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Political and Economic News During the Argentine Crisis of 2000-2002: An Agenda-Setting Analysis of Major Newspaper Coverage

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Political and Economic News During the Argentine Crisis of 2000-2002:

An Agenda-Setting Analysis of Major Newspaper Coverage

by

Mariana Eberle-Blaylock

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my family. To my husband, to my parents and to my Mom and Dad, thank you for your encouragement, support and love. To my sister Natalia and to my friend Mariana, for their assistance from Buenos Aires. To Kate, without whose help it would have been impossible to continue with this project. To Irena, Ivona and Dawn for listening to my endless thesis stories. And last, a very special thanks to my daughter Victoria for making me realize that this work was not the most important project in my life. I am forever grateful for having each one of you in my life.

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Political and Economic News During the Argentine Crisis of 2000-2002:
An Agenda-Setting Analysis of the Major Newspapers' Coverage.

Mariana Eberle-Blaylock

ABSTRACT

During the years 2000-2002, the Republic of Argentina experienced one of the most, if not the most, devastating social/political/economic crises ever seen.

President Fernando de la Rúa, elected in 1999, was forced to resign on December 20, 2001, after several months of protests, public demonstrations, and a colossal economic recession. This unprecedented event in the history of the country created a state of chaos and confusion in a frantic population desperately searching for answers.

During the crisis, the media played a vital role in providing the public their daily updates. This study analyzed the newspapers' role during the crisis using the agenda-setting theory as the research foundation. Dearing and Rogers (1996) write "the media's agenda sets the public's agenda, the key element in the agenda setting process being the degree of issue salience." In this particular study, the Argentine crisis during 2000 to 2002 caused such disarray that there were a succession of issues that could have been the lead in the media's priorities.

This study analyzed two issues: political and economic. In addition, it analyzed the positive and negative attributes of those two issues. The researcher

measured the front-page political and economic stories of the three major newspapers from January 2000 to December 2002.

This study's main goal was to determine Argentine newspapers' position during the crisis and aimed at answering two main questions: Did or did not the newspaper support the transition from one government to the next? If they did or did not support the transition, how did they report it to the public?

The study concluded that the three newspapers supported the government changeover. During the years 2000 and 2001, the newspapers showed a steady increase in their negative economic and political coverage until President De la Rúa's resignation. Once President De la Rúa resigned in December 2001 and the opposition party took control of the government, the newspapers negative economic and political coverage rapidly decreased. Thus, this study concluded agenda-setting took place during the Argentine crisis and that the three newspapers supported the government transition.

Chapter One: Introduction

Overview of the Argentine Crisis

During the years 2000-2002, the Republic of Argentina, the third most populous nation in South America, experienced one of the most, if not the most, devastating social/political/economic crises ever seen by the world. President Fernando de la Rúa, elected in 1999 by popular vote for a four year term, was forced to resign on December 20, 2001, after several months of protests, public demonstrations, and a colossal economic calamity.

The collapse of the system as a whole occurred through a combination of trigger events. According to John B. Taylor (2002), Under Secretary for International Affairs at the United States Department of the Treasury, the economic crisis began in the late 1990s with a number of policy setbacks and external shocks. “Moving toward the end of 2001, it became clear that efforts to deal with problems such as the foreign debt numbers, and the public deficit numbers through the budget were not working. The debt began to grow more rapidly, raising concerns about sustainability,” says Taylor (2002, p.7). “People increasingly viewed the government’s debt as unsustainable, and in November of 2001 the government announced that it wanted to restructure the debt” (p. 7).

As that restructuring was underway, uncertainty about its impact on the banks holding that debt began to lead to large deposit withdrawals. To prevent those

withdrawals, the government imposed on November 30, 2001, restrictions on the ability of people to withdraw their deposits from banks. Consequently, on December 7, 2001, the Government of Argentina announced it could no longer guarantee payment on its foreign debt (\$132 billion in loans, the largest and most complicated sovereign debt default ever).

These economic events, together with new unemployment and poverty records, triggered and added to the public protest by the middle classes in a manner that has never been seen before in the country, creating in them a sense of frustration described in the phrase: “que se vayan todos!” (“we want all out!”), in reference to the politicians.

With the economy in free fall, the banking system in collapse and millions of Argentines thrown into poverty, the government pleaded with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for help. But, mindful of a trail of broken promises by recent Argentine governments, the *Fund* refused to budge until its long list of preconditions was met, which according to *The Economist* magazine, “the majority of preconditions have in fact been met” (*The Economist*, July 6, 2000).

After those money restrictions were imposed, significant social and political protests took place. They turned violent, and on the night of December 20, 2001, under tremendous social, political, and economic pressure, President De la Rúa resigned.

However, one of the most important problems, if not the most important one, that dragged Argentina to this crisis and fiscal bankruptcy was the political corruption, the lack of credibility in the government’s institutions, and the total

absence of productive political consensus at all levels (within the parties and between other parties).

“It is a political crisis most of all,” writes Jesus Rodriguez (2001). “Without a political solution that guarantees the State’s autonomy, the government function, and the legitimacy of the political directorate responsible for its conduct; makes it impossible to think of a possible viable solution, even in the short run” (p. 77).

One of the reasons President De la Rúa was forced to resign was because of his lack of leadership and an inefficient and quick response to the social/ economic/ political problems (13 million people below poverty levels, and 30 percent of the population affected by unemployment).

Immediately after his hasty resignation due to the rioting and supermarket lootings in Argentina’s major cities, five other consecutive Presidents were selected by the National Congress within a two-week period. This unprecedented event in the history of the country created a state of chaos and confusion among a frantic population that was desperately searching for answers.

