946 election offers a classic example of priming in which charismatic leader Juan Domingo Perón defined the election in terms of foreign dominance versus Argentine self-determination. To put this into historical context, Spruille Braden was the United States ambassador to Argentina. Braden had distributed a “blue book” which described the “Argentine situation”, arguing that totalitarian groups were trying to create a Nazi-fascist state and that Perón was in collusion with the Axis. Moreover, Braden had endorsed Perón’s rival, José Tamborini of the Democratic Union party. To many, this was perceived as a U.S. attempt to influence the election outcome so that Perón would not come to power³⁶. A successful mobilization of mass support led to

³⁵ This non-partisan figure stayed about the same after the election. In a study conducted by Ana María Mustapic, only 30% of 25,480,440 registered Argentine voters belonged to a party (*La Nación*, 10/10/04).

³⁶ In *Exporting Democracy: The United States and Latin America* (1991), Lowenthal makes the point that U.S. policymakers during the 1940s were primarily concerned that pro-fascist or pro-Communist regimes did not attain power via elections or otherwise in Latin America.

Perón's victory in the February 24, 1946 election—an election that was known as “¡Braden o Perón!”. The thrust of Perón's message was to prime the concepts of foreign dominance and Argentine sovereignty so that fear of U.S. hegemony, or imperialism, would translate into votes for Perón. Indeed, Perón won with 52.4% of the popular vote (Rock 2002, p.221).

A recent Argentine study examines media agenda setting. Focusing on television, radio, and print media, Poder Ciudadano and Konrad Adenauer-Stiftung find that candidate proposals represented a scant 7% of election coverage two months prior to the election³⁷. Moreover, 71% of media coverage dealt with general election information, alone, while the remaining 22% focused on other topics such as the economy, international politics with particular focus on the war in Iraq, the personal lives of politicians, corruption, and legislative power. Interestingly, they found a positive correlation between media coverage of candidates and vote share, suggesting that candidates benefited from increased media coverage regardless of whether it was favorable, unfavorable, or neutral (Poder Ciudadano, Infocívica 5/8/03). Further, media heavily favored the top five candidates, those considered likely to continue to the second round of the election. Two months prior to the election, the top five captured 90% of media coverage and received roughly 90% of the total vote share (Poder Ciudadano, Infocívica 5/8/03). One extension would be to extend the time frame of the analysis by examining the amount of coverage each major candidate received over the entire campaign period.

The initial evidence shown in table 2.1 below suggests that media coverage, specifically media attention, is a potentially fruitful area to investigate its impact on the 2003 presidential election outcome. Data from two centrist Argentine newspapers,

³⁷ In a study conducted by Poder Ciudadano and the foundation Konrad Adenauer-Stiftung, “Medios y política: Monitoreo de la cobertura informativa de la campaña presidencial argentina 2003”, they examined five television news programs (*América Noticias*, *Canal 7 Noticias*, *Telenueve*, *Telefé Noticias*, and *Telenoche*), five radio programs (*Cada Mañana*, *Magdalena Tempranísimo*, *Puntos de vista*, *Desayuno Continental*, and *Aire comprimido*), and six major newspapers (*Clarín*, *La Nación*, *Popular*, *Crónica*, *Página 12*, and *Ambito Financiero*). In an extension study, they also analyzed twelve television programs with political content (*Informe Central*, *Desayuno*, *Después de Hora*, *Hora Clave*, *Día D*, *Periodistas*, *La Cornisa*, *Desde el Llano*, *A dos Voces*, *El Juego Limpio*, *Mirtha Legrand*, and *Susana Gimenez*).

Clarín and *La Nación*, indicates that increased media attention of candidates seemed to offer an electoral advantage, perhaps greater name recognition (Bartels 1988; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987; Jacobson 1985). The correlation coefficient between placement of candidates in the election and the total number of mentions found in Argentina's two major centrist newspapers is 0.98. Again, media attention speaks to what media pay attention to and to what degree. In this case, the pattern in the data shows that attention was placed heavily on the major candidates. Alternatively, it could be the scenario that media simply index their coverage to the most prominent candidates. Thus, it could be a candidate's popularity that affects the quantity of media coverage a candidate receives.

Placement of Candidates in the election	Presidential Candidates	Party	<i>Clarín</i> Search (Number of hits per candidate)	<i>La Nación</i> Search (Number of hits per candidate)
1.	Carlos Menem	Frente por la Lealtad/ Unión del Centro Democrático	717	850
2.	Néstor Kirchner	Frente para la Victoria	526	677
3.	Ricardo López Murphy	Movimiento Federal Recrear para el Crecimiento	297	416
4.	Elisa Carrió	Alianza Afirmación para una República Igualitaria	265	352
5.	Adolfo Rodríguez Saá	Frente Movimiento Popular	323	427
6.	Leopoldo Moreau	Unión Cívica Radical	119	165
7.	Patricia Walsh	Izquierda Unida	33	45
8.	Alfredo Bravo	Partido Socialista	52	64
9.	Enrique Venturino	Que se vayan todos	2	5
10.	Jorge Altamira	Partido Obrero	26	23
11.	Guillermo Sullings	Partido Humanista	10	12
12.	José Arcagni	Tiempo de Cambios	4	4
13.	Mario Mazzitelli	Partido Socialista Auténtico	10	19
14.	Manuel Herrera	Partido Demócrata Cristiano	12	23
15.	Carlos Zaffore	Movimiento Integración y Desarrollo	8	14
16.	Gustavo Breide Obeid	Partido Popular de la Reconstrucción	3	4
17.	Juan Mussa	Unidos o Dominados	5	3
18.	Ricardo Terán	Movimiento por la Dignidad y la Independencia	2	5

Table 2.1 Media Attention to Presidential Candidates from January 27, 2003 to April 27, 2003

Researchers have investigated media attention to candidate character as a factor that may influence an election outcome. As noted by Iyengar and Kinder, media coverage can prime judgments about a candidate's character (Iyengar and Kinder 1987, pp.73-81). From a structural analysis of trait inventories, they identify competence and integrity as two main traits that voters use to evaluate presidential character. They define competence as being perceived as "experienced" or "knowledgeable" and integrity as "moral" and "honest" (Iyengar and Kinder 1987, p.74). Their findings suggest that media attention to these particular character traits can affect popular support for a candidate.

To date, Argentine research along these lines has focused on media attention to candidate character (Lennon 1997; Casermeiro de Pereson 2003). Conducting newspaper content analysis, Lennon finds that print media attention to candidates in the 1997 legislative elections focused on the following: 1) party ideology (42%); 2) qualifications (28%); 3) personality (20%); and 4) ethics (10%) (Lennon 1998, p.40). Similarly, in Casermeiro de Pereson's study of presidential contenders in the 1998 primary election, she finds that *La Nación* and *Clarín* focused predominantly on the following: 1) party ideology (49%); 2) qualifications (28%); 3) ethical behavior (14%); and 4) personality (8%) (Casermeiro de Pereson 2003, p.287). However, as pointed out earlier, a trend in Argentine politics is the personal vote as opposed to the party vote. Moreover, voters in the 2003 presidential election were predominantly independent voters. Of the remaining three factors, media attention to candidate competency (qualifications) and integrity (ethical behavior) does seem promising. That is to say, we would expect Argentine media to heavily cover those two candidate attributes, given the crisis context. Thus, the ways in which media presented candidate competency and integrity may have influenced the election outcome.

While, on one hand, it seems reasonable that media coverage of candidate integrity during the campaign period would be an important factor in the election outcome, if media largely ignored candidate integrity, then integrity may have been less prevalent in the minds of voters. Still, corruption of the political class was widely

perceived as the cause of their country's worst financial crisis³⁸. In fact, a poll conducted by polling center *Nueva Mayoría* in 2002 shows that the second and third most pressing problems after unemployment (40%) were corruption (13%) and the political class (11%) (*Nueva Mayoría*, 8/25/03). It should be fruitful to examine the relationship between media coverage of candidate integrity and the level of popular support each candidate received throughout the campaign period.

Taking stock of the discussion so far, the media attention argument, alone, does not seem to carry us far enough in terms of unraveling Argentina's puzzling election outcome. To say that media coverage directed voter attention more toward certain candidates than others provides us with valuable insight, though partial. What is missing is the substantive content of candidate information, namely the slant in coverage. It stands to reason that substantive information about candidates could influence the election outcome. Conceivably, candidates could have been framed in distinctly favorable and unfavorable ways.

In general, how media present information is called framing. Framing is defined as "selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution" (Entman 2004, p.5)³⁹. Framing applies not only to issues and events but also to actors. A key aspect of framing is the slant in coverage such that issues, events, and actors are portrayed in particular ways that lead to favorable or unfavorable judgments. By focusing on how candidates were framed by the media, we would obtain a better handle over its potential effect on popular support across major establishment and non-establishment candidates.

Media frames focus on the slant of coverage with respect to views, parties, and candidates. When reporters make value statements or direct assertions about a

³⁸ Months before the elections, a Gallup Argentina poll taken in June 2001 in Buenos Aires showed that 60% of those polled believed that corruption of the political class was the country's most pressing problem (Manzetti 2003; *Página12* 7/8/01).

³⁹ Entman specifies four functions for issues framing: problem definition, identification of the cause, solution or endorsement proposed, and moral judgment (Entman 2004, p.24). Problem definition and remedy (solution or endorsement) are considered the most important of these.

candidate's leadership qualities and policies, they violate their stance of neutrality and independence (Shoemaker 1991, p.39). This bias can also occur when reporters downplay the positive factors yet highlight the negative ones or vice versa (Goldberg 2003; Shoemaker and Reese 1991). How media cast individual candidates in terms of attractiveness of issues, personality, and leadership experience may have a bearing on popular support for a candidate. Additionally, they may condense candidates to a few lines, revealing very little about who they are. In view of this, how media cast individual candidates in terms of issues, personality, and leadership experience may affect their popularity with voters.

Modern day campaign coverage has a tendency to cover an election as a horse race, focusing on who is ahead or who is behind in the polls, focusing extensively on electability (Auletta, *NPR* 1/22/04). This game schema, otherwise known as procedural framing, is overly emphasized such that every motive is read as a strategy to win the game (Patterson 1993, p.84). Framing election coverage in this fashion serves the purpose of drawing in audience members. Audiences learn which dark horse candidates have unexpectedly pulled ahead while other candidates, previously perceived as strong finishers, have suddenly fallen behind. A critique of such coverage is that pundits make pronouncements of who is going to win as if they know everything (Auletta, *NPR* 1/22/04). In some instances, they fail to provide any rationale for their pronouncements. They predict the election outcome simply to predict. The unintended effect of presenting campaign coverage in an expectancy game frame is that media direct public attention to what kinds of strategies candidates employ as opposed to more substantive information such as their stands on issues and their qualifications (Patterson 1993). Further, through this process of assessing who will win the election, media brand candidates with labels that, in turn, may influence how people view them.

Prior research suggests that media framing of candidate competence in handling the economy can be critical to affecting an election outcome. Argentine print media during the 1946 campaign period focused on the ability of candidates to tackle domestic issues. As Laura Ruiz Jiménez points out, while Perón's campaign slogan of "*¡Braden o Perón!*" attempted to direct voter attention to anti-imperialism and the U.S. threat,

essentially international factors, print media focused on domestic issues (Laura Ruiz Jiménez 1998). In particular the pro-peronist newspaper *La Epoca*, focused on which candidate could best promote humanized capitalism and social justice, much in the fashion of the then popular President Roosevelt. She argues that the newspaper's content gave the impression that "Perón is Roosevelt", enhancing his image as a leader who would most likely deliver on substantive provisions. The significance of this study is that while Perón and his rival Tamborini had similar reformist plans, print media framed Perón as a beloved Roosevelt. The implication is that this particular media framing may have advantaged Perón over his rival.

Another facet of media framing literature focuses on gender differences. Recent western studies demonstrate that news coverage undermines the credibility of women as serious, competent, and professional (Ross 2004; Demert 2003; Norris 2003). Ross points out that women are typically framed primarily as women and secondarily as politicians, suggesting that more attention is given to their age, family situation, fashion sense, and appearance and less to their political activities and agenda. In the 1997 British parliamentary elections, headlines cast parliamentary women as "Blair's Babes". Further, Ross points out that a double standard exists for women in that media expect "better" standards of behavior, higher moral values, more honesty, integrity, and loyalty" (Ross 2004, p.63). April Demert's survey experiment shows that male candidates are evaluated more favorably in terms of their competence and that they tend to receive more positive descriptions (Demert 2003). While female candidates were rated more highly on trustworthiness and compassion, male candidates were rated more highly on honesty, leadership, knowledge, and well roundedness. As Pippa Norris shows, a frame that typically portrays women in a negative light is one that emphasizes women as newcomers, suggesting that they are unprepared to take office (Norris 2003). At the same time, they are also positively portrayed as "agents of change", having the ability to "clean up" politics and get things done.

Scholars of Argentine politics speculate that gender was a potential factor in the 2003 Argentine election. Elisa Carrió, a non-establishment candidate, was the only

major female candidate⁴⁰. A divorced mother of two and a devout Catholic, Carrió was often attacked as unfit to run the country due to her obesity, which some equated with a lack of self-control (Farmelo and Cibils 2003, p.3)⁴¹. In a political satire piece by Nik-Política of *La Nación*, a slender reporter asks Carrió if she thinks the price of crude (oil) will increase if Bush attacks Iraq. A caricature of an obese Carrió wearing a cross necklace responds that she does not know but that just in case she has already bought ten kilograms of cooked ham. The words *crudo* (raw) and *cocido* (cooked) are in bold. The double meaning of *crudo* (raw as opposed to crude oil) gives the impression that Carrió does not have the wherewithal to handle foreign affairs, given her portrayed misunderstanding of *crudo* for raw ham as opposed to crude oil. This characterization of Carrió as, at best, a novice, or at worst, an incompetent candidate, may speak to the issue of Argentine sexism. However, Argentine sexism does not seem like a plausible explanation for why Carrió lost to the establishment candidates. For one, if her gender mattered, we would not expect her to have led in the polls, though she clearly did early in the campaign. Thus, her decline in the polls does not seem linked to Argentine sexism. If media framed her skills, knowledge, and experience as generally unfavorable, this could have influenced voters to evaluate her as less than competent in taking on the presidency. Her decline in the polls and eventual defeat by the establishment candidates could be attributed to media framing of her competency. Content analysis of news coverage of Carrío would help to shed light on why Carrío fell behind the establishment candidates.

⁴⁰ Up until recent decades, the role of women in politics in Argentina has been limited. According to Molinelli, the first election in which the suffrage of women was in effect came in the election of November 1951. During that election, Eva Duarte Perón personally chose women peronist candidates. Much like her husband, Eva drew support from women as well as appealing to the concerns of *los descamisetas*, the unshirtd ones, namely workers and the poor (Molinelli 1994, p.198). In 1991, Congress enacted a new law that stipulated an obligatory quota system in national elections for presidential electors, national deputies, and senate electors of the federal capital (Molinelli 1994, p.201). While opportunities for women to contest office have increased since then, they have not fared as well as their male counterparts, particularly for the highest office, namely the presidency. In the 2003 presidential election, there were only two female candidates in a field of eighteen.