This study’s main goal is to determine Argentine newspapers’ position during the crisis and to answer two broad questions: Did the newspapers support or not support the transition from one government to the next? If they did support or did not support the transition, how did they report it to the public?

The Role of the Argentine Media

For the past decade, journalists and the Argentine media in general have built an enormous trust from the public; according to Centro de Estudios Nueva Mayoría’s (2000) public opinion poll, the media were the second most credible institution of the

country with a positive image of 51 percent, second only to the Catholic Church at 56 percent (November 13, 2003, <http://www.nuevamayoria.com>).

During the crisis of 2000-2002, the media played a vital role in providing people with daily updates of the situation. On the other hand, the media in general took an additional step; they told people not only what issues to think about but also what to think about them.

Argentine author Jose Angel Di Mauro (2003) said that “due to the corrupt and inefficient justice system, people trusted the media more than their own government; however, during the time of crisis, the media have abused that power, becoming at the same time the judge and the main character of the story” (p. 427).

In addition, journalist Nestor Scibona (2003) argues that “we (Argentines) criticize politicians, but at the end we are behaving just like them. How? Describing the problems without inquiring what could be the possible solutions, writing about defects without mentioning the virtues, and always mentioning the existence of ideological extremes; forgetting that in reality, society usually is much more ideologically moderate” (p. 429).

Federico Rey Lennon (2002), Communication Professor at Austral University in the City of Buenos Aires, writes that Argentina “has been suffering two illnesses for the past three decades” (October, 16, 2003, <http://www.comunic.org>). “First, the political directorate, the unions, and an inefficient and corrupt business sector. Second, the mass media’s inability to generate a consensus among public opinion. In addition, the latter have been constantly dedicating their time and efforts to attack politicians in general, generating a sense of disbelief in the population, not only

toward the politicians but to all the governments' institutions," Rey Lennon (2002) writes.

"The Argentine media," writes Rey Lennon (2002) "seem not to be willing to assume their responsibility of transcending their limited mission of reporting the news to a broader mission of helping to defend the well being of public life. Indeed, on February 4, 2002, *La Nacion Newspaper* wrote a *mea culpa* in regards to the media's contribution to the political, economic, and social chaos" Rey Lennon (2002) continues. "The editorial writes that the media are not exempt of their 'moral obligations' to review their participation and assume 'some responsibility in helping to tumble the political, economic, and social system'" (October 16, 2003, <http://www.comunica.org>).

Issues of Concern

The struggle of thousands of people, not only from Argentina but also from around the world, in trying to understand why the crisis happened has created a great deal of academic, political, and social examination among different experts.

In this work I do not intend to discover who was wrong; what I do intend is to analyze how two issues, *political* (such as clashes among different parties and the overthrow of the government), and *economic* (such as payment of the foreign debt, unemployment rate, and social unrest), struggled with one another to be rated as the most salient by the top Argentine newspapers during the 2000-2002 period.

Since the Argentine media have a very positive image (compared to the other institutions) for a population desperately craving information, it will be useful to examine how the press selected and described those issues. These are some of the

questions this study aims to answer: Was there any specific news agenda among the newspapers? Does one issue dominate the news agenda through the three-year time frame? Was there a shift in the news agenda after De la Rúa's government was institutionally overthrown and the economic default on the debt was declared? Was the shift in the agenda more applicable to a particular newspaper?

Furthermore, to better understand the handling of the news reports, this study will also analyze the use of media's attributes. How did the media portray the issues they covered? How were these agenda issues framed from newspaper to newspaper?

In order to further understand the issue relating to the media and agenda setting in Argentina, the following research questions are posed:

R1: How does coverage of economic crises issues differ from coverage of political crises issues in each newspaper from 2000-2002.

R2: Viewing the issues of political crises versus economic crises, does one issue dominate the news agenda through the three-year time frame, or is there a shift in the agenda by the examined newspapers?

R3: Are shifts in the agenda during this time period more applicable to one newspaper than another newspaper?

R4: How will these agenda issue shifts be framed from newspaper to newspaper?

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The Need for Orientation and Media Credibility

David H. Weaver (1977) said that individuals with high uncertainty about an issue will have a need to be oriented about those issues. He argues there are three factors that could explain why voters or people in general expose themselves to media messages: “(1) interest in the message content; (2) uncertainty about the subject of the message; and (3) effort required to attend the message (including the perceived likelihood that a reliable source of information is available).”

McCombs and Weaver (1973) have incorporated the first and second of these psychological factors in their concept of need for orientation. This concept assumes that “each person feels some need to be familiar with his surroundings, both his physical and mental environment” (p.131). According to Tolman’s (1932) concept of cognitive mapping, “each individual will strive to map his world, to fill in enough detail to orient himself, to intellectually find his way around.”

McCombs and Weaver (1973) suggested that increased need for orientation leads to increased mass media use, which in turn leads to increased agenda-setting effects by media. “As an individual strives to map political (or other) issues through the use of mass media, he is more susceptible (at least in many situations) to the agenda-setting effects of the media” (p. 132).

McCombs and Weaver (1973) further explained that “low relevance results in a low need for orientation, that high relevance and low uncertainty result in a moderate need for orientation, and that high relevance and high uncertainty result in high need for orientation and therefore much more susceptible to agenda-setting influence” (p. 132). The latter would probably describe the Argentine crisis the best.

It will be interesting to find out if the crisis in Argentine stimulated a high need for orientation. I personally found myself involved in the situation not understanding exactly what to do; thus, the relevance of the information during the crisis and the uncertainty of the situation ended up giving me a high desire for media orientation. According to Ball-Rokeach (1976) people are dependent on media to satisfy information needs in numerous ways. One form of dependency is based on the need to understand one’s social world; another type of dependency arises from the need to act meaningfully and effectively in that world; still a third type of dependency is based on the need for fantasy-escape from daily problems and tensions. The greater the need and consequently the stronger the dependency in such matters, the greater the likelihood that the information supplied will alter various forms of audience cognitions, feelings, and behavior (p.6).

As I mentioned it before, the Argentine media have always been highly credible in society. According to Wanta and Hu (1994), if the media are perceived by people to be highly credible, as is the case in Argentina, “people will rely on the media for information, increasing their exposure to media messages, and in turn they will become more susceptible to agenda-setting effects” (p. 90).

Wanta and Hu (1994) examined three variables in the agenda-setting process: media credibility, media reliance, and media exposure. The model also draws upon research in uses and gratifications, which examines how people use the news media, rather than how media affect people. It assumes that individuals are active processors of media messages. In other words, “the agenda-setting effects of the mass media are interrelated with individuals’ perceptions and usage patterns of the media” (p.91). McCombs and Weaver (1986) suggested that examination of variables such as media credibility, media reliance, and media exposure, could link the uses and gratifications approach with agenda-setting.

Wanta and Hu (1994) proposed and tested a path analysis model which suggested that “credibility will lead to reliance, which in turn will lead to exposure, which will lead to agenda-setting influence. If credibility leads to reliance, exposure to the media should follow,” Wanta and Hu write (p. 96). They further explain that individuals may actively seek out information from the media if they believe the media are highly credible and if they have developed strong dependency on the media for information, “if exposure to the media increases, media influence should follow” (p. 96).

In order to measure the credibility’s variable, Wanta and Hu (1994) employed a credibility index consisting of two factors: one dealing with believability, the other with community affiliation. “Believability is based on the assumption that news media need to offer accurate and unbiased information. The affiliation index was based on newspaper editor’s concern that media need to maintain harmony and leadership status in a community” (p. 91).

Adding to the “media dependency” discussion, DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1989), argue that individuals develop dependencies on the mass media because people tend to be goal-oriented and often require resources by the media to achieve their goals. In addition, Wanta and Hu (1994) explain that “if individuals have a goal of gaining information on the important issues of the day, they will become highly dependent on the media, since the media control access to a variety of information,” (p. 91). McCombs (1981) in explaining the “need for orientation” concept, suggests that the mass media “are so pervasive that it is nearly impossible to avoid all contact with them.”

To determine the issues included in the investigation, Wanta and Hu (1994) analyzed the content of four news media for four weeks before the beginning of the survey period. All stories carried on ABC’s *World News Tonight* and the news programs from the local ABC stations were coded. Stories carried on the front page of two newspapers were also included. The five issues that received the greatest media coverage were then chosen to be included in the study. Then, the respondent’s credibility, reliance, and exposure to the news media were examined.

The results remarkably fit Wanta and Hu’s (1994) model. The findings suggest that credibility leads to reliance; thus, individuals develop degrees of reliance on the media based on their opinions of media credibility. If individuals perceive the news media to be highly credible, they will tend to become highly dependent upon the media for information (p. 96). The findings also found that the degree of reliance may affect how often individuals seek out and use the news media for information.

Again, if individuals develop strong reliance on the media for information, they will tend to increase their exposure to mass media messages (p. 96).

Wanta and Hu (1994) also found that the level of exposure to the news media may influence the intensity of agenda-setting effects within individuals. If individuals perceive the media to be highly credible, they develop strong reliance on them for information, they increase their exposure to them, and they tend to become highly susceptible to agenda-setting effects. This pattern holds for newspapers, television, and the two media combined (p. 97).

In other words, Wanta and Hu (1994) explain that “if individuals believe the media are highly affiliated with society, they will tend to believe that the issues covered are in the best interests of society.” Therefore, individuals will be influenced directly by the messages the media transmit, regardless of their level of reliance or exposure. Individuals, then, do not necessarily need to develop a strong reliance on the media or increase their exposure to their messages to realize that the issues that the media cover are important (p. 97).

Agenda-Setting Theory

The term agenda-setting first appeared in an article by Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw in 1972. These scholars at the University of North Carolina studied the role of the mass media in the 1968 presidential campaign in the university town of Chapel Hill, North Carolina. They went on to hypothesize that a correspondence existed between the media and the public where, over time, the priority issues of the news media would become the priority issues of the public (Dearing and Rogers, 1996, p, 6).

For their study, they selected and interviewed 100 undecided voters for a period of three weeks just prior to the 1968 presidential election. The voters agenda was measured by asking the voters what were their concerns at the moment. Specifically, the question asked was: “What are the two or three main things that you think the government should concentrate on doing something about?” (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Five main campaign issues were mentioned most frequently by the respondents, thus measuring the public agenda (Dearing and Rogers, 1996, p. 6). The media agenda was measured by counting the number of news articles, editorials, and broadcasts stories in the nine mass media outlets that served Chapel Hill. McCombs and Shaw found an almost perfect correlation between the rank order of the five issues on the media agenda and the same five issues on the public agenda. Thus, McCombs and Shaw concluded from their analysis that the mass media “set” the agenda for the public (Dearing and Rogers, 1996, p. 7). Afterward Protes and McCombs (1991) described that “journalists’ day-by-day judgments on the selection and display of news stories influence the public’s perception of what the important issues of the day are. This influence of the news media on the perceived salience of key political issues is called the agenda-setting role of mass communication” (p.2).

In addition, Dearing and Rogers (1996) write that “agenda setting is an ongoing competition among issue proponents to gain the attention of media professionals, the public, and the policy elites.” They further explain that agenda-setting offers an explanation of why information about certain issues, and not other issues, is available to the public in a democracy; how public opinion is shaped; and why certain issues are addressed through policy actions while other issues are not.