⁴¹ Divorce was made legal in Argentina in 1987. According to a 2002 TGI Latina Study, Argentina has a divorce rate of 3.4% and a separation rate of 5.9% (“Divorce in Latin America”, www.zonalatina.com/Zldata308.htm).

Taken together, review of the media and politics literature suggests that a fruitful area for research is media attention and framing. First, by analyzing both the volume and content of candidate information offered by centrist print media, we would gain a better understanding of how media may have influenced voter perceptions and preferences, thereby rendering the counterintuitive election outcome that we observe. Second, these are both suitable for a methodological reason: they offer a macro level analysis to a macro level phenomenon. Third, this study would be a pioneering study of media attention and framing of candidates in this unique context of a deep and sudden economic crisis. To date, very little is known about print media's influence in this particular context.

SECTION 2.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have introduced the reader to the central research problem, namely the puzzling election outcome in which establishment candidates generally placed higher than did non-establishment candidates, despite Argentina's worst financial crisis. To address this problem, I have discussed two main bodies of literature. The first literature review has focused on current explanations found in the economic voting and party politics literature. What I have argued is that while many of these explanations shed some light on the puzzle, these do not tell the whole story. The first discussion points to research that focuses on what media-supplied information voters may have used. In the second literature review, I have identified centrist print media coverage of candidates, a macro level approach, as suitable to the research objective at hand since the election outcome is, essentially, a macro level phenomenon. To focus on media attention and framing, using centrist print media, is a logical, preliminary step toward understanding how, when, how much, and why media affect voters when choosing a candidate. Moreover, based on preliminary evidence, it has the potential to add to a fuller account as to why establishment candidates were predominantly favored in the Argentine election in the aftermath of a deep and sudden crisis.

In the next chapter, I lay out the steps that I took to investigate media coverage of the major candidates in the election.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

SECTION 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I describe and justify the methodology used and the choice of data collection to investigate Argentina's puzzling election outcome. By comparing media coverage of establishment and non-establishment candidates, the goal is to assess whether there are patterns in coverage that might help to account for Argentina's counterintuitive election outcome. By media coverage, I mean the volume and content of print news coverage of candidates. Both of these underlie the concepts of media attention and framing that were discussed in the literature review. These are taken as the explanatory variables for the study. By a candidate's standing in the polls, I mean vote intention as measured by a monthly poll taken by Argentine polling outlet Ipsos and Mora y Araujo. This is what I use as a proxy for the dependent variable.

I organize this chapter in eight sections, the first two of which, present the central research questions and hypotheses. In the fourth section, I discuss the approach I take to medium selection, namely national print media, basing my decision on four factors: 1) the content of radio and television typically are reproductions of print media; 2) greater objectivity; 3) more in-depth coverage; and 4) the feasibility and convenience in article retrieval. My decision to focus on two centrist print media, namely *Clarín* and *La Nación*, stems from the fact that they are considered quality press, face less financial constraint, and offer greater generalizations across news media outlets, given that they

set the agenda for other media. Further, these are used by other researchers. In section five, I provide the rationale for the choice to focus on the top five major candidates, pointing out that they captured roughly 90% of the vote. The sixth section offers the decision criteria for the time frame of the study, which entails an eleven-month period. In the seventh section, I discuss how I measured media attention and framing. Finally, in the concluding section, I discuss the value-added of this study.

SECTION 3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How do the volume and content of candidate coverage correspond to the level of popular support for a candidate over time? Are there systematic differences in the volume and content of coverage across establishment and non-establishment candidates? In terms of volume, does the quantity of coverage vary systematically with a candidate's standing in the polls? For content, do the type and tone of coverage vary systematically with a candidate's standing in the polls?

This research study operates under the assumption that voters are likely to access information about candidates from media sources and that media, in turn, are likely to exert some influence over voters. Both are reasonable assumptions to make, given the extensive supportive evidence for this (Graber 2004; Jacobs & Shapiro 1994; Semetko et al. 1991). It is also plausible that media are likely to exert some influence over Argentine voters.

In general, Argentine media enjoy much public confidence. One statistic shows that 51% of Argentine polled agreed with the statement that the news media is a good influence in their country (Pew Global Attitudes Project, Pew Research Center 2002). In a Gallup Argentina poll taken May 10-14, 2002, 53% expressed trust in television news while another 48% expressed trust in the press (Gallup Argentina and Consorcio Iberoamericano de Empresas de Investigación de Mercado y Asesoramiento, July 2002). Further, the 2002 Latinobarómetro shows that 88% of Argentines did not believe their country's leaders were running things correctly and that only 4% expressed much or some trust in political parties (Latinobarómetro 2002). In light of the lowly reputation of political parties, it stands to reason that skeptical Argentines were more likely to rely

on candidate information supplied by the media rather than by the candidates, themselves, in the wake of the crisis. Thus, it is important to examine how media presented candidates to voters through their coverage of them.

Media hold the power to set the agenda by lavishing more attention on some candidates than others. As discussed in the previous chapter, media attention to candidates can send a message as to which candidates are more or less newsworthy, hence more or less important, through mere coverage alone (Iyengar and Kinder 1987). Media attention can induce greater name recognition and recall for those candidates that receive more coverage than their competitors. As noted in the literature, this is particularly true for incumbents or career politicians (Bartels 1988; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987; Jacobson 1985). Thus, the likely route of influence is that media attention enhances name recognition and that, in turns, enhances a candidate's popularity.

The first kind of media coverage that is examined in this study is the volume or quantity of coverage. By quantity of coverage, I mean the number of cover stories devoted to candidates, regardless of whether whole cover stories are devoted to a single or multiple candidates. The counting involves any name, nickname, title, photograph, or graph that refers to any of the five candidates. The count is carried out such that a candidate can receive at most a single count per whole article. If a whole article mentions all five candidates, then this particular front-page article is counted as containing a candidate's story for each of the five candidates. An article that contains a name of a candidate in the headlines, an accompanying photograph of the candidate, and a graph of their standing in the polls, would constitute, at most, as a single mention for that particular candidate.

A second kind of coverage that is examined focuses on content. Specifically, the content includes both the type and tone of coverage. By type of coverage, I focus exclusively on candidate competency, integrity, and electability. As discussed in the literature review, these have been found to be the character traits by which political candidates are judged or evaluated in the U.S. and in Argentina (Casermeiro de Pereson 2003; Lennon 1998; Patterson 1993; Iyengar and Kinder 1987). By tone of coverage, I mean whether a candidate is portrayed in a favorable or unfavorable light in terms of

competency, integrity, and electability. In the research design section, I discuss more fully how I define and measure these character traits.

Both the type and tone of coverage essentially speak to media framing, namely the slant in coverage. Again, framing is defined as “selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution” (Entman 2004, p.5). The significance of studying this second form of coverage is that it sheds light on the substantive content of candidate information. By focusing on both the type and tone of coverage, we can get a better picture of how candidates were described, essentially defined, by the media. This is important since it has implications for how they may have been perceived either in a favorable or unfavorable light by voters.

Tracking both the volume and content of candidate coverage over time will likely afford greater confidence in derivation of conclusions about the effects media attention and framing may have had on the election outcome. Patterns in the data can be weighed against hypothesized expectations. In the next section, I formulate two hypotheses that specify the relationship between candidate coverage and their standing in the polls.

SECTION 3.3 HYPOTHESES

The thrust of this research is theory testing. It relies on theoretical insights from the media attention and framing literature (Casermeiro de Pereson 2003; Jiménez 1998; Lennon 1997). I test the following two media coverage hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The greater the volume of media attention given to a candidate, the greater the level of popular support for her.

Hypothesis 2: The more favorably candidates are presented in terms of their competency, integrity and electability, the greater the popular support for them.

The first hypothesis speaks to the volume of candidate coverage over the course of the campaign. This volume is essentially the quantity of coverage as measured in terms of the number of stories devoted to candidates. Thus, the first hypothesis focuses on media attention on candidates as a plausible factor for why there was higher support for establishment than non-establishment candidates in the 2003 presidential election in Argentina.

The second hypothesis speaks to the content of candidate coverage in terms of its type and tone and suggests a plausible influence for why the election turned out the way that it did. The type takes into account competency, integrity, and electability. The tone of coverage refers to whether candidates and their character traits were presented in a favorable or unfavorable light. This second hypothesis is different from the first since emphasis is placed on the substantive content of candidate information, focusing specifically on how the three character traits were presented.

These two hypotheses will be further fleshed out in later sections in terms of their conceptualization and operationalization. I turn now to discuss general research design matters, starting with the approach I took to medium selection.

SECTION 3.4 APPROACH TO MEDIUM SELECTION

The justification for choosing print media over audio and audio-visual media is four-fold. First, radio and television coverage of politics is heavily influenced by what appears in *Clarín* and *La Nación* (Casermeiro de Pereson 2003). As a result, there would be some redundancy in examining radio and television as well as these newspapers. Second, it would be interesting to choose newspapers since it is this particular medium in which we would expect more objectivity in coverage due to the textual nature of information. While it could be the case that individuals choose newspapers on the basis of their pre-existing partisan bias (Butler and Stokes 1969), this is less likely the case in this particular scenario, given that, in the previous chapter, 80% of Argentines polled were political independents. Third, television and, to a lesser

extent, radio are not as adept in presenting in-depth information. Both have a tendency to offer a superficial treatment of news in contrast to newspapers that can cover more subjects in greater detail (Arnold 2004, p.4). Selecting print media would offer the opportunity to examine the quality of candidate information from the medium that could best cover it. Fourth and practically, analysis of print media content is more feasible and convenient than the analysis of radio and television content due to its accessibility. Retrieval of news articles can be conducted via on-line archives, thereby making it both feasible and convenient (Poder Ciudadano and Konrad Adenauer-Stiftung 2003).

I selected two large centrist newspapers, *Clarín* and *La Nación* for three reasons. First, both are national in circulation and are commonly viewed as quality press. Known for its extensive domestic coverage, the tabloid-sized *Clarín* has a circulation of about 600,000 for daily and 1,000,000 for Sunday editions. The second largest-selling newspaper is *La Nación* with roughly 200,000 newspapers for daily and 400,000 for Sunday circulations (Bernhardson 2004, p.50). A broad-sheet newspaper, *La Nación* is known for its extensive international coverage. These two were chosen primarily because of their national reach and because they are reputable leaders in the print news industry. It stands to reason that these national newspapers, considered mainstream, could have some impact in influencing a presidential election outcome.

I excluded non-centrist and non-national newspapers as other choices for media analysis. Under consideration were newspapers such as a business newspaper *Ámbito Financiero*, a popular “lower class” daily paper *Crónica*, a financially focused *El Cronista*, a broad popular daily *Diario Popular*, the oldest paper *La Prensa*, and a leftist-oriented paper known for its investigative reporting *Página12* (Lavieri 1996, pp.189-191). These along with many provincial dailies were excluded because of their relatively low circulation and their appeal to a less general audience in comparison to the two larger centrist papers. Further, as noted in the previous chapter, reprints of centrist news content are commonly found in provincial dailies and in local television news during the following week (Casermeiro de Pereson 2003).

Second, we would expect *Clarín* and *La Nación* to be in a better position than smaller papers to provide a more balanced coverage of candidates for financial reasons.

Specifically, a value-added tax (VAT) was applied in 2001 to all sales of print media. Before the economic crisis, media outlets were only required to pay VAT only on advertising revenue. As a result, small and medium-sized newspaper organizations were financially constrained more than the larger national ones. We would expect this financial constraint to more negatively impact the quantity and quality of candidate news coverage found in small and medium-sized newspapers as opposed to the larger ones.

Third, focusing on two newspapers helps to enhance confidence in the reliability of the study's findings. In other words, with two newspapers, we can rule out the possibility that the inferences drawn are unique to a particular media source, which, in turn, allows for a more confident generalization beyond these two sources. Specifically, if reproductions of news content from *Clarín* and *La Nación* are found in television and radio news, then media have the potential to exert a far-reaching effect, potentially a magnifying effect (Waisbord 2004, p.1078).

As for which particular content of centrist print newspapers to analyze, I selected front-page news articles since this is what people are more likely to read or pay attention to. Such cover stories are more likely to grab the reader's attention.

Next, I discuss the decision to select which candidates to include in the study.

SECTION 3.5 CANDIDATE COVERAGE SELECTION

The 2003 presidential election in Argentina fielded a total of eighteen candidates. An ideal study would include all eighteen candidates, thereby making it comprehensive. However, minor candidates received very little media coverage and voting intention data are non-existent for them. For these reasons, I limited the analysis to the top five finishers, namely Menem, Kirchner, López Murphy, Carrió and Rodríguez Saá. Intuitively, it makes better sense to track media coverage for this group since they ended up obtaining roughly 90% of the popular vote between them in the actual election. Focusing on them also serves my purpose of understanding better why major establishment candidates were more popular than the major non-establishment candidates.

As discussed in the introductory chapter, I classified Menem, Kirchner, and Rodríguez Saá as establishment candidates and Carrió and López Murphy as non-establishment candidates. The former are considered to be establishment candidates because of their extensive ties to the traditional peronist party and because their campaigns were based on machine politics, involving the use of vote buying (Stokes 2005). In contrast, both Carrió and López Murphy are classified as non-establishment. They, each, formed their own party and did not rely on machine politics.

The 2003 presidential election was unusual in that it involved a long campaign period of more than year for establishment candidate Menem and non-establishment candidate Carrió. Typically, presidential campaigns in Argentina and elsewhere in Latin America last a relatively short time in stark contrast to those in the United States. In the next section, I discuss how I chose the time frame for the study.

SECTION 3.6 TIME FRAME FOR THE STUDY

There were three considerations for selecting the time frame for the study: 1) when each of the five candidates announced their candidacy; 2) when non-trivial media coverage of the candidates began; and 3) the availability of monthly polls on vote intentions from a single source. The ideal study would entail a starting point in which all the candidates announced their intention to run at around the same time so that tracking media coverage from this starting point would add a control for the comparative analysis. If candidates had the same starting point in coverage, this similarity would add a control element to the study such that we can rule out differences in the length of coverage as a factor in explaining the counterintuitive outcome. The ideal study also would have consecutive monthly vote intention polls from a single source during this period. Unfortunately, the ideal is far from reality.

What was unusual about the April 2003 presidential election in Argentina was that it involved a long campaign, particularly for Menem and Carrió. Menem announced his candidacy in late November 2001, following his release from six months of house arrest. Carrió publicly announced her candidacy in the midst of the pot-banging protests and presidential successions in late December 2001. Kirchner entered

the race some six months later. A Latin American Weekly Report issued on June 11, 2002 cites him as a candidate at that time (LAWR 6/24/02, p.268). Rodríguez Saá was considered a presidential aspirant by mid-2002. Similarly, this was the case for López Murphy.