“The study of agenda-setting is the study of social change and of social stability”
(p.1).

According to Dearing and Rogers (1996) “an agenda is formed by a set of issues that are communicated in a hierarchy of importance at a point in time” (p.2). Cobb and Elder (1981) defined an issue as “a conflict between two or more identifiable groups over procedural or substantive matters relating to the distribution of positions or resources.” That is, “an issue is whatever is in contention” write Lang & Lang (1981). “This two-sided nature of an issue is important in understanding why and how an issue climbs up an agenda” (Dearing and Rogers, 1996). The potentially conflictual nature of an issue helps make it newsworthy as proponents and opponents of the issue battle it out in the shared “public arena,” which, in modern society, is the mass media (Dearing and Rogers, 1996, p.2).

In this particular situation, the Argentina crisis during 2000-2002 was in such disarray that there was a succession of issues that could have been competing with each other for the media’s priority. Issues such as unemployment, the increase of poverty and street violence, fiscal deficit, foreign debt, political battles, and corruption among others were at the top of the agenda. However, Dearing and Rogers (1996) assert that “there are many social problems that never become issues even though proponents and opponents exist. Problems require exposure—coverage in the mass media—before they can be considered ‘public’ issues” (p.2).

Dearing and Rogers (1996) further explain that the heart of agenda-setting process is when the salience of an issue changes on the media agenda, the public agenda, or the policy agenda. “The task of the scholar of agenda-setting is to measure

how the salience of an issue changes, and why this change occurs. This salience on the media agenda tells viewers, readers, and listeners ‘what issues to think about’” (p.4).

According to Dearing and Rogers (1996), “the agenda-setting process begins with an issue climbing the media agenda.” The question is: what puts an issue on the media agenda? Dearing and Rogers (1996) explain that certain prestigious media and specific news events play particularly important roles in boosting an issue up the media agenda, as well as the President of the country and Congress.

“What journalists consider to be ‘newsworthy’ provides efficient cues about the relative importance of the welter of issues in our time” write Protes and McCombs (1991). “Newspapers clearly communicate salience through page placement, headline size, and the amount of space allotted to a topic” (p.2).

Shoemaker and Mayfield (1987) explain that “journalists and editors are trained to recognize and value issues which are ‘newsworthy’ by virtue of how much the issue reflects, or can be made to reflect, such newsworthiness criteria as sensation, conflict, mystery, celebrity, deviance, tragedy, and proximity” (p.4).

Rogers, Dearing, and Chang (1999) argue that a public issue can retain a priority position on the national media agenda for years at a time because of the interplay of (1) “constantly new information about the issue, which, when interpreted by journalists and editors in the context of the ongoing social problem, remakes the issue as being important in a new way, and (2) attention given to the issue on agendas other than the mass media agenda, such as the scientific agenda, the polling agenda, and the policy agenda” (p.2). As the situation in Argentina continued to deteriorate

during 2000-2002, public issues such as politics (political clashes between the parties) and economics (economic default and economic policies) retained the highest priority in the Argentine newspapers.

In order to study the agenda-setting process of an issue throughout a long period of time (such as this particular case in Argentina), Rogers, Dearing, and Chang (1991), considered necessary to conceptualize the agenda-setting study as *agenda research*, defined as “the study of how public issues gain or lose importance relative to other issues over time” (p.7). “This definition incorporates a dialect which determines change in issue importance. Issues become more important on various agendas through the addition of new information and new interpretations, while becoming less important on those same agendas due to competition with other issues. Thus, investigations of issues development and agenda setting should ideally be conceptualized to study the interplay on different agendas of (1) how an issue arises and is sustained through new information and interpretations, and (2) how competition with other issues erodes the importance of an issue of study”, write Rogers, Dearing, and Chang (1991, p.7).

With dominant political and economic news stories in Argentina, such as unemployment, social chaos, foreign debt, and corruption, “new interpretations not only sustain attention to the overall issue, but also compete with previous interpretations of the same issues in a struggle to determine how the issue is perceived,” write Rogers, Dearing, and Chang (1991, p.7).

The Rise of Social Problems

Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) developed a model which explains how a social problem may rise and fall in the media and other arenas of public discourse. The model, which applies concepts such as competition, selection, and adaptation to public discourse about problems, proposes that “social problems are a product of a process of collective definition” (p.53). They argue that social problems are “projections of collective sentiments rather than mirrors of objective conditions in society” (p.54). In regards to “issue competition for attention” in the public sphere, Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) write that “social problems exist in relation to other social problems; and that they are embedded within a complex institutionalized system of problem formulation and dissemination” (p.55). Thus, they assume that public attention is a scarce resource, allocated through competition in a system of public arenas. “The fates of potential problems are governed not only by their objective natures but by a highly selective process in which they compete with one another for public attention and societal resources. A fraction of the potential problems are publicly presented by groups or individuals who define them as problems,” write Hilgartner and Bosk (1988, p. 57).

Hilgartner and Bosk’s (1988) model presents six elements:

1- a dynamic process of competition among the members of a very large “population” or social problem claims (this competition among problems involves competition among social groups who promote different problems or different ways of seeing the ‘same’ problems);

2- the institutional arenas that serve as “environments” where social problems compete for attention and grow;

3- the “carrying capacities” of these arenas, which limit the number of problems that can gain widespread attention at one time;

4- the “principles of selection,” or institutional, political, and cultural factors that influence the probability of survival of competing problem formulations;

5- patterns of interaction among the different arenas, such as feedback and synergy, through which activities in each arena spread throughout the others; and

6- the networks of operatives who promote and attempt to control particular problems and whose channels of communication crisscross the different arenas (p. 56).

Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) further explain that “statements about social problems select a specific interpretation of reality from a plurality of possibilities. Which reality comes to dominate public discourse has profound implications for the future of the social problem, for the interest groups involved, and for policy” (p.58).

“Competition among social problems thus occurs simultaneously at two levels,” explain Hilgartner and Bosk (1988). “First, within each substantive area, different ways of framing the situation may compete to be accepted as an authoritative version of reality. Second, a large collection of problems compete with one another for public attention, as a complex process of selection establishes priorities about which should be regarded as important. Through these interacting processes, social problems (and the operatives who promote them) must compete both to enter and to remain on the public agenda” (p.58).

Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) argue that there is a “set of principles of selection that influences which problems will most likely be addressed. These general selection of principles—the intense competition for prime space; the need for drama and novelty; the danger of saturation; the rhythm of organizational life; cultural preoccupations; and political biases—get played out differently in different arenas” (p.61).

On the cultural side, the key issue is “deciding what is news,” writes Gans (1979). “Here journalists rely on a shared professional understanding of what is an important event. What is a good story, what merits coverage. These shared understandings influence which stories reporters seek out and editors assign, how are written, where they appear in the paper, and how events are framed,” writes Schudson (1978). “Since the amount of prime space in a newspaper (e.g., the front pages of the sections, the editorial pages, and certain featured spots scattered throughout the paper) is quite limited, competition among journalists for this prime space is intense; careers and professional status are determined by where one’s byline appears” (Hilgartner and Bosk, 1988, p.65).

“On the organizational side,” Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) explain that “newspapers coverage of social issues, for example, is influenced by such factors as the structure of newspapers; the organization of media chains and wire services; the stratification of the industry into an elite ‘national’ press, local dailies, and tabloids; the size and deployment of staff; their division into departments or ‘beats’; the time and budgetary pressures on journalists; their dependence on, and vulnerability to, key sources for information; the linkages between newspaper directors and other parts of

the American business elite and the strong organizational preoccupation with immediate, fast-breaking events” (p.65).

According to Hilgartner and Bosk (1988), other principles of selection beside organizational and cultural ones are drama, the carrying capacity, and politics. Public arenas place a premium on drama. Social problems presented in a dramatic way have a higher probability of successfully competing in the arenas:

- a) saturation of the arenas with redundant claims and symbols can dedramatize a problem;
- b) repeated bombardment of the public with messages about similar problems can dedramatize problems of that class; and
- c) to remain high on the public agenda, a problem must remain dramatic; thus, new symbols or events must continually renew the drama or the problem will decline” (p.71).

Another principle of selection according to Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) is the carrying capacity. “The smaller the carrying capacity of an arena is, the more intense the competition” (p.71).

The third principle of selection is politics. According to Hilgartner and Bosk (1988), all public arenas have political biases that set the acceptable range of discourse in that arena. Social problems that fall outside of or at the margins of this range are less likely to compete successfully than are mainstream ideas:

- a) most of the public arenas (especially powerful ones) are heavily influenced by dominant political and economic groups. Thus, social problems definitions that reflect these biases have a higher probability of success; and

b) changes in political culture affect selection by altering the acceptable range of public discourse.

“Some problems are advanced in the competitive process because they are important to powerful political and economic interests; the ‘sponsors’ of a problem can have far-reaching implications for its success,” write Hilgartner and Bosk (1988, p. 64). Adding to this idea, Crenson (1971) said that “elites may actively oppose some problem definitions, relegating some issues to a ‘politically enforced neglect’” (p. 184).

Moreover, according to Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) “the political economy can shape the definition of social problems in ways that extend beyond the strong influence of dominant groups on political/economic values,” and “economic changes can affect collective definitions of social problems” (p.64). “When an economy is expanding and things are going well, it becomes easier to think in terms of spending resources to deal with problems. Times of recession or slow growth and slowly rising living standards with reduced public resources result in downgrading the significance of no productivity linked social problems and discourage actions to deal with them,” writes Miller (1976, p. 139).

The Piqueteros Movement

A vast quantity of media coverage in Argentina during 2000-2002 was given to the social movement called “*Piqueteros*.” These movements “lie in the arrival of mass unemployment, for the first time in modern Argentina, in 1996. The state oil company laid off thousands of workers prior to its privatization. Many lived in small

towns in remote provinces, such as Neuquen and Salta; there, blocking the roads was the only way of getting the country's attention," writes *The Economist Magazine*.

Argentine author Julio Godio (2003) defines the *Piqueteros*' movement as a "territorial movement of resistance among an immense, heterogeneous, social conglomerate in where exist several socio-historic layers of poor people from the 1960's and 1970's; poor people created by the process of deindustrialization beginning in 1970; poor people produced by government reform and the privatization of public services and production companies, which were skilled and semi-skilled workers; and lastly, middle and lower-middle class families who lost their jobs for different reasons (small business bankruptcy, etc.)." In sum, "these movements were born as a consequence of a group of workers being laid off, but not belonging to unions," writes Godio (p. 187).

According to Godio (2003) "these movements have a common goal: they fight for the government's employment plan called *Jefas y Jefes de Hogar* (Home Bosses). They organize small businesses of products and services, student services, basic laboratories for medical analysis, popular dinning places, etc. In sum, they have created a sociopolitical movement of multiple goals. Ideologically, some of their leaders belong to the leftist party, others are left activists, and some are connected to the Catholic Church and Human Rights organizations. Roadblocks are their main form of protest. However, in the past few years they have developed other types of protests such as street mobilizations. The *Piqueteros* are funded by subsidies, they collect donations, but the main source of donations comes from the beneficiaries of

the *Jefas y Jefes de Hogar Plan*. The *Piqueteros* movement administers ten percent of the *Jefas y Jefes de Hogar Plan*,” (Godio, 2003, p. 189).