Another consideration is that media coverage of candidates did not get underway until interim President Duhalde called for new elections in early July 2002. Perusing daily front-page headlines from January to May 2002 indicated that there was very little candidate coverage in this period. Media attention focused instead on the newly installed Duhalde having to deal with the country's financial and social problems. Argentines generally were feeling the effects of the economy bottoming out and were adjusting accordingly in the first half of 2002. Much media coverage focused above all on the effects of the crisis on people's lives. It was not until June 2002 that we start to see candidate coverage come to the fore in the news. Not surprisingly, it increased significantly around the time when Duhalde called for new elections the following month.

Still another factor is the availability of monthly polls that track vote intentions—all from a single source⁴². Ideally, we would want this polling data to have been conducted over consecutive months. What comes closest to this ideal situation is data provided by a reputable polling outlet Ipsos and Mora y Araujo. Their data cover the period from June 2002 to April 2003, though data for July 2002 is missing (*La Nación* 4/17/03). Making the best of this publicly available data, I pick as a starting point the first month in which it was publicly known that all five candidates had decided to run, officially or unofficially. Thus, the time frame covers the eleven months from June 2002 to April 2003. The starting point begins a month prior to Duhalde's decision to call for new elections and ends during the month of the election. I use an average between June and August 2002 for the missing data for July 2002.

⁴² It has been argued that a single source is not all that important as long as polling agencies are systematically sampling the same population. I thank Thomas Nelson for this point.

SECTION 3.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

I retrieved 329 front cover page layouts from each of *Clarín* and *La Nación* over the period June 1, 2002 to April 27, 2003. Two editions were missing, namely Christmas Day, December 25, 2002 and New Year's Day, January 1, 2003. As a result, a total of 4 layouts were excluded from the database. Thus, I have a total of 658 cover page layouts.

For my coding schema, a key conceptual and operational definition is a candidate's story. I defined a candidate's story as a front-page news article that gives reference to a presidential candidate or candidates by name, nickname, title, photograph, or description in the headline, sub-title, summary statement, graphical presentation, or photograph. Empirically, this means that a whole article can be counted as containing a candidate's story if it mentions any of the candidates. The count is done per candidate such that a candidate can receive at most a single count per whole article. At most, a single cover article counted as a candidate's story for as many as five candidates.

The study makes use of content analysis to analyze media attention and framing (Hesse-Biber, Nagy and Leavy 2004; Neuendorf 2002). I define media attention as the volume of quantity of coverage devoted to a candidate. In terms of the counting procedure for media attention, I focus on whether media gave prominence to any of the five candidates by making a mention in a front-page story. To measure media attention, I counted the number of candidate stories that appeared on the covers of *Clarín* and *La Nación*, organizing the data on a monthly basis. I added the counts from both newspapers for a single tally per month.

Table 3.1 shows the counts in the volume of coverage across the two centrist print newspapers. I present this data to determine whether there were substantial differences in coverage across the two newspapers. Given that *La Nación* is a broadsheet newspaper and *Clarín* is a tabloid-sized newspaper, the expectation is that the former would offer more stories than the latter. In general, however, there does not seem to be sharp differences between the two newspapers. Compared to *Clarín*, *La*

Nación generally gave more coverage to candidates. The only exception is Menem who received more media attention from *Clarín* than *La Nación*.

Candidates	<i>Clarín</i>	<i>La Nación</i>
Establishment candidates		
Menem	68	54
Kirchner	35	35
Rodríguez Saá	23	29
Non-establishment candidates		
López Murphy	16	27
Carrió	19	26

Table 3.1 Breakdown of Media Attention across *Clarín* and *La Nación*

My media attention analysis does not take into account any mention of a candidate in the cover article's text since people are more likely to pay attention to a candidate's name, nickname, title, photograph, or description in the headline, sub-title, summary statement, graphical presentation, or photograph. It stands to reason that many people may not even delve below the headlines by reading an article's text. Thus, the text is removed altogether from the counting procedure. For this reason, I rely entirely on the front-page layouts when measuring and coding media attention. Again, at most, an article could yield a single count for media attention to a single candidate. Thus, there are no double or triple counts per candidate for a given article. I then present the volume of media coverage for Menem, Kirchner, López Murphy, Carrió, and Rodríguez Saá, using a multi-linear graph that lends itself well to the comparison of candidates. To measure the association between media attention and a candidate's standing in the polls, I estimated correlation coefficients that are lagged and unlagged and tests of significance. I also re-estimated the correlations, lagging the volume of media attention by one month (t-1) and, in the reverse causal direction, lagging popular

support by one month (t-1). These results are reported in the results and discussion chapter.

To investigate media framing of candidates, I started with my 658 front-page layouts that cover the period from June 1, 2002 to April 27, 2003. From this universe, I pulled articles that made reference to a single candidate, several candidates, the “new president”, or any other vague reference that would indicate that the article’s content would involve any of the five major candidates with reference in headlines, sub-titles, summary statements, or photographs that were found on the cover layouts. Thus, this count data was less restrictive than the media attention count data, which was specific to a candidate or candidates. This less restrictive criterion is an asset since it creates opportunities to more fully analyze candidate framing. It should be noted that not all articles that appeared to have candidate content actually had the particular content that I was seeking to code. In fact, there were many articles that I scanned that did not have any of the three types of frames relevant for this study. At the same time, it should be noted that there were articles that had the particular content of interest for multiple candidates.

My unit of analysis is keywords or phrases, which is more appropriate for an intra-article analysis. One of the advantages of using simple counts of these is that it not only increases the number of observations but it also offers a closer examination of frames within the context that they are applied by focusing on keywords or phrases within articles. Recall that Entman’s framing schema focuses on problem definition, identification of the cause, solution or endorsement proposed, and moral judgment (Entman 2004, p.24). Entman’s schema is more suitable for analyzing individual articles as whole units. For my purpose, then, simple counts are appropriate and they are what I used for my framing analysis.

From those articles that did have the particular candidate coverage of interest, I recorded and counted the number of mentions to a candidate’s competency, integrity, and electability that took on either a favorable or unfavorable tone (Iyengar and Kinder 1987, p.74). To assess whether a frame was favorable or unfavorable, I used my best judgment of the words used within the context of the entire article’s content. Examples

of favorable and unfavorable tones in coverage will be offered when I discuss each of the three types of frames.

I define candidate competency in terms of how well or badly a candidate is judged to perform. For competency frames, I categorized any reference to a candidate's knowledge, aptness, experience, government service record, issue priorities, confidence in solving a problem or getting things done, ease in working with others or other countries, and ability to govern. While it may be argued that a candidate's time served in office and her issue priorities do not necessarily reflect competence, I count those two in the study since they certainly can render that impression. For example, if media report that a candidate has served ten years in office, this information may leave the impression that this particular candidate has performed the job well since, one might think, he or she would not have been in office for that long. In terms of issue priorities, the logic is that a candidate's issue priorities may give the impression that she can handle well those issues. Both of these can leave the impression that a candidate has experience or expertise, though it may not necessarily be the case.

I offer some examples of competency frames. For favorable tones, I recorded mentions that alluded to the following "best able to satisfy the interests of the United States", "will meet with his technical team to advance in detail a government program", "the most competent among the politicians that aspire to the presidency", "only we will end the chaos", "[her] priority is to generate jobs", "[t]he relationship between . . . with the embassy and with the State Department and the international credit organizations are very good", "has the advantage of already having demonstrated that he can change Argentina", "has a well-known history", and "with . . . , Argentines were better". Examples of unfavorable tones are: "vague in details", "did not inform us of their projects", "he does not have competency", "an authoritarian style", "has a more critical and hostile position toward the United States" (emphasizing a lack of ease in working with another country), "he did bad things in the 90s", "left in the hands of those who enriched themselves with neoliberal policies", "if she can govern", and "has a discourse of confrontation".

Table 3.2 shows the breakdown across the two newspapers for purposes of identifying whether there were sharp differences in coverage between the two since they are posited to be similar. Taking into account the eleven-month time frame of analysis, the differences in candidate coverage across newspapers do not appear lop-sided in terms of the number of favorable and unfavorable mentions across the two newspapers. The quantity of coverage seems to fall within the neighborhood of one’s general expectation of more mentions from the broad-sheet newspaper *La Nación* as opposed to the tabloid-sized *Clarín*.

Candidates	Favorable Mentions in <i>Clarín</i>	Favorable Mentions in <i>La Nación</i>	Unfavorable Mentions in <i>Clarín</i>	Unfavorable Mentions in <i>La Nación</i>
Establishment candidates				
Menem	16	28	21	27
Kirchner	12	20	2	11
Rodríguez Saá	7	6	4	9
Non-establishment candidates				
López Murphy	5	8	5	3
Carrió	3	1	6	7

Table 3.2 Breakdown of Media Framing of Candidate Competency across *Clarín* and *La Nación*

For electability, I recorded any mention in reference to a candidate’s chances of winning the election, his or her chances of making it to the second round election, or his or her popularity among the electorate. I recorded favorable mentions that contained keywords or phrases such as the following: “the escalation of”, “the possibility that . . . would win”, “leads in the polls”, “increases”, “the ascent”, “better placed”, “the most preferred”, “the most voted for”, “maintains himself in the lead”, the most probable [scenario] is a second round between . . .”, “jumped from 11.6% from the month

before”, and “the advance of . . .”. Examples of keywords or phrases that I recorded for unfavorable mentions are: “continues falling”, “declines”, “recedes”, “fell by 3 points”, “lowers to 14.8%”, “stagnates or descends”, “57% responded that they would never vote for him”, “the two have less consolidated votes and something more fragile than”, “lost . . . of vote intention”, and “continues a descending tendency that began since January”.

Table 3.3 below shows the breakdown in electability mentions for both newspapers. Again, there are no sharp differences across the two newspapers, taking into account the expectation that the broad-sheet newspaper *La Nación* would offer more coverage than *Clarín*.

Candidates	Favorable Mentions in <i>Clarín</i>	Favorable Mentions in <i>La Nación</i>	Unfavorable Mentions in <i>Clarín</i>	Unfavorable Mentions in <i>La Nación</i>
Establishment candidates				
Menem	15	37	2	7
Kirchner	10	17	1	4
Rodríguez Saá	6	18	1	9
Non-establishment candidates				
López Murphy	12	27	3	4
Carrió	2	19	2	16

Table 3.3 Breakdown of Media Framing of Candidate Electability across *Clarín* and *La Nación*

I did the same for integrity frames by coding keywords and phrases that made a reference to a candidate’s “morality”, “honesty”, “goodness”, “virtue”, and “religiosity”. For instance, favorable tones for integrity frames included: “conscience does not know fear”, “vote with clean hands”, “he’s a man who has shown honesty, who has fought against mafias”, “to combat poverty is more of a moral choice than an ideological

one”, “always walking with a Bible under her arm”, ““a total renewal of all the offices and threaten with the revolutionary abstention”, ““to recover the values of Argentine society””, “to respect the constitutional order”, “with new faces”, “I return to correct past mistakes, with new people”, “the youths remember the brief presidency of . . . they see something new, against the political system, and they want to remove privileges”, “new space”, “is the only that is for renewal”, and “the most historic of the antimenemistas”. Some examples of unfavorable tones that I recorded are: “swiped the discourse”, “raises suspicions among many peronist leaders from the interior”, “feudal practices”, “neither . . . detailed the identity of those individuals and business that donated money to their campaigns”, “he is no Reutemann”, “he was denounced for controlling the Court”, “extended corruption”, “questioned the moral integrity of some members of his team”, “illegal arms sale”, “selling the country”, and “the Electoral Junta that he controls”.

Table 3.4 shows the breakdown across the two newspapers for integrity framing mentions. Again, taking into account the two types of newspapers and length of period for analysis, the differences in coverage are not strikingly different between the two centrist newspapers.

Candidates	Favorable Mentions in <i>Clarín</i>	Favorable Mentions in <i>La Nación</i>	Unfavorable Mentions in <i>Clarín</i>	Unfavorable Mentions in <i>La Nación</i>
Establishment candidates				
Menem	7	5	49	52
Kirchner	19	13	3	10
Rodríguez Saá	3	6	0	5
Non-establishment candidates				
López Murphy	5	10	1	3
Carrió	24	22	0	4

Table 3.4 Breakdown of Media Framing of Candidate Integrity across *Clarín* and *La Nación*

I will summarize the relationships between framing and level of popular support in the next chapter by using correlation coefficients and tests of significance. This is done for each of the types, namely competency, electability, and integrity, in connection with each of the tones, favorable or unfavorable. Thus, I present the measure of association between favorable framing of each of the three types and the level of popular support for each of the candidates. Likewise, I present the measure of association between unfavorable framing of these types and the level of popular support for each of the candidates.

Finally, I excluded neutral frames from the analysis since there were very few of them. For the most part, the front-page news articles dealing with candidates had a slant in their coverage, offering a favorable or unfavorable take on candidates. In many instances, there were multiple frames within an article that had both favorable and unfavorable tones. The question arises as to why there were so few neutral frames. While some have made the point that competition leads mainstream news organizations toward a more neutral editorial stance to avoid alienating significant segments of the market, Arnold argues the opposite, suggesting that competition decreases the neutrality of news since news organizations need sizzle to compete in a highly competitive market (Arnold 2004, p.195-196). Indeed, the 2003 presidential election was a competitive race in the sense that there were many contenders and no clear-cut front-runner throughout the campaign period. It is this particular scenario that may have induced centrist print media to add more sizzle to their coverage, possibly to boost sales.

SECTION 3.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have detailed how I investigated media coverage of the five major candidates in the 2003 presidential election in Argentina. The media analysis is based on a merged data set, using two centrist print newspapers, namely *Clarín* and *La Nación* and involving an eleven-month time frame, covering the campaign period from June 2002 to April 2003.

The proposed research method involves the use of cover layouts to quantify the volume of coverage and the use of article texts to record and count relevant framing

mentions. To measure media attention, I counted the number of candidate stories that appeared on the covers of *Clarín* and *La Nación*, organizing the data on a monthly basis. I defined a candidate's story as a front-page news article that gives reference to a presidential candidate or candidates by name, nickname, title, photograph, or description in the headline, sub-title, summary statement, graphical presentation, or photograph. To measure media framing, I recorded and counted the number of keywords or phrases within an article that made a reference to a candidate's competency, integrity, and electability that took on either a favorable or unfavorable tone. To analyze the data, I rely on count data and multi-linear graphs as well as correlation coefficients and tests of significance.

Finally, content analysis as a methodological approach is likely to offer insight on how media attention and framing of candidates may have played a role in influencing popular support for establishment and non-establishment candidates. The value-added of this study is that it can potentially shed light on the role that centrist print news media may have had in Argentina's 2003 presidential election outcome.

In the next chapter, I present the results along with a discussion.

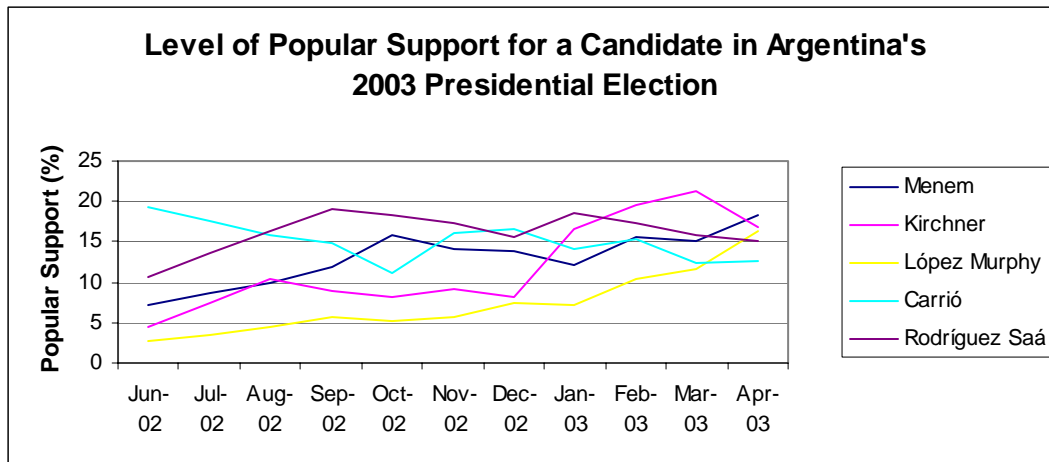
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SECTION 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I discuss the empirical findings of the content analysis of press coverage of the five major candidates in the 2003 presidential election in Argentina. The data set pulls together news articles from two centrist newspapers, namely *Clarín* and *La Nación*, over an eleven-month period. Of key interest is to assess whether there were differences in the volume and content of coverage across establishment and non-establishment candidates and to relate these differences to their standing in public opinion as seen in graph 4.1. The data come from polling outlet Ipsos and Mora y Araujo found in *La Nación* on April 17, 2003.

Graph 4.1 shows that non-establishment candidate Carrió was in the lead early in the campaign, followed by establishment candidate Rodríguez Saá who led in popularity from August to November 2002. Interestingly, these two candidates later came in fifth and fourth, each respectively. In contrast, non-establishment candidate López Murphy, who was the least popular candidate of the five at the outset, eventually placed third. Making strong gains in popularity in January 2003, establishment candidate Kirchner emerged in second place. Finally, establishment candidate Menem, who began in third place, made small strides throughout the campaign, eventually placing first in the first round of the election. I hypothesize that the greater the volume of media attention given to a candidate, the greater the level of popular support for her. Also, I hypothesize that the more favorably candidates are presented in terms of their competency, integrity and electability, the greater popular support for them.



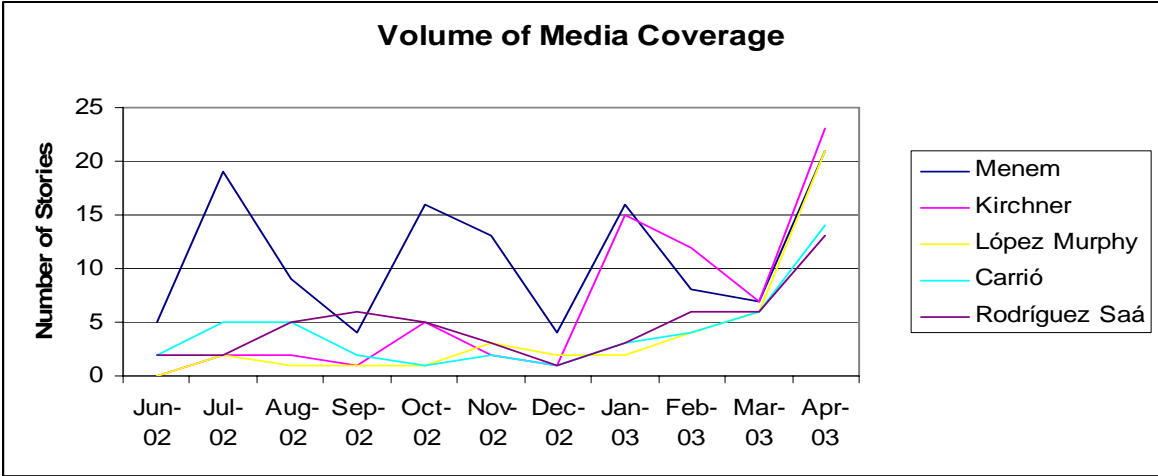
Graph 4.1 Candidates' Standing in the Polls

My approach to investigate Argentina's puzzling election outcome focuses on media attention and framing. As discussed in the previous chapter, the volume of media attention speaks to the prominence or newsworthiness of candidates, measured by the number of front-page news articles devoted to a candidate during the campaign period under analysis. By media framing, I focus on the slant in coverage as it pertains to candidate competency, electability, and integrity. I do so by examining both favorable and unfavorable tones for these three types of frames. The second to last section offers a discussion of external studies that validate these findings.

SECTION 4.2 VOLUME OF MEDIA COVERAGE

Graph 4.2 below shows a pattern in coverage of candidates over an unusually long campaign period. In general, there was more coverage of candidates in the months of July and October of 2002 and in January and April of 2003. Peaks in coverage corresponded to the following key events: the call in July 2002 for new elections, the country's loan repayment failure in October 2002, Duhalde's endorsement of

Kirchner’s candidacy in early January 2003, and the month of the presidential election in April 2003. Also, peaks and valleys in coverage seem to be driven largely by Menem, and to a smaller extent, Kirchner. In general, candidate coverage appears to converge over time with the greatest convergence shown in the final month prior to the election itself.



Graph 4.2 Media Attention to Candidates

Looking at graph 4.2, it shows that Menem had significantly more coverage than his rivals for the period under analysis. This is particularly true for the first seven months. Only in late December 2002 and January 2003 was Menem at par with Kirchner in terms of coverage volume. From late February and into March 2003, there was very little media attention to the candidates since outside events meant that the media came to focus more heavily on international news, namely the U.S. war in Iraq. Thus, March 2003 seems to be the month in which we see the greatest convergence in media coverage of candidates.

The data in table 4.1 shows us that centrist print media coverage tilted more in favor of establishment than non-establishment candidates. Specifically, the three major establishment candidates, all from the peronist party, received more media attention than did the two non-establishment candidates pretty much throughout the campaign. Leading the pack, the most newsworthy was Menem with 122 articles. A distant second, Kirchner received 70 front-page news articles. The candidate with the third most extensive coverage was Rodríguez Saá with 52 articles. In contrast, both the non-establishment candidates had considerably less media attention: Carrió had 45 and López Murphy had 43 articles. Establishment candidates Menem and Kirchner may have been advantaged by more extensive coverage than their non-establishment rivals López Murphy and Carrió. Moreover, the standard deviation is generally higher for those who placed higher in the election, indicating that there was more month-to-month variation.

Candidates	Number of cover stories in <i>Clarín</i> and <i>La Nación</i>	Mean number of cover stories per month	Standard deviation
Establishment candidates			
Carlos Menem	122	11.09	6.17
Néstor Kirchner	70	6.36	7.35
Rodríguez Saá	52	4.73	3.29
Non-establishment candidates			
Ricardo López Murphy	43	3.91	5.91
Elisa Carrió	45	4.09	3.70

Table 4.1 Volume of Media Coverage from June 1, 2003 to April 27, 2003

While Rodríguez Saá did receive slightly more coverage than did the two non-establishment candidates, he finished in fifth place. This, of course, runs counter to this

study's expectation of greater popularity being associated with greater media coverage. To account for this anomaly, it could be the case that machine politics helped Rodríguez Saá to gain more media attention than did the non-establishment candidates. Also, his one week stint as president may account for why his media attention did not translate into a higher placement in the election. Campaigning as a nationalist and populist, Rodríguez Saá was very popular with young voters who gathered for his campaign speeches. According to Regúnaga, Rodríguez Saá's lead in the early months of the campaign was probably due to his campaigning against both Menem and Duhalde (Regúnaga 2003, p.2). This, in turn, could explain his higher level of media coverage relative to the non-establishment candidates.

The larger question remains as to why there was more extensive coverage of establishment candidates compared to non-establishment candidates over the campaign period from June 1, 2002 to April 27, 2003. One speculation is that with the radical party discredited, media attention focused on the fixture in the aprty landscape, namely the peronist party. For the non-establishment candidates Carrió and López Murphy, there were no scandals or disputes over who would become their party's nominee. As founders, they assumed this role automatically. As Waisbord notes, "Publicity is what counts in scandals. Media inattention is tantamount to symbolic annihilation" (Waisbord 2004, p.1079). In contrast, a key focus of the campaign as covered by *Clarín* and *La Nación* was the internal dispute in the peronist party over the method of selecting the party's presidential nominee. Most of the articles focused on the rivalry between Menem and Duhalde from mid-August 2002 until mid-February 2003. To test for this, I eliminated stories dealing with the nomination fight from Menem's tally. In all, there were 37 stories that focused on the nomination fight, reducing Menem's volume of coverage to 85 front-page stories.

While there were several candidates vying for the peronist party's nomination, including De la Sota and Carlos Reutemann as early as June and July 2002 along with Menem, Kirchner, and Rodríguez Saá, it eventually boiled down to these last three. The dispute over whether to hold a peronist primary election or to allow all three candidates to run in the general election became a key focus of extensive media coverage during

the campaign. In particular, centrist print media emphasized heavily the Menem-Duhalde personal rivalry and its role in fragmenting the party. Internal party conflict over the primaries captured by the personal rivalry between Menem and Duhalde may have induced more coverage of them as opposed to Rodríguez Saá and the non-establishment candidates. Centrist print media captured their personal rivalry with headlines that read: “The fight within the PJ over the *ley de lemas* arrives in the Court” (*La Nación* 8/17/02), “Duhalde and Menem, again at war” (*Clarín* 10/20/02); “The war within the PJ already has exploded among deputies” (*Clarín* 10/24/02), “Duhalde won a battle against Menem” (*Clarín* 11/6/02); “The tension grows with the PJ” (*La Nación* 12/28/02), and “Menem: ‘Duhalde is acting like a dictator’” (*La Nación* 1/19/03).

Table 4.2 below shows us the correlation between the volume of front-page coverage and a candidate’s level of popular support. These correlations represent the relationship between the month-to-month trends in the volume of media attention and a candidate’s standing in the polls. All of the correlation coefficients are statistically significant except for the coefficient for Menem.

A surprising finding is that while Menem had the most coverage, the magnitude of the correlation was relatively small, 0.27 and not statistically significant. It could be the case that while Menem had the most media attention among all candidates, he was a well-known and controversial politician with both strong supporters and critics. We would expect Argentines to have a better picture of who he is, given that he was in the highest national office for ten years. Argentines either loved him or hated him with very little grey in between in terms of the legacies he left behind (Levitsky and Murillo 2003, pp.153-154). Thus, it stands to reason that the volume of media attention may not have had much of an impact on his level of support since voters had divided views about him, thereby explaining the relatively small and non-statistically significant coefficient.

Candidates	Correlation between media attention on a candidate and level of popular support
An asterisk denotes statistical significance at the 95% confidence level.	
Establishment candidates	
Carlos Menem	0.27
Néstor Kirchner	0.72*
Rodríguez Saá	0.18*
Non-establishment candidates	
Ricardo López Murphy	0.88*
Elisa Carrió	-0.32*

Table 4.2 Correlations between Volume of Media Coverage and Level of Popular Support

In stark contrast, both Kirchner and López Murphy had relatively high and statistically significant correlations: Kirchner's was 0.72 and López Murphy's was 0.88. While both of their campaigns were relatively low-volume in the first half of the campaign period, they both received extensive coverage just months prior to the election. For Kirchner, his coverage increased significantly in January 2003 following the official endorsement made by President Duhalde. For López Murphy, his coverage picked up in April 2003, following his appearances on popular television programs.

Carrió's correlation is intriguing since the relationship is negative. Her highest level of popular support was in June 2002. Thereafter, her popular support gradually declined over the campaign period. This begs the question as to why the relationship is negative. Putting her campaign into context, early media attention focused on her call for all incumbent politicians to step down from office, which resonated very much with public sentiment. However, this call for the political class to step down from power did not pan out and media attention soon faded. Farmelo and Cibils point out: "Carrió had no name recognition, prestige, or party base inherited from a father, husband, brother, or

political boss” (Farmelo and Cibils 2003, p.3). Without these along with financial contributions to launch an energetic campaign, she, perhaps, was unable to generate the kind of media attention that was given to her establishment rivals. In short, then, it could be the case that the non-finding relationship simply is spurious. Alternatively, it could be the case that as more media attention shifted from integrity to competency, her popularity declined.

We might suspect that the causal direction between media attention and a candidate’s standing in the polls is specified in the reverse direction such that public popularity leads to greater media attention. To test this, I examined the lagged effects of the volume of coverage on popular support as well as the lagged effects of popular support on the volume of coverage. Table 4.3 shows that the relationship is slightly stronger when the causal direction is specified with media attention lagged by one month as the predictor as opposed to the dependent variable. While hardly definitively conclusive given the small number of observations per candidate, intuitively, it makes better sense that media attention would impact a candidate’s level of popular support more than a candidate’s level of popular support would impact a candidate’s media attention. This is because many Argentine voters were independent voters who were largely undecided for several months before the election.

Candidates	Correlation between media attention lagged by one month and level of popular support	Correlation between level of popular support lagged by one month and media attention
An asterisk denotes statistical significance at the 95% confidence level.		
Establishment candidates		
Carlos Menem	-0.07	-0.02
Néstor Kirchner	0.81*	0.67*
Rodríguez Saá	0.92*	0.78*
Non-establishment candidates		
Ricardo López Murphy	-0.27*	-0.21
Elisa Carrió	0.11*	0.12*

Table 4.3 Lagged Analysis of Media Attention and Level of Popular Support

While the volume of candidate coverage discussed in this section is indicative of some media effect, it does not offer an altogether satisfying answer since the month-to-month variations in media attention were not always associated with month-to-month variations with a candidate's standing in the polls. However, this is a far cry from saying that media coverage had no impact on public opinion. For one, the variation in the volume of coverage throughout the campaign period may have had a selective impact on a candidate's standing in the polls. Specifically, media coverage can hardly be expected to impact public opinion if there were very little of it in particular months. For instance, López Murphy and Kirchner had only 10 and 13 cover stories from June to December 2002. Moreover, during the period in which much attention focused on the peronist squabble over whether to hold a primary election, Carrió, had only 7 cover stories from October 2002 to January 2003. It may be more telling then to examine the

substantive content of coverage, focusing particularly on media framing of candidate competency, electability, and integrity. This is what I take up in the next section.

SECTION 4.3 CONTENT OF MEDIA COVERAGE

A general trend is that candidates that placed higher in the election generally received more favorable mentions. We would expect substantial negative coverage of candidates, particularly for the establishment candidates, in the aftermath of the economic crisis. However, centrist print media generally did not go negative in their coverage. For Kirchner and López Murphy, their favorable to unfavorable ratio was about 3 to 1. For Carrió and Rodríguez Saá, their ratio was about 2 to 1. The reverse held true for Menem with a ratio of 2 to 3. Thus, Menem was the only candidate to have received predominantly negative coverage.