The main reason for taking this particular social movement into account in this study was because of the *Piqueteros*' activism during 2000 to 2002. According to Godio (2003) “there were 191 roadblocks nation wide between 1997 and 1998. This number increased to 766 between 1999 and 2000; and in 2001, motivated by the crisis, the amount substantially increased to 2,992” (p. 189).

Godio (2003) asserts the *Piqueteros* are divided in three main groups. “Their common goal is revolution. However, they hold opposing views when it comes to defining how the revolution should take place. One group wants a ‘pacifist revolution’ where people can vote for their leaders. Another group asks for a massive insurrection that installs a popular government. The third group fights also for a popular insurrection to overthrow the ‘bourgeois’ power’. Although these groups’ ideologies differ, they also have to coexist in order to negotiate their differences with the counties, state, and national authorities because these entities control most of the *Jefas y Jefes de Hogar Plans*” (p. 190).

Agenda-Setting Research in Argentina

The first agenda-setting research in Argentina was published in 1998 by *The Freedom Forum Organization* in collaboration with the Faculty of Communication Science at Austral University in Buenos Aires, Argentina. They carried out an investigation about the Buenos Aires’ media coverage of the 1997 legislative elections. The investigation discussed first and second level analysis of the agenda-setting theory.

The study focused on the three main political parties and independent candidates with the best chances to be elected for a position in the National Parliament and the City of Buenos Aires legislature.

Three national newspapers with a large amount of news coverage of the area under study were considered for the content analysis. The newspapers were *Clarín*, *La Nación*, and *Página 12*. The two main economic newspapers, *Ambito Financiero* and *El Cronista*, were also taken into consideration. A total of 4,151 news stories were considered between the months of September and October of 1997 (p. 5).

The public's agenda was obtained by two polls (not specifically arranged for this study). Two questions were asked of the participants: What is the most important problem the country faces? And, what issue do you consider to be a priority when you prepare for voting in the next October's legislative elections? (p.8).

The six most important issues reported by the public in the month of September were the following in descending order: unemployment, corruption, education, poverty, elderly people's pensions, and the justice system. In regards to the newspapers agenda, their most mentioned issue was corruption, followed by education, elderly pensions, unemployment, justice system, and poverty. Among the public's and newspaper's agenda there was a correlation coefficient of 0.429 in the month of September and 0.800 in the month of October, where corruption and economic issues were placed at number one and two respectively. This investigation showed a remarkable agenda-setting effect on the Buenos Aires's voters during the 1997 legislative elections.

The second agenda-setting research study carried out in Argentina was conducted by Dr. Casermeiro de Pereson (2003), Director at the Institute for Social Communication, Journalism and Advertising at the Argentine Pontific Catholic University “Santa Maria de los Buenos Aires.” The investigation focused on the news media’s performance in Buenos Aires during the October 1998 primary election. The goal of the investigation was to “adopt an international ‘comparable’ perspective, one that confronts the agenda setting theory and its empirical methodology to the results obtained in our own cultural means,” writes Casermeiro de Pereson (2003, p.20).

Specifically, the author chose to analyze the media’s agenda by considering the content of the main two national newspapers, *Clarín* Newspaper and *La Nación* Newspaper, and the two main national television news channels, *Telenoche* and *Telefe Noticias*. Four hundred and twenty nine newspaper stories were examined between October 5th and October the 30th, 1998. There were also 222 television stories from the most watched daily newscasts at night. The most important issues represented in the media’s and people’s agenda were unemployment, corruption, economic situation, insecurity, education, and poverty (p. 184).

This study was the first in Argentina to perform an *ad hoc* public opinion research project to measure the public’s (only in the city of Buenos Aires) agenda. To measure the people’s agenda, the author employed the following question: According to you, what is the most important national problem the country needs to solve at this moment? A total of three hundred and seventy eight responses were examined.

Ranking of the Most Important Problems

Public's Agenda

Newspaper's Agenda

TV's Agenda

1-Unemployment		1-Corruption
2-Corruption	1-Corruption	2-Insecurity
3-Economic Situation	2-Insecurity	3-Economic Situation
4-Insecurity	3-Unemployment	4-Unemployment
5-Education	4-Economic Situation	5-Education
6-Poverty	5-Education	6-Poverty
	6-Poverty (p. 193)	

Casermeyro de Pereson (2003) finds a high correlation between the newspaper's agenda and the public's agenda (+.600), in addition to the television's agenda and the public's agenda (+.714).

Empirically, the research explores first and second level agenda-setting (issue salience and issue attributes). Regarding an issue's salience, Casermeyro De Pereson (2003) found that agenda-setting effects were stronger than those found in most other countries around the world, especially for the case of television newscast. Nonetheless, there were issues to which Buenos Aires voters assigned a higher priority than the media did. "Half the people interviewed assigned high relevance to the issue of unemployment, even though press coverage of this problem was relatively scarce. However, it was discovered that the media had a very powerful influence on public opinion on issues such as corruption, personal security, and the economics situation" (p.192).

“An intriguing new pattern found in this analysis of the agenda-setting process—an effect that Casermeiro De Pereson labeled ‘doubled step opinion leaders’—is that print media establishes the thematic agenda for television newscasts, which in turn transfers this agenda to the public,” writes McCombs (2003, p.15).

Casermeiro De Pereson’s (2003) investigation also discovered that the respondents with regular exposure to the media (television and newspaper) were more influenced than those with no interest at all or plenty of interest. “This is because those with no interest in politics do not look for information. In the second case, those with a lot of interest in politics have a better mechanism of news selection when it comes to media’s messages” (p. 270).