	Competency Mentions			Electability Mentions			Integrity Mentions			All Mentions		
	Fav.	Unf.	% Fav.	Fav.	Unf.	% Fav.	Fav.	Unf.	% Fav.	Fav.	Unf.	% Fav.
Establishment candidates												
Menem	44	48	0.48	52	9	0.85	12	101	0.11	108	158	0.41
Kirchner	32	13	0.71	27	5	0.84	32	13	0.71	91	31	0.75
R. Saá	13	13	0.50	24	10	0.71	9	5	0.65	46	28	0.62
Non-establishment candidates												
López Murphy	13	8	0.62	39	7	0.85	15	4	0.79	67	19	0.78
Carrió	4	13	0.24	21	18	0.54	46	4	0.92	71	35	0.67

Table 4.4 Breakdown in Framing of Candidates

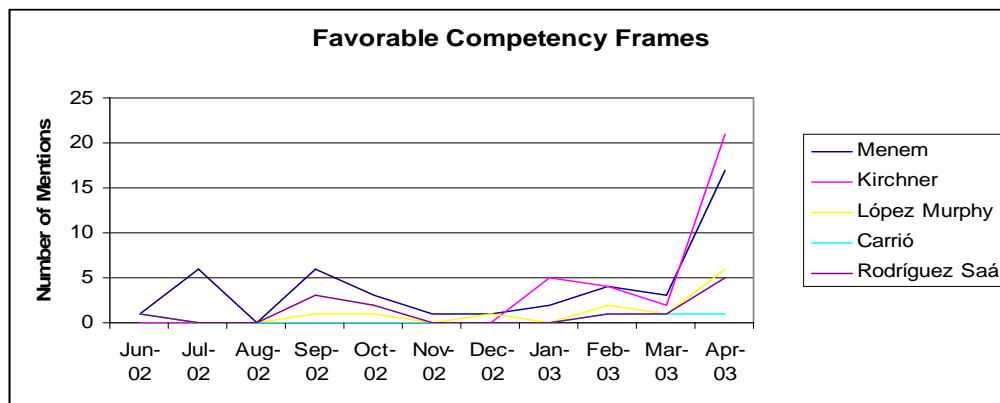
While there were roughly the same number of mentions for each of the three types of frame, specifically 201 competency, 212 electability, and 241 integrity mentions, centrist print media generally gave more attention to electability. Specifically, the percent of positive mentions across the three types of favorable frames is generally higher for electability, suggesting that the horse race theme was emphasized more heavily than competency or integrity. By comparison then, candidate coverage was less than substantive, focusing more on which candidate was ahead or behind.

Competency and electability generally were emphasized more for establishment than non-establishment candidates. For instance, for favorable competency mentions, establishment candidates Menem and Kirchner attained the highest number of mentions, followed by López Murphy who attained the same number of mentions as Rodríguez Saá. Carrió attained the least with only 4 favorable competency mentions throughout the eleven-month period. For favorable electability mentions, Menem came out on top with the most mentions, followed by López Murphy who had the second most number of mentions. Again, Carrió came had the least with 21 favorable competency mentions.

In contrast to the other candidates, media generally gave a more favorable slant in coverage to integrity to non-establishment candidates. Carrió's integrity was framed in a favorable light, more so than for any other candidate. She had the most number of mentions with 46. Kirchner had the second most number of favorable integrity mentions, followed by López Murphy. These findings are consistent with prior research that shows that voters that gave priority to "eficacia", essentially competency, generally voted for establishment candidate Menem while those who gave priority to "honestidad", essentially honesty, generally voted for non-establishment candidate Carrió (Fraga, Burdman, and Ovalles 2003, p.42).

Graph 4.3 shows that Menem received more favorable mentions about his competency compared to his rivals. One campaign theme captured by the media was his own self-promotion as a former president who had improved living standards in Argentina. In an article covering his campaign in La Matanza, he is quoted as follows: "With which president were we living better?" (*Clarín* 9/15/02). In addition, centrist print media emphasized his economic team (*Clarín* 4/13/03), his friendship with former

president George Bush (*Clarín* 7/12/02), his need for only 30 days to negotiate an agreement with the IMF (*Clarín* 11/28/02), his ability to control inflation (*La Nación* 4/19/03), and his promise to bring forth an improved New Deal (*La Nación* 4/25/03). In terms of loan aid, a menemista is quoted as saying that “we need only 30 days to negotiate a long-term agreement if Menem assumes the presidency in May 2003” (*Clarín* 11/28/03). The idea that loan aid was just around the corner was reinforced with the story that Menem’s economists had met with IMF Director Dr. Anoop Singh (*Clarín* 12/1/02). In short, centrist print media framed Menem as the candidate who best could deliver on international loan aid on short order. Thus, media depicted Menem’s ability to handle the economy as one of his strong suits.



Graph 4.3 Favorable Framing of Candidate Competency

Coverage of Kirchner’s leadership style tended to emphasize his ability to govern at the provincial level, his political connections, and his having a viable plan to create jobs. His public service record was stressed with particular attention paid to his having been the mayor of Río Gallegos and a governor of Santa Cruz. A voter is quoted as basing his support for Kirchner on “what he did in his province” (*Clarín* 4/19/03).

Many of Kirchner's favorable competency mentions came from President Duhalde who presented him as a "renovator" for a "peronist new space" (*La Nación*, 1/9/03). This frame is further emphasized by support from Duhalde's Economy Minister Roberto Lavagna who described him as a "guarantee of governability", signaling Kirchner's seriousness as a candidate (*La Nación* 4/21/03). Media also highlighted Kirchner's vision for a "serious Argentina" that is "competent and stable", appealing to the demand for "justice and work" (*La Nación* 2/24/03 and 4/3/03).

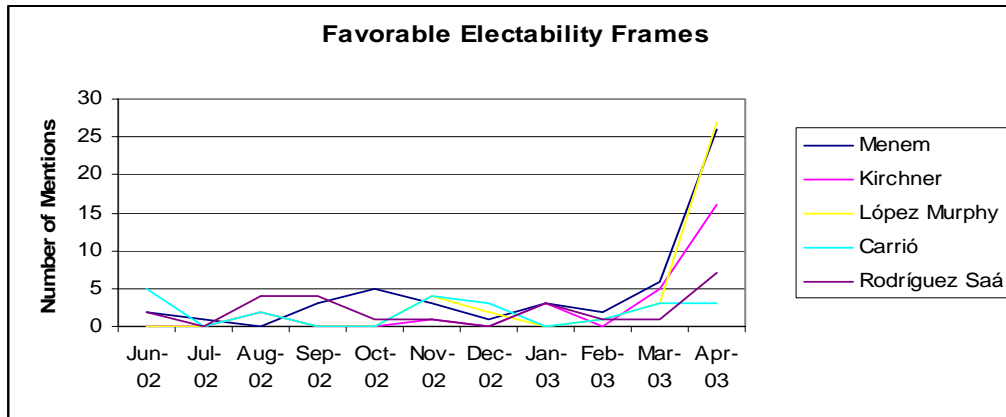
Centrist print media framed non-establishment candidate López Murphy as the candidate who could best satisfy U.S. interests and work with European diplomats (*Clarín* 4/20/03 and *La Nación* 12/29/02) as well as maintain order in the streets (*La Nación* 2/9/03). For Rodríguez Saá, media emphasized his 18 years as governor of San Luis province (*La Nación* 9/11/02). Moreover, media labeled him as "the doer", having a lofty plan to end corruption. They also presented his plan to increase retirement benefits and salaries as well as to create jobs by constructing 150,000 housing units (*Clarín* 4/24/03).

In contrast, Carrió received only 4 favorable mentions about her competency throughout the entire campaign period. Most of her mentions focused on social issues, typically considered women's issues. Media portrayed her as having competency in dealing with public disorder and addressing the problem of poverty and unemployment through public policies (*Clarín* 6/2/02 and 3/11/03; *La Nación* 2/11/03 and 4/17/03). This paltry coverage may have given the impression that she did not have the wherewithal to handle the economy, thereby conveying the idea that the economy was not her strong suit.

The 2003 presidential election was presented as a competitive election in which any of the candidates could walk away as the winner. This was a common theme throughout the campaign. From July 2002 to March 2003, media generally placed favorable framing coverage on candidates in terms of their electability. From March to April 2003, we see a clear difference across candidates. Specifically, Menem and López Murphy were relatively even, having been deemed by the media to have a strong chance of winning the election. Kirchner received significantly fewer favorable frames about

his chances. Interestingly, Rodríguez Saá underwent a small increase in his favorable electability coverage. In stark contrast, Carrió experienced a plateau in coverage.

Taken together, graph 4.4 below shows that centrist print media portrayed establishment candidates more favorably than non-establishment candidate Carrió in terms of presenting their chances of winning or making it to the second round. An interesting trend in this graph is Menem and López Murphy's surge a month before the election. Media coverage focused on López Murphy's television advertisements and his increased popularity. Presented as a come-from-behind contender, López Murphy was portrayed as a strong candidate who could compete in the second round (*Clarín* 4/23/03 and 4/27/03). Centrist print media identified him as carrying 55% support from business (*La Nación* 11/8/02). This seems to show that media coverage was more important than his non-establishment status in enhancing his standing in the polls.

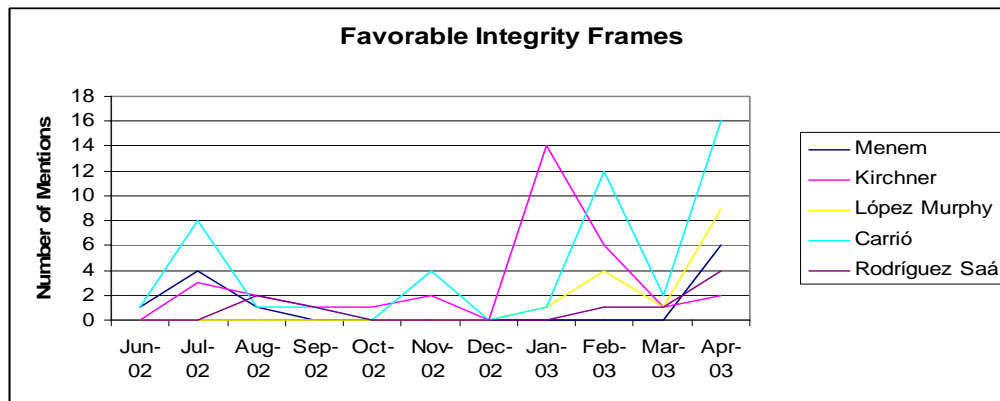


Graph 4.4 Favorable Framing of Candidate Electability

Interestingly, in late June 2002, only 15% of those polled believed Menem would win the election (*La Nación* 6/25/02). This figure, however, increased over time with 35.9% and 41% believing so in September and October 2002 (*La Nación* 9/29/02

and 10/27/02). By April 2003, it is reported that between 40 and 60% of those interviewed believed that Menem would become the next president (*La Nación* 4/14/03). Thus, it seems that media speculation of who would win, based on people’s speculation as to how others would vote could have affected the eventual election outcome by rendering an inflated impression of Menem’s level of popularity among the electorate.

Looking at the third type of frame, favorable framing of candidate integrity, Carrió received early on and again toward the end of campaign more mentions than did her competitors. Heading in to the final month, both non-establishment candidates Carrió and López Murphy received considerably more favorable mentions about their integrity compared to establishment candidates Menem, Rodríguez Saá, and Kirchner. They received 12, 9, and 32 mentions, each respectively.



Graph 4.5 Favorable Framing of Candidate Integrity

Carrió emerged as the candidate with the most mentions about her integrity with 46 total mentions. Media coverage focused on her call for clean elections, a need for “moral authority”, and a renewal of the political system (*La Nación* 2/23/03 and

4/25/03, *Clarín* 11/10/02). Carrió's campaign coverage in the early months had presented her as pushing for the expiration of all major offices in the spirit of the protest mantra, "Down with them all!" (*Clarín* 7/12/02 and 11/10/02). Other frames focused on her advocating judicial reform by removing all Supreme Court justices and putting in place transparent rules for the selection of justices (*La Nación* 3/9/03). While news had focused on her fight to persuade incumbent politicians to refrain from competition until the scheduling of concurrent elections to hold all incumbent officeholders accountable, coverage of her on this issue had eventually faded.

Media portrayed her as a "clean" candidate who had sought to avoid political clientelism by refusing to accept any campaign donations (*La Nación* 2/11/03). Having made the decision not to be beholden to any group, she was left "without a cent", essentially penniless to mount a campaign against her competitors (*Clarín* 4/13/03). Centrist print media failed to emphasize the fact that whether a candidate has significant funding or not should not serve as the basis to evaluate her qualifications. Instead, they seemed to emphasize her lackluster campaign activities due to her refusal to accept contributions. The impression was that a candidate who could not run a well-funded campaign organization was one who would not be fit for the presidency. Centrist print media, however, did not dispel this misimpression. Instead, they focused more on the campaign the activities instead of the issues.

From December 2002 to January 2003, media shifted focus away from her and onto Kirchner. Kirchner received the second most favorable mentions throughout the entire period with 32 mentions. He was often described as "the most historic of the antimenemistas", suggesting that those who were strongly discontented with Menem would prefer Kirchner (*Clarín* 10/29/02). Interestingly, in the final month of the election, he borrowed Carrió's campaign theme by proposing "a new moral contract" and suggesting that incumbent politicians have breached the "moral limit" (*Clarín* 4/3/03). Thus, Kirchner's strategy, as captured by media framing, involved appealing to anti-Menem voters and voters who gave priority to clean government.

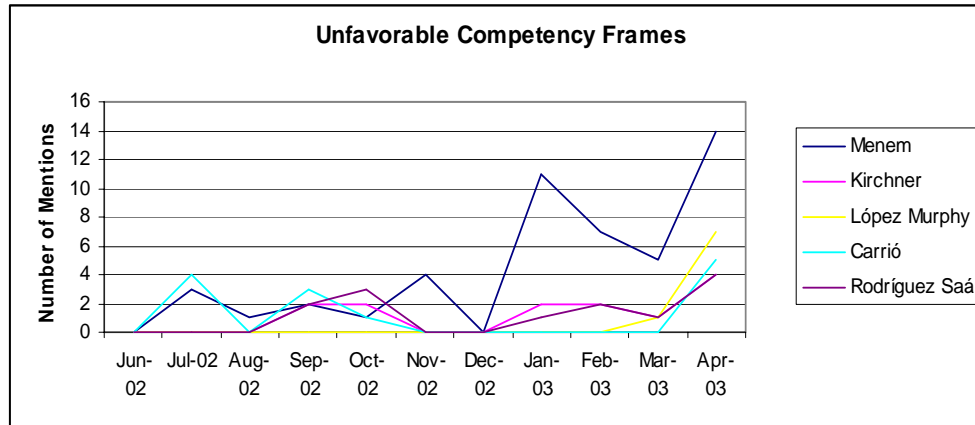
An interesting aspect of Menem's integrity framing is that media captured him making a tacit admission of guilt by reporting his promise to correct mistakes from the

past (*La Nación* 4/25/03). Menem is described as willing to submit himself to an external audit conducted by Transparency International (*La Nación* 4/19/03 and *Clarín* 4/13/03) and willing to bring in new people into his cabinet instead of his old cronies (*Clarín* 4/13/03). In many ways, such favorable framing gave the impression that Menem was acknowledging his critics and that he was willing to make amends.