In regards to political interest, Casermeiro De Pereson (2003) found a minor media agenda correlation with those respondents who are less educated and those with a college degree. “The first ones are less critical while the second ones are not only more critical, but seem to be much more independent in their criteria when it comes to rank the media’s supremacy” (p. 271).

Casermeiro De Pereson (2003) also found that respondents with high credibility in the Catholic Church and mass media are influenced much more than those who trust other institutions. In addition, the author found that those respondents with “high” credibility in the institutions have higher correlation with the media’s agenda than those with “low” credibility in the institutions (p. 271).

On the other hand, the author found that the media’s influence is higher on those who have “low” credibility in the justice system, congress, and the government than those who have “low” credibility in other institutions. According to Casermeiro

De Pereson (2003), the media could have been responsible for portraying those institutions, highly connected to power, as less credible.

An interesting finding was that newspapers set the television's agenda. However, in the majority of the cases, the agenda-setting function was accomplished by the television news programs instead of newspapers. There was a high correlation between the television news agenda and the public's agenda (p.215). "One of the reasons for this particular finding," writes Casermeiro De Pereson (2003) "is that for the past decades television audiences have grown while the newspapers' sales have dropped year after year. Television coverage attracts much more audiences not only because is more economically accessible but also because it is easier to decode, and includes instant information twenty-four hours a day."

Furthermore, Teijeiro, Farre, and Pedemonte (2002) carried out an empirical investigation in Argentina about the role of the Argentine press (newspapers and television) during the crisis of 2001. An analysis of second level agenda-setting effect was carried out to discover how the media portrayed the various social actors (protesters, middle-classes, poor people, politicians, the elites, etc.) during the last two days (December 19th and 20th, 2001) of De la Rúa's government.

The investigation had two goals: (1) to determine how the media portrayed the social actors during the crisis for a long period of time; (2) to determine, the journalists routines while covering the crisis, and their standards (legal and ethical), explicit and implicit. Once they analyzed the results, the authors compared the Argentine journalist's standards to the standards of journalists from developed countries with better journalism preparation while covering social protests (p.15).

Teijeiro, Farre, and Pedemonte's 2002 study sought to answer three questions:

-How did the media portray the individuals at the social protests? Who were they? Did they belong to a specific or various groups?

-How did the media portray the protesters' actions? What type of actions they carried out? Did they spontaneously execute their actions or were encouraged to do it?

-How did the media portray the reasons behind those protests? What were the group's main reasons and motivations? Who did they protest against? What was the goal of the protest? (p. 32).

The content analysis was completed by measuring all the social protest stories printed in the two national newspapers with major circulation, *La Nacion* and *Clarín*, for a period of one week. Two television news channels, *Telenoche* and *Azul Noticias*, were measured on December 19th and December 20th. The investigation established several findings:

-The media portrayed the protest as a homogenized situation breaking in surprisingly in the public space.

-In general the media depersonalized the protesters who steal.

-The media defined all the violent incidents in a similar way.

-The media defined three levels of motivation for social protest (hunger, robbery, and political complaints).

-The media did not worry about their role in society during the crisis.

-They seemed not willing to minimize the negative impact of violent events (p. 144).

Teijeiro, Farre, and Pedemonte (2002) further discovered a very interesting detail during their investigation—a change of news agenda in the media. Newspapers as well television channels, separated the incidents of December 19th and 20th. “The first incident (people stealing) on December 19th was placed into social and economic terms. The second incident happening on December 20th (President De la Rúa’s renouncement) was placed into the political orbit. “Once the second incident happens, the first incidents disappeared of the media’s agenda,” write Teijeiro, Farre, and Pedemonte (2002, p. 25).

Political News and Agenda-Setting

According to Chaffee (1975) “the world of politics and the techniques of mass communication have intersected in fundamental and fascinated ways, at least since the days when Julius Caesar posted his version of the day’s news, *Acta Diurna*, to neutralize the speeches of his opponents in the Roman Senate” (p.13).

Becker, McCombs, and McLeod (1975) argue that no other series of studies has had as much impact on the study of political communication as that conducted in the 1940s and 1950s by Columbia University’s Bureau of Applied Social Research by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948). “The intent of the study was to discover how and why people decided to vote as they did,” write Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948, p.1).

Becker, McCombs, and McLeod (1975) recount that “the media played a decisive role in increasing interest in the campaign, which had the important subsequent effect of stimulating more information seeking about the election” (p.28). They also concluded that voters used the content of the media “to support the vote

conclusion they would have reached because of their social predisposition. Similarly, the Columbia researchers concluded that the block of voters who exposed themselves to the media during the campaign despite firm earlier decision on vote choice were seeking reinforcement of their decision, not new information,” write Becker, McCombs, and McLeod (1975, p. 28).

Becker, McCombs, and McLeod (1975) further explain that the Columbia researchers did find dramatic evidence of other media effects during the campaign. “Media exposure was positively related to increase in interest during the campaign. Similarly, media use led to a strengthening of the voters’ support for their candidates, and to higher turnout at the polls on Election Day” (p. 31). “In addition, those voters high in media exposure demonstrated a better understanding of the candidates’ support among the diverse groups making up the electorate than among those using the media less, and they were more likely to be able to identify accurately both candidates’ stands on the issues. Both of these information findings held up after controls for the political interest and level of education of the voter” (Becker, McCombs, and McLeod 1975, p. 31).

Timothy Mead (1994) writes about the media agenda setting and its effect in distributing political power. “The link between mass media and municipal reform is easier to understand when it is noted that the muckraking newspapers and magazines went beyond merely reporting the news. They sought to create news, in part by creating events that were newsworthy and in part by elevating otherwise unnoticed events to the pages of the newspapers” (p.27).