While media framed Rodríguez Saá's integrity in a favorable light, his mentions were relatively modest for integrity compared to the other two peronist candidates. *La Nación* captured Rodríguez framing his opponents Menem and Kirchner as "the corrupt establishment of peronism" (*La Nación* 3/17/03), stating that he would not form a pact with either of them (*La Nación* 4/13/03). One speculation is that this frame probably was not effective since Rodríguez Saá belonged to the same establishment party as his two opponents.

The discussion so far suggests that media coverage framed candidate strengths in different ways, rendering a tilted or distorted impression of their character, specifically their competency and integrity, and their chances of winning the election. Establishment candidates generally were portrayed as having more or equivalent competency but with greater electability, while non-establishment candidates generally were portrayed as having more integrity. The fact that candidate electability was the primary focus of the campaign instead of competency and integrity suggests that centrist print media covered the election campaign in a less than substantive light. I turn now to examine how centrist print media framed their weaknesses on these three types of frames.

I begin the discussion of unfavorable mentions of candidate competency, electability, and integrity. As stated previously, there was very little emphasis placed on unfavorable framing of candidate competency. The only exception was Menem. Graph 4.6 illustrates an over-time breakdown of the data. Here, we see Menem's mentions exceed those of his rivals from December 2002 to April 2003.



Graph 4.6 Unfavorable Framing of Candidate Competency

From the outset, Carrió led in unfavorable mentions about her competency, which is, perhaps, not surprising, given her lack of executive experience. This coincided with media emphasis on her favorable integrity. In the aftermath of the December 2001 financial crisis, public concern was focused on the menacing problem of corrupt government. Interestingly, it is during this early period of the campaign in which Carrió had the highest level of popular support, suggesting that her lack of extensive experience and knowledge of government was of lesser importance than her perceived strength as a leader with integrity. However, as the campaign got underway, media attention focused on economic issues such as international loan aid, job growth, and privatization reform. Capturing her opponents and competitors’ point of view, she is described as having the “karma” that she can’t govern, having “communist ideas”, an authoritarian personality such that she considers herself as “the owner of Argentina” by Menem, and that she is not interested in power (*Clarín* 7/9/02, 7/12/02, 4/11/03, and 4/23/03). This last characterizes her as lacking ambition to take on great challenges. Similarly, *La Nación* describes her as rejecting the idea of negotiating with the IMF and

having a “confrontational discourse” toward the U.S. (*La Nación* 9/15/02, 4/12/03, and 4/14/03). All of these insinuated that she was less than qualified to become president.

Centrist print media framed Kirchner’s competency in an unfavorable light by stressing the fact that he was not a national public figure. Sizing up his opponent, Menem pointed out that, “He is not ready to govern” and described Kirchner as lacking “competency and charisma” (*La Nación* 1/19/03). Similarly, he is attacked as having an “authoritarian style” (*La Nación* 4/13/03) and engaging in “feudal practices” according to Carrió (*La Nación* 2/27/03). In terms of how Kirchner had governed Santa Cruz, Menem suggested that Kirchner operated beyond the rule of law, pointing out that Kirchner had removed 700 million U.S. dollars from his province, having sent it abroad prior to the freeze on bank accounts (*La Nación* 1/19/03).

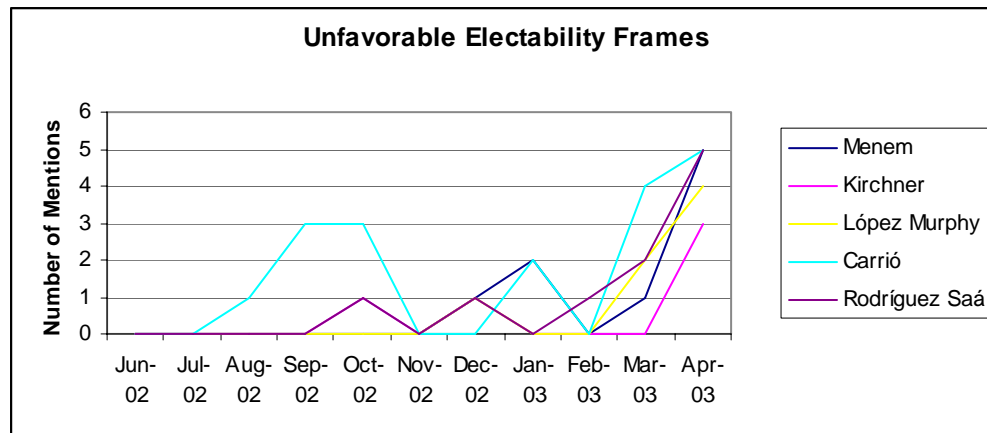
By the second half of the campaign period, Menem emerged as the leader in unfavorable competency mentions, undergoing a surge in both December 2002 and March 2003. In the final month to the election, all of the candidates except for Kirchner experienced a surge in unfavorable mentions, though their increases paled in comparison to that of Menem. An interesting attack on Menem’s competency occurs when Kirchner repeats the words “one by one”, perhaps intending to remind voters that Menem’s peso-dollar parity is what caused the country’s massive unemployment: ““One by one our children left the country, one by one we were left without jobs”” (*La Nación* 3/27/03). Also, describing the former president as ““the old phantom of the past who promised a productive revolution””, Kirchner draws attention to Menem’s failed campaign promises. He paints him as representing “economic concentration, hunger, and unemployment” (*Clarín* 4/25/03). Further, he frames Menem as “the past of frustration” in contrast to his own “future of hope” (*Clarín* 4/3/03). Kirchner also attributes crisis blame to Menem’s lack of competence in public administration that eventually led to “the implosion of the state”. Further, he draws a link between the implementation of neoliberal policies and the last dictatorship: “under the guise of modernization was the process initiated in 1976” (*Clarín* 1/7/03). The underlying message suggests that Menem’s economic policies were those that came from military leaders during the last dictatorship.

López Murphy received eight unfavorable competency mentions that appeared in the final two months prior to the election. Due to this small number, the expectation is that there would be no correlation relationship with his level of popular support, given that a minimum number of mentions are necessary for an effect to take place. López Murphy is portrayed as being known for “adjustment and social exclusion” in reference to his pro-market stance (*Clarín* 4/23/03). Labeled as “the number one defender of structural adjustment” (*La Nación* 4/21/03), this idea of a staunch supporter of neoliberalism is seen in a front-page article that appears two days before the election in which he is described as having an economic team member who was an (economic) minister in the last dictatorship, namely José Alfredo Martínez de Hoz” (*Clarín* 4/25/03). His lack of competency is further pointed out by his association as a former minister for the failed De la Rúa administration (*La Nación* 4/21/03).

Rodríguez Saá’s unfavorable competency mentions are modest with 13. His one week as president in late December 2001 is described as “el brevísimo”, bringing to mind doubts about his endurance for a tough job (*Clarín* 3/9/03). Similarly, his form of populism was portrayed “lacking ideology” and that is perceived as causing “much damage throughout Latin America according to U.S. analysts” (*Clarín* 4/20/03).

Taking stock of the discussion so far, it seems that candidates framed their opponents with help from the media. Many of these portrayals misrepresented or exaggerated candidate qualities with half-truths, distortions, or lies, though media failed to vet them out. For instance, the conclusion about Carrió not having the ability to govern was not substantiated with evidence. Similarly, Menem’s promise to conduct an external audit was not weighed by the media in terms of his credibility to follow through on his promise. Moreover, López Murphy’s association with a former economist from the dictatorship was construed as something undesirable as opposed to supported with evidence that would suggest what impact it would have for the country. Further, Rodríguez Saá’s populist movement was described as lacking the “right” kind of ideology—one that the U.S. would approve. Again, there was no discussion as to why it would be better to have a U.S. approved ideology, though it was framed as problematic.

There is some evidence that non-establishment candidates were portrayed more unfavorably than establishment candidates in their chances of winning. As graph 4.7 illustrates, non-establishment candidate Carrió received more unfavorable mentions about her chances of winning the election than any other candidate, though all candidates underwent a surge in unfavorable mentions in the final month to the election. This was less the case for the other non-establishment candidate López Murphy. Concentrating more heavily on the horse race theme, *La Nación* typically described Carrió as “descending”, “falling”, or “declining” in the polls such that by March 2003 it points out that “nobody considers it even possible that Elisa Carrió . . . will enter the ballotage” (*La Nación* 3/17/03).



Graph 4.7 Unfavorable Framing of Candidate Electability

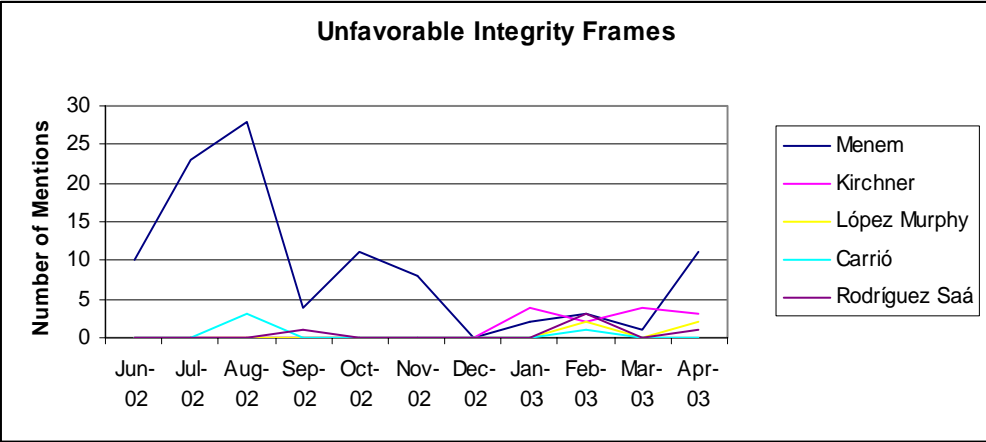
Throughout the entire period, establishment candidate Kirchner received the least number of unfavorable mentions, possibly due to his connection to the incumbent president Duhalde who had campaigned on his behalf. Media typically reported on his campaign activities, which took place where large crowds gathered. While he was

labeled as the “man that nobody knows”, this, perhaps, was diminished by his endorsement from Duhalde.

For candidates without an endorsement from the sitting president, media coverage of their lack of name recognition and popularity may have disadvantaged them. Most troubling for López Murphy during the month of the election is that *La Nación* stated: “50% of the electorate does not know him” as a candidate running for president (*La Nación* 4/14/03). Similarly, *La Nación*’s report three days before the election revealed that 54% of those polled stated that they would never vote for Rodríguez Saá (*La Nación* 4/24/03).

We might expect a substantial focus on the negative side of candidate integrity in view of public disenchantment with politicians; however, with the exception of Menem, this generally was not the case. Looking at graph 4.8, the data show that there was not much focus on the unfavorable side of candidate integrity. The only exception was Menem who had 101 unfavorable mentions. Menem received disproportionately more mentions in the first half of the campaign period and again in the final month heading in to the election. In an *escrache*⁴³ in New York, the reader learns that Menem had received verbal insults from protesters who had called him a “thief”, having “sold the country” in reference to his many privatization plans during the nineties (*Clarín* 6/18/02). Reporters described his tenure as one of “extensive corruption” (*Clarín* 4/13/03). According to Kirchner, Menem’s tenure during the nineties was “hegemony” (*Clarín* 4/20/03). This particular description is interesting, given that “hegemony” is typically used in the context of U.S. hegemony in the Western region. The effect intended by his rival may have been to evoke a negative visceral reaction against Menem by linking him to the unpopular United States.

⁴³ A form of street justice, an *escrache*, is when a person faces public accusations and insults by those who perceive that person as having committed a wrongdoing. The purpose is to bring about social humiliation, shunning, and harassment.



Graph 4.8 Unfavorable Framing of Candidate Integrity

Three major scandals involving Menem were covered in the news from June to November 2002. The first focused on his controversial signing of two of four decrees with the provocatively entitled article “Menem finds himself close to prison” (*La Nación* 6/22/02). Interestingly, centrist print media failed to raise the issue about whether a candidate who had broken the law, having served five months in house arrest for illegal arms trafficking, should not be in the position to enforce the law by becoming the next president. Thus, it seems that media missed an opportunity to raise public debate over what voters should consider in terms of candidate qualifications.

A second major scandal focused on the investigation of his having made a false declaration of his wealth, “illicit enrichment”, by accepting a \$10 million dollar bribe to keep quiet about two Jewish center attacks in the federal capital (*La Nación* 7/24/02). Centrist print media focused on the fact that he had lied about having any funds abroad, having declared none on his 1999 tax statement. Later, it was revealed that he had a Swiss bank account of \$200,000 that grew to \$600,000 with interest (*Clarín* 7/23/02; *La Nación* 8/23/02). According to Menem, the \$200,000 was an indemnity he received from the state for having been a political prisoner during the last dictatorship.

A third scandal focused on his secretary, Ramón Hernández, who was found to have \$6 million dollars in a Swiss bank account (*Clarín* 8/16/02) and a diplomatic passport, though he was no longer in public service. Such scandals were the topic of news with one of the last news flash focusing on an investigation by Swiss officials of Menem's accounts (*La Nación* 11/7/02). By late November 2002, media focus on Menem's scandals subsided, giving way to other topics.

Unfavorable framing mentions that were non-scandal related focused on the following: the increase in the size of the external debt during his tenure (*Clarín* 1/17/03), promoting the use of military forces to combat delinquents, though Argentine law prohibits military use for domestic purposes (*Clarín* 11/20/02), and supporting the U.S. war in Iraq, though over 90% of Argentines were against it (*La Nación* 4/25/03). With respect to this last, Menem's initial support of the war may have been perceived as insensitive to the many Argentines who endured the dictatorship period. In light of public opinion, Menem switched his war stance, stating that Argentina would not fight in the war.

By comparison, the other candidates had relatively few negative mentions about their integrity. As we might expect, non-establishment candidate Carrió had only a handful. All of her mentions came from *La Nación* and focused mostly on her accusations against ex Economy Minister Domingo Cavallo (*La Nación* 8/17/02 and 2/13/03). Similarly, non-establishment candidate López Murphy received only 4 unfavorable mentions about his integrity. A couple of mentions focused on criticizing López Murphy for associating himself with questionable people from his campaign team and from when he served as a minister for ex President De la Rúa (*La Nación* 2/13/03 and 4/21/03).

For the two remaining establishment candidates, Kirchner received a modest 13 mentions while Rodríguez Saá had only five. The most notable mentions for Kirchner were those that emphasized his sending abroad provincial money, his access to government information that none of his rivals had, and his failure to reveal the identity of individuals and businesses that contributed to his campaign (*La Nación* 4/22/03, 3/10/03, and 1/19/03). Rodríguez Saá was portrayed as hypocritical and superficial, as

complaining about wearing the required adornments as president (*La Nación* 4/13/03). More serious than this superficial concern is having, according to Carrió, “‘copied paragraphs from her proposal’” (*La Nación* 2/7/03).

Looking at the measure of association between favorable framing mentions and a candidate’s level of popular support, the correlations in table 4.5 indicate the presence of some media effects that are consistent with this study’s expectations. For the top three finishers, the correlations between favorable competency mentions and their level of popular support are moderate to high. This is also the case for the correlations between favorable electability mentions and their level of popular support. For favorable integrity mentions, this holds for Kirchner and López Murphy, but not for Menem. Integrity was not a strong suit for Menem. As noted by Jubany, many Argentines perceived him as the most corrupt politician in Argentine history (Jubany 2003, p.1). In view of this, the weak relationship is consistent with the study’s expectations.

For Carrió’s favorable integrity mentions, while she did garner the most mentions, the correlation shows a surprisingly small and negative relationship. It could be the case that the focus on integrity was made salient in the early months of the campaign period, which benefited Carrió in terms of her standing in the polls. She may have lost support as more contenders entered the competition and voters reconsidered her chances of being a viable candidate, thereby accounting for her correlation of -0.11, which runs counter to the study’s expectation. Given her relatively small number of competency mentions, her correlation between these mentions and popular support is not surprising, suggesting no relationship. This is similarly true for Rodríguez Saá who obtained relatively small numbers of mentions for each of these three types of frames.

Candidates	Correlation between Favorable Competency Mentions and Popular Support	Correlation between Favorable Electability Mentions and Popular Support	Correlation between Favorable Integrity Mentions and Popular Support
An asterisk denotes statistical significance at the 95% confidence level.			
Establishment candidates			
Carlos Menem	0.49* (n=44)	0.63* (n=52)	0.09* (n=12)
Néstor Kirchner	0.50* (n=32)	0.50* (n=27)	0.45* (n=32)
Rodríguez Saá	0.08* (n=13)	0.10* (n=24)	-0.00* (n=9)
Non-establishment candidates			
Ricardo López Murphy	0.81* (n=13)	0.78* (n=39)	0.86* (n=15)
Elisa Carrió	-0.05* (n=4)	0.38* (n=21)	-0.11* (n=46)

Table 4.5 Correlations between Favorable Framing Mentions and Popular Support

I now look at the correlations between unfavorable framing mentions and candidate standing in the polls. Here, the results are mixed. López Murphy and to a lesser extent Kirchner show strong and positive correlations across the three framing types, which runs counter to the study's expectations. It could be that these correlations are spurious, given the small number of unfavorable mentions. For Menem, his correlations for unfavorable competency and electability are positive, contrary to the study's expectation. His unfavorable integrity mentions, in contrast, did concur with expectations such that the relationship is moderate and negative with a correlation of -0.45. It is important to point out that his number of unfavorable integrity mentions is 101. Carrió's unfavorable competency mentions turns up a negative correlation, -0.16, which is contrary to expectation. In contrast, her correlation between unfavorable electability mentions and level of popular support turn up strong and negative as well as statistically significant.

Candidates	Correlation between Unfavorable Competency Mentions and Popular Support	Correlation between Unfavorable Electability Mentions and Popular Support	Correlation between Unfavorable Integrity Mentions and Popular Support
An asterisk denotes statistical significance at the 95% confidence level.			
Establishment candidates			
Carlos Menem	0.54* (n=48)	0.54* (n=9)	-0.45 (n=101)
Néstor Kirchner	0.54* (n=13)	0.14* (n=5)	0.89* (n=13)
Rodríguez Saá	0.37* (n=13)	-0.08* (n=10)	0.24* (n=5)
Non-establishment candidates			
Ricardo López Murphy	0.80* (n=8)	0.87* (n=7)	0.74* (n=4)
Elisa Carrió	-0.16* (n=13)	-0.82* (n=18)	0.12* (n=4)

Table 4.6 Correlations between Unfavorable Framing Mentions and Popular Support

Looking at the measure of association between framing mentions, both favorable and unfavorable, and a candidate's level of popular support, the correlations in table 4.7 indicate the presence of media effects. Centrist print media's focus on the favorable aspects of candidate competency, electability, and integrity seems to correspond to an increase in their level of popular support. The only exception to this general observation is López Murphy. The relationship between his favorable mentions and level of support appears very weak with a correlation of 0.06, suggesting no relationship between the two.

Candidates	Correlation between Total Favorable Mentions and Popular Support	Correlation between Total Unfavorable Mentions and Popular Support
An asterisk denotes statistical significance at the 95% confidence level.		
Establishment candidates		
Carlos Menem	0.55*	-0.55*
Néstor Kirchner	0.39*	-0.04*
Rodríguez Saá	0.04*	0.29*
Non-establishment candidates		
Ricardo López Murphy	-0.06*	0.78*
Elisa Carrió	0.64*	-0.64*

Table 4.7 Correlations between Total Framing Mentions and Popular Support

The results for the concomitant variation generally hold and are statistically significant. Consistent with one's expectation, as centrist print media emphasized the unfavorable aspects of candidate competency, electability, and integrity, this seems to correspond to a decrease in popular support. Menem's measure of association between favorable mentions and popular support is 0.55 while the measure between his unfavorable mentions and popular support is -0.55. Similarly, Carrió's correlations are 0.64 and -0.64, each respectively. The correlations for López Murphy and Rodríguez Saá are the two exceptions. Overall, the statistically significant coefficients suggest that, in general, a candidate's popularity was enhanced with favorable framing and diminished with unfavorable framing of their competency, electability, and integrity. For both favorable and unfavorable framing, the only exception is López Murphy.

The framing discussion so far suggests that media presented establishment and non-establishment candidates in different ways in terms of their strengths and weaknesses. Establishment candidates were generally depicted as having competency

and electability as their strengths and integrity as a weakness. In contrast, non-establishment candidates generally were depicted as having integrity as more of their strength and competency and electability as their weaknesses. In the next section, I discuss external studies that further validate these depiction findings.

SECTION 4.4 EXTERNAL STUDIES

In this section, I discuss two survey studies that suggest that voters were responsive to the media depictions of their competency and integrity discussed in the previous section. Specifically, I use summary data from Graciela Römer y Asociados' March 2003 national pre-election survey with 1800 respondents and CEOP's April 2003 exit poll survey with 1,242 respondents. In general, the findings of these two studies are consistent with the framing findings in my study, thereby adding external validity.

I begin with summary data based on Graciela Römer y Asociados' March 2003 national pre-election survey with 1800 respondents⁴⁴. Looking at the initial responses of those polled (n=1759), we find that unemployment was the most serious problem identified with 44.1% (n=776) of respondents who mentioned it as a "top of mind" response. The second most serious problem was corruption with 12.8% (n=226) identifying it as the most serious problem. Following unemployment and corruption, economic stagnation (recession) was perceived as a serious problem for 7.8% (n=138). The fourth major problem was the social situation (poverty) with 6.6% (n=116) giving it as an answer. Further down in importance are political concerns such as a lack of leadership representation (political crisis) and the functioning of justice, which 5.3% (n=93) and 1.6% (n=28) mentioned, each respectively. The data clearly show that increasing employment was of greater priority than getting rid of corruption.

Next, I examine how these concerns correspond to vote intentions. A pattern emerges that shows a greater percentage of those concerned about unemployment were more in favor of candidates linked to the establishment Peronist party. 46.8% of those

⁴⁴ They report a confidence level of 95.5% \pm 2.3%.

polled who stated their vote intention for the plurality winner Menem named unemployment as the most serious problem. Similarly, 50% of those supporting Rodríguez Saá mentioned unemployment as a “top of mind” concern. This was also true for 47.3% of Kirchner’s supporters. To a lesser extent, only 40.8% of López Murphy’s supporters and 37.3% of Carrió’s gave the response of unemployment as their initial answer. Among those polled who expressed their vote intention in favor of Carrió, no one gave a “top of mind” response that identified inflation (cost of living), one’s retirement situation, or lowered salaries (insufficient income) as the most serious problem that the country currently faces.

Analysis of cross-tabulations between vote intention and the major problems mentioned show another general pattern. We find that 77.7% (n=220) of those polled who indicated their vote choice for Menem stated unemployment as one of the top three problems whereas 28.3% (n=80) of his supporters mentioned corruption. A similar relationship in the data emerges when analyzing cross-tabulations for the other candidates. 77.7% (n=181) of those intending to vote for Rodríguez Saá identified unemployment as one of the three major problems that the country faces. To a lesser extent, 28.3% (n=66) of Rodríguez Saá’s supporters mentioned corruption as one of the three major problems. Similarly, 75.9% (n=198) of Kirchner’s supporters pointed to the unemployment problem while another 27.6% (n=72) of his supporters mentioned corruption. For those expressing a vote intention for López Murphy, 71.8% (n=102) cited unemployment while another 32.4% (n=46) identified corruption. To a lesser extent, this relationship is less pronounced among those polled who expressed their vote intention in favor of Carrió. Here, we find that 65.5% (n=144) gave the answer of unemployment as one of the three major problems that the country currently faces while another 31.8% (n=70) gave the answer of corruption.

Further support is found in CEOP’s exit poll survey. In a post-election poll with 1,242 respondents conducted by CEOP (CEOP, *Clarín* 4/28/03), 39% of those polled who voted for Menem did so because of retrospective economic voting—they wanted to return to the nineties when the national economy was better. An additional 21.9% supported Menem because of his actions as a political leader. Also, 15.2% gave the

reason that they voted for him because Menem was perceived to guarantee strong job growth. The most popular reason for voting for Kirchner was prospective economic voting—31% of those polled for Kirchner cited his provincial record as governor of Santa Cruz and 23.2% mentioned his proposals to guarantee a national project. Similarly, 46.5% of Rodríguez Saá’s supporters polled voted for him primarily because of his actions as governor of San Luis and 38.6% did so because they were attracted to his ideas and proposals (38.6%). Still another 18.9% voted for Rodríguez Saá did so because they perceived him to guarantee strong job growth. Taken together, the general pattern in these responses suggests that most voters voted for establishment candidates for their competency in handling the economy.

This was less so for the non-establishment candidates with the exception of López Murphy whose supporters were attracted to his perceived economic competence: 32.5% of those polled who voted for him did so because they viewed him as the best candidate to lead the country out of the crisis. Another 11.8% of those polled who voted for him did so because they believed that he was the most capable to resolve the economic crisis. Still another 33.1% of those polled who stated their support for López Murphy perceived him as the most honest and transparent.

In stark contrast, voters who voted for the non-establishment candidate Carrió did so for mostly integrity reasons. Specifically, the most common reason for supporting Carrió was the perception that she was the most honest and transparent candidate, which 63.7% of her voters made this point in CEOP’s poll. The second most common reason was that the perception that she represented the renewal of the political class, which another 50% of her supporters stated. These responses were followed by three additional reasons: 1) 16.3% held the perception that she represented the utopia of change; 2) 14.3% pointed to her ideas and proposal; and 3) 13.2% stated that they voted for her because she was perceived as the default choice, namely the lesser evil of all the candidates. Taken together, Carrió’s supporters were mostly attracted to her “clean politics” quality.

Voters in favor of the establishment candidates generally did not base their voting decision primarily on candidate integrity. 22.5% of those who supported

Kirchner stated that they did so because he was perceived “the most honest and transparent”. Only 11.8% did so for Rodríguez Saá. Finally, no one in the poll who voted for the plurality winner Menem gave the “clean candidate” reason. Instead, a lesser common reason for why voters supported him suggests confirmation of the exact opposite. Specifically, 19% of Menem’s voters polled stated that they did so because they perceived him as the most *vivo* and intelligent, implying that they were attracted to his political cunningness or savvy⁴⁵. Thus, the evidence suggests that supporters of establishment candidates perceived them as more competent in handling the economy while supporters of non-establishment candidates perceived them as having greater integrity.

SECTION 4.5 CONCLUSION

The results and discussion of this chapter suggest that the outcome of the 2003 presidential election in Argentina may have been influenced by the role of centrist print media. In short, establishment candidates generally placed higher relative to non-establishment candidates, despite a devastating economic crisis, because they received more extensive coverage and because their strengths and weaknesses were framed in particular ways that seemed to advantage them over their rivals in the sense of emphasizing characteristics valued by voters.

In terms of the volume of coverage that candidates received, the data show that the top two establishment candidates, Menem and Kirchner, received the most media attention. Likewise, the two non-establishment candidates, López Murphy and Carrió, received less media attention and came in third and fourth place. The only exception is Rodríguez Saá who placed fifth, despite having more media attention than did the two non-establishment candidates.

As for media framing, the horse race theme captured in the electability framing mentions had more extensive coverage than did coverage about a candidate’s competency or integrity, indicating that candidate coverage was less than substantive.

⁴⁵ A *vivo* is a “lively” or clever person who can outsmart a situation or another person through trickery, deception, or quick action.

Also, centrist print media framed candidate strengths and weaknesses in different ways. There were more or equivalent mentions of candidate competency and electability than integrity for all of the candidates except for Carrió. In other words, competency and electability were emphasized more than integrity for establishment candidates Menem and Kirchner and to a much lesser degree for non-establishment candidates López Murphy and Carrió.

Further, centrist print media generally placed a favorable take on candidate information. With the exception of Menem, major candidates had more favorable than unfavorable mentions about their competency, electability, and integrity. To account for why Menem was not hurt by his large number of negative coverage, it could be the case that integrity generally was not perceived as his strong suit and, consequently, voters may not have held him to the expectation of being a “clean candidate”. Instead, their attention may have been directed toward his strength in handling the economy, which was heavily covered by the media.

Discussion of external studies adds additional support to the validity of the framing effects findings. These studies suggest that voters were responsive to media depictions such that establishment candidates were generally perceived as more competent in handling the economy while non-establishment candidates were characterized as having greater integrity. Interestingly, the data show that some of these media depictions came from their competitors who were captured by the media assessing their rival’s weaknesses.

In the next chapter, I discuss more fully the ramifications of these findings.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

SECTION 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter, I summarize and integrate the research findings and their implications, making the case that centrist print media may have played a role in affecting the election outcome by, advertently or inadvertently, devoting more media attention to establishment than non-establishment candidates and drawing attention to their strengths and weaknesses in particular ways. The findings show that establishment candidates received disproportionately more media attention than non-establishment candidates. In short, centrist print media deemed them as more newsworthy. Moreover, media framed establishment candidate strengths as competent and electable, though with questionable integrity. The reverse held true for non-establishment candidates who were generally framed as having more integrity.

Following this introductory section, I present an overview of the dissertation with an emphasis on the aim of the study. I also review the principal findings as well as discuss the significance of the research study in terms of its ramifications. Further, I present extensions for future research that, at the same time, take into account the limitations and weaknesses of this study. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a discussion of how this research contributes to the field of political science.

SECTION 5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

The plan of this dissertation was to improve on existing studies' account for Argentina's puzzling election outcome in which a failure of electoral accountability took place following the December 2001 financial crisis. The initial expectation was that public outcry against the political class would lead to electoral punishment of establishment candidates from both major political parties, namely the peronist and radical parties. Contrary to this expectation, establishment candidates generally placed higher relative to non-establishment candidates.

As pointed out earlier, this particular scenario of a crisis-driven election offers an interesting opportunity to examine what role centrist print media may have played in the 2003 presidential election outcome. Argentina is an interesting country to study, given its highly literate population with a strong middle class identity. Also, it is a country that has experienced media propaganda in past elections. Further, the many pot-banging protests along with the call for the removal of the political class would suggest that candidates representing traditional parties would suffer electoral defeat.

In chapter two, I showed that the current literature on economic voting and party politics does not offer an altogether satisfying answer for the election outcome. For instance, Gervasoni's study showed that an economic downturn does not necessarily lead to the electoral punishment of neoliberal candidates. Instead, he identified hyperinflation as a key factor for electoral punishment. However, it was pointed out that hyperinflation was not a factor that candidates had to contend with in the 2003 election.

I also argued that the prospective economic voting argument did not seem intuitively plausible. Taking into account the effects of the crisis as well as public opinion data about personal and national economic conditions, the evidence suggests otherwise. Instead, it seems that Argentines may have been more optimistic about their future over time yet this is a far cry from saying that they continued to believe in the neoliberal promise, which is doubtful.

Further, I critically appraised clientelism and party identification arguments. While these two seem more plausible, accounting for those voters who supported peronist candidates, they fail to fully account for all the major candidates, particularly

non-establishment candidates who ran as leaders of their own party and did not engage in machine politics. For Carrió, in particular, it would be difficult to sustain an argument that voters had a strong attachment to her party since it was new.

A discussion of the media and politics literature along with initial evidence indicated that media attention and framing would be a fruitful area of research, particularly in light of initial evidence. Further, I argued that content analysis would be a suitable methodological approach to use, given prior research along this line. Because the election outcome is, essentially, a macro level phenomenon, I chose to focus on media message emission as opposed to reception, thereby making the unit of analysis a macro level analysis.

Chapter three presented the research design, which proposed a content analysis of two centrist print media over an eleven-month period from June 2002 to April 2003. To measure media attention, I counted the number of stories devoted to a candidate. To measure media framing, I recorded and coded keywords and phrases that reference a candidate's competency, electability, and integrity in either a favorable or unfavorable tone. To analyze the data, I used count data, multi-linear graphs, as well as correlation coefficients and tests of significance. This research design goes beyond other studies by offering a more extensive analysis, given that the 2003 presidential campaign in Argentina was unusually long. Also, it departs from prior research in that it adds a framing analysis, focusing on candidate competency, electability, and integrity, which have been less studied in Argentine politics.

In the results and discussion chapter, I presented and interpreted the findings, showing that media effects were present in the 2003 presidential election. Specifically, centrist print media generally tilted in favor of establishment candidates over non-establishment candidates by offering more extensive and favorable coverage of their competency and electability. In contrast, the volume of coverage was considerably less for non-establishment candidates. Moreover, they were framed more favorably in terms of their integrity as opposed to their competency and electability. This lopsided treatment across the two groups seems to have advantaged establishment candidates over their rivals.

In the next section, I review these findings more in depth. It is important to note that the findings are based on only a slice of media coverage of candidates for a limited time frame during the campaign period.

SECTION 5.3 PRINCIPAL FINDINGS REVISITED

The findings generally support established theories about media effects. Testing the media attention hypothesis, I found that establishment candidates were deemed more newsworthy than non-establishment candidates insofar as centrist print media gave more front-page coverage to establishment than non-establishment candidates. This particular finding suggests that how well candidates placed in the election may have been related to how extensively they appeared on the front pages of *Clarín* and *La Nación*. Interestingly, the plurality winner Menem, who had the highest volume of coverage, experienced a small effect on his level of popular support and the measure of association was not statistically significant. Given that Menem was a well-known and controversial public figure, we would not expect much of a media effect on his level of popular support, particularly for those Argentines who either loved or hated him. Overall, though, the data generally supports the media attention hypothesis.

A second finding is that centrist print media framed candidate strengths and weaknesses in different ways. Media stressed more in a favorable light establishment competency and electability over their integrity. The opposite held true for non-establishment candidates in that their integrity was emphasized more in a favorable light than their competency and electability. This was the case more for Carrió than López Murphy. In particular, centrist print media emphasized the “competency question” for Carrió, rendering the impression that she was not qualified to be president, despite the fact that she was framed as a candidate with high integrity.

External studies by Fraga, Burdman, and Ovalles (2003) as well as Graciela Römer’s pre-election survey (2003) and CEOP’s post-election poll (2003) confirm the media depictions found in the framing analysis. Specifically, establishment candidates were generally perceived as highly competent but with less integrity and non-establishment were perceived as less competent though with substantial integrity.

These findings from external studies add further support to the media effects hypotheses.

Interestingly, of the three frames, the electability frame was the dominant frame for media coverage, suggesting that media paid more attention to the horse race aspect of the presidential contest, informing voters which candidate was ahead or behind yet paying less attention to candidate competency and integrity. This is somewhat surprising, given the severity of the economic crisis, which would seem to call for more serious scrutiny of candidates. The fact that coverage was less than substantive suggests that centrist print media may have sought to incorporate sizzle to their coverage, perhaps to boost sales.

For the most part, centrist print media paid very little attention to candidate weaknesses since candidates generally received more favorable than negative coverage. The only exception was Menem whose unfavorable framing of integrity and competency was substantially more than the other candidates. Interestingly, Menem's unfavorable to favorable mentions ratio was 3 to 2. Given that integrity was not Menem's strong suit, coverage of his scandals probably did not hurt his level of popular support. Overall, though, the fact that centrist print media did not go negative in their coverage may have further benefited establishment candidates such as Kirchner and Rodríguez Saá over their non-establishment rivals.

Looking at the correlations between media framing and level of popular support, there is evidence of a framing effect for nearly all of the candidates. The only exceptions are López Murphy and, to a lesser extent, Rodríguez Saá. Not surprisingly, many of the candidates were unfavorably framed by their opponents who typically characterized them as less than competent, unlikely to win, and with questionable integrity. Coverage of candidate rivals framing their opponents would undoubtedly render a distorted or tilted impression due to this strategic element of candidate attacks via the media.

SECTION 5.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The significance of this study is that it conceptualizes democracy in a richer way by focusing on democratic quality in terms of the information voters may have used to make their voting decision. While much discussion in the democratic literature focuses on the need for voters in a growing democracy to make informed decisions, very little attention is placed on the quality of information that they rely on to arrive at those decisions. This study highlights the importance of media-supplied information to influence a macro level outcome.

By professional journalistic standards, news information should contain relevant and truthful information that is presented in a fair and balanced fashion. Both the facts and their contexts should allow one to draw one's own conclusions. The findings of the study suggest that centrist print media offered differential treatment across major candidates, lavishing more attention on establishment than non-establishment candidates and accentuating their strengths and weaknesses in different ways. This, in turn, may have influenced how voters perceived them, thereby affecting the election outcome that we observe. Further, it should be pointed out that while there was talk about holding a public debate among major candidates, this never took place. Candidates, particularly non-establishment candidates, did not have the opportunity to express their unmediated, hence candid, views in a public fashion.

In terms of the media's role in enhancing democratic accountability, it seems that many Argentines were taken by surprise at their country's debt situation prior to the December 2001 meltdown. The question that arises is why news media did not forewarn the public about the severity of the country's debt situation and the impending consequences that it could bring. It seems that media had failed to perform its central job, which is to inform the public about what their government is doing and to hold them accountable. Severely lacking in news coverage during the election campaign were reports that focused on candidate commitment to integrity, particularly for peronist candidates. Instead, centrist print media seemed to accentuate their strengths, painting them as more competent in handling the economy and standing a better chance to win

the election. The findings of this study are significant since it demonstrates how media attention and framing can have a subtle yet profound impact.

The evidence also suggests that candidate viability in the 2003 election was very much linked to media attention and framing. The fact that thirteen of eighteen candidates were largely ignored illustrates the power of media to direct attention away from lesser-known candidates who were potentially new entrants into Argentine politics. Non-major candidates contesting the election received very little front-page coverage. It stands to reason that voters had very little information about them and, consequently, it had a negative impact on their standing in the polls. One ramification is that media hold power to limit the public debate about the kinds of policies that could be pursued to improve the country's situation by focusing predominantly on establishment as opposed to alternative views. This is unfortunate, given that Argentina is a politically diverse society that potentially could have benefited from outsiders bringing in a fresh perspective to democratic government, perhaps introducing novel ways to solve economic problems.

The question arises as to why would centrist print media favor establishment candidates? Are they necessarily pro-establishment? To understand the kinds of news reports that are produced, we would need to understand the motives that underlie the reporting. This perceived bias may be due to a climate of a less than fully free press. Specifically, it could be the case that a power relationship exists between politicians and reporters such that reporters are dependent on politicians for information or operate within a context in which fear is still part of a reporter's job. It also could be the situation that politicians pay reporters to write stories that give them favorable coverage. Without a free press in Argentina to check those in power, the unintended consequence of media effects is the further consolidation of power. Most recently, in the post-election period, the peronist party has further consolidated its power by controlling the presidency, the Congress and the Senate, and fourteen of twenty-four governorships.

In the aftermath of the December 2001 crisis, news media institutions remained as the most credible and trustworthy institution in Argentina. A key assumption for this

study is that Argentines used media-supplied candidate information during the 2003 presidential campaign period. As noted in the literature review, the 2003 Latinobarómetro survey shows that a paltry 8% of Argentines trust newspapers for political information. Despite this figure, it seems that centrist print newspapers may have been indirectly, though still substantially, influential in affecting the presidential election outcome. This is because centrist print media, namely *Clarín* and *La Nación*, set the agenda for radio and television news and reproductions of centrist print media typically are found in provincial dailies. The ramification of this is that media attention and framing effects may have been more influential than previously thought.

Finally, the findings are significant since they reveal that media effects are present even in a context of a devastating crisis in which establishment politicians are widely blamed for the crisis. This study provides insight as to why a rapidly changing society that is considered middle class fails to bring about a political change, even when it is in a position to do so. It seems that this particular crisis in Argentina had a conservatizing effect such that voters were risk adverse to opt for change. This study further draws attention to the high barriers for non-establishment leaders to enter Argentine politics, even when devastating conditions would suggest otherwise. One speculation is that a non-crisis context is what yields the best opportunity for voters to seriously consider non-establishment candidates.

SECTION 5.5 EXTENSIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

One avenue for future research would be to test the validity of the underlying premise of this study. The conclusions drawn are based on the assumption that voters accessed information from “quality press”, namely *Clarín* and *La Nación* and that trust in these sources are critical for influence. An extension study would investigate whether voters did use centrist print media as a source to obtain information about candidates. To carry this out, this would require the use of surveys to ascertain whether voters used *Clarín* and *La Nación* as sources for candidate information. Testing this assumption would increase the internal validity of the conclusions drawn. Additionally,

it would be worth it to examine the contents of provincial dailies as well as radio and television news to examine which news content was reproduced.

In terms of the reach of media effects, it seems that in large, urban areas, voters from the middle and upper classes would be more affected than voters from the working classes. This is because peronist machine operations would likely target working class voters who were leaning toward voting for a peronist candidate but were not entirely decided. In contrast, many of the middle and upper class voters remained as political independents. Thus, it stands to reason that media effects may have influenced their voting behavior.

A second avenue for research would be to investigate whether media attention causes greater name recognition for candidates, which leads to increased support for a candidate. We would expect media attention to have a cumulative effect. Specifically, name recognition should increase over the course of a campaign. If extensive coverage, say, in January leads to increased name recognition for a candidate, then people should not “forget” the candidate’s name in February, even if media coverage declines. One way to test this would be to look at changes in the percentage of respondents who have no opinion about a candidate or who do not recognize a candidate’s name. The expectation is that the percentage would decline more steeply in months where there is heavy coverage, but would not increase substantially over the course of the campaign, even if coverage declines.

A third avenue would examine a cross-national study of Latin American voters to investigate the generalizability of the findings. A larger study would help to identify whether media attention and framing is a phenomenon that extends within the region. Such a study would increase the external validity of the findings, addressing why establishment politicians in Latin America do not get voted out of office, despite poor handling of the economy. This larger and more in-depth study of comparing different elections would help to determine whether framing mentions by candidates, candidate rivals, or reporters have more of an impact on an election outcome. It would also flesh out whether differences in crisis conditions, whether economic or political, present a conditioning effect on whether incumbents are blamed for a crisis. Alternatively, it may

be fruitful to examine variations in media systems in terms of print, radio, and television coverage of candidates.

Testing framing effects would be a fourth avenue since it is by no means clear whether framing effects exist. The post-hoc nature of this study does not allow me to test framing effects across two-groups—a treatment group that was exposed to candidate information via centrist print media and a control group that was not. Such a study in which the variation in content could be controlled via a natural experiment and a procedure for random assignment of individuals to these two groups would offer much insight about the causal mechanism between media framing and vote choice. In contrast to this macro level analysis with focus on media message emission, this future study would offer individual level analysis with focus on message reception. Of particular interest would be to compare and contrast the results found across these two levels of analyses, namely macro and micro level analyses, as well as to examine the role of emotional overtones and hot button issues.

It is possible that Argentine voters have a shorter attention span to media effects such that media effects may be a cyclical phenomenon based on the unraveling of events during the campaign. One of the problems encountered in this single country study was the small number of observations on which the conclusions were drawn, using monthly data. Unfortunately, weekly polling data typically are not available, thereby making the study of short-term media effects unfeasible.

Finally, a fifth extension for research focuses on what role, if any, centrist print media play in undermining the confidence of the Argentine public in their government. It could be the case that public perception of government performance is colored by what media pays attention to and to what degree. In addition, the tone of coverage may also affect public perception. For example, an overwhelming focus on corrupt politicians may render the impression that all politicians are corrupt, thereby inducing a less trusting attitude toward government. It may be worthwhile to investigate how different frames influence public perceptions of government at the national, provincial, and local levels.

SECTION 5.6 CONCLUSION

While democracy is more than just holding elections, its quality is highly dependent upon the information that people use to base their political decision making. In terms of this study's contribution to the field of political science, it demonstrates that media can have an important impact in terms of how voters perceive their choices. This, in turn, has ramifications for democratic accountability and, more broadly, for whether political change takes place or not. This study adds to our understanding of how media attention and framing are phenomenon that can render a distorted or tilted impression of potential leaders. Overall, it seems that both the extensiveness of coverage as well as the portrayals of candidate strengths and weaknesses influenced the 2003 presidential election outcome.

The findings of the study highlight the importance of a free and fair press to check government by holding them accountable to what they do and say. Serving in a public agency role, media hold power to improve the relationship between citizens and their government. Having news media institutions that persistently question the authority of those in power and a public that questions the news information that they receive may be critical for the quality of democracy to improve in the long run.

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