In terms of contemporary political analysis, Mead (1994) writes that “what the reform-minded muckrakers were doing was setting the agenda-raising certain issues to prominence and by doing so lessening interest in other issues,” (p. 27). “Media agenda setting has the effect of redistributing political power, helping place and publicize issues in the symbolic arena, and thereby increasing the influence of supporters of these issues,” writes Gans (1979, p. 332).

Linsky (1986) explain that national policymakers believe that the press has its most significant impacts on policy early in the process, “that media do a lot to set the public agenda and to influence how an issue is understood by policymakers, interest groups, and the public” (p.87). In this sense, “the agenda...is the list of subjects or problems to which government officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying serious attention at any given time,” writes Kingdon (1984, p.3). Kingdon (1984) refers in this case to the *policy agenda setting* described by Rogers and Dearing (1988), which relates to “the crucial democratic means by which policymaking elites select issues for their attention.”

Banfield and Wilson (1963), argue that a daily newspaper is often “a political institution of great importance.” “In part,” writes Mead (1994), “the influence of the daily newspaper is a result of its selection of news and items and editorial subjects, emphasizing some and overlooking others; ...editors take into account not only what they think the paper’s clientele wants to read but also what they think it ought to read” (p.28).

Mead (1994) argues that there is a crusading, public improvement quality to newspaper coverage of local government and politics. “In effect, such editors and

newspapers set the local political agenda in return for the creation of public interest which impacts the policy agenda of public decision makers” (p.28).

Mead (1994) dealt with a single case study of local policy agenda setting by a daily newspaper. The theme of the study was that *The Charlotte Observer* (North Carolina) over the last two decades has played a policy agenda setting role in regard to consolidation as a means of metropolitan reform. Mead (1994) concluded that the newspaper played a crucial agenda-setting role concerning the consolidation as a means of metropolitan reform due to two reasons: first, because of the role of the policy entrepreneur in the policy process, and second because it had to do with particular features concerning the political patterns of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg County (p.34). Mead’s (1994) study found that the newspaper set the agenda by “pushing their concerns about certain problems higher up in the agenda, by sustaining interest among the political community when others were willing to let consolidation languish” (p.34).

However, in this study, *The Charlotte Observer* has been able to set “its own internal media agenda.” In terms of the public agenda, the impact of the newspaper has not been so demonstrable (p.35). “Yet *The Charlotte Observer* remains undaunted. Ed Williams, editorial page editor, said, ‘we bring it (consolidation) up at every opportunity. Any time anyone mentions it, we report it. And if they don’t mention it, we say they should have” (p. 35).

Economic News and Agenda-Setting

“Covering a complex issue is hard, especially if the reporting itself becomes part of the story,” write Wu, Stevenson, Chen, and Guner (2001). “Economic

situations are good examples of stories that challenge journalists' expertise and judgment. On the one hand, it is imperative to keep the audience abreast of the current status of the economy; on the other, emphasis on future conditions can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. In the early 1990s, the media were blamed for harming an already weakened economy—the term 'media malady' was invoked often to describe the scenario. However, others defended their stories as simply reflecting hard facts and not intentionally influencing the economy. Therefore, the relationship between news coverage and the state of the economy, a relationship that has yielded debates about their mutual influences, is worth thorough investigation" (Wu, Stevenson, Chen, and Guner, 2001, p. 21). In their study, Wu, Stevenson, Chen, and Guner (2001), examined the complex relationship between recession news, the state of the economy, and people's perceptions toward the economy from January 1987 through March 1996. "The state of the economy itself can be affected by public confidence, because policy is influenced, in part, by public opinion," writes Katona (1964).

Wu, Stevenson, Chen, and Guner (2001) argue that news coverage, public opinion, and economic situation should be examined simultaneously because they can all reinforce and influence each other over time; in addition, these variables are not likely to be endogenous under any circumstances. "Particularly because the economy is an obtrusive issue—in addition to media the public can obtain information about the economy from other sources—reality cues must be taken into account when media effect is assessed" (p. 21).

Only a handful of studies have specifically tackled these multifaceted relationships among news coverage of recession, the state of the economy, and the public's perception. Stevenson, Gonzenbach, and David's (1994) study, a pioneering work on this subject, found some cyclical effects between news coverage and people's perception toward the economy. "More specifically, they discovered that, when economic reality is controlled, public opinion strongly influenced media coverage, but the media in turn followed the upsurge of public concern and influenced back at a later date. Overall, however, they found that the public's evaluations of the economy had a stronger effect on media coverage than vice versa," write Wu, Stevenson, Chen, and Guner (2001, p. 22).

In 1995, Blood and Phillips also examined the same three variables but produced a different result from Stevenson *et al.*'s. They discovered that only the number of news articles that contained recession headlines was found to influence consumer sentiment (at lags of two months and four months). Other than this finding, none of other relationships examined turned out to be statistically significant (p.17).

In the same year, Goidel and Langley (1995) conducted a similar study that explored the impact of economic news on the public's evaluation and its repercussion on presidential approval. With a measure of the story's tone, they found that negative economic news was more likely to reflect the economic situation in the 1981-92 periods. In addition, when various economic indicators were held constant, negative stories were found to influence public appraisal of the economy (p.325).

Haller and Norpoth (1997) took a slightly different approach to gauge economic news impact on people's appraisal of the economy. They discovered that

news played only a modest role in providing people with economic information; news exposure did not lead to a significant improvement of capability in assessing the economic situation. Measures of economic conditions such as unemployment and inflation contributed more to economic opinion (p.555).

In 1985, Behr and Iyengar investigated the determinants of news coverage and public concern, respectively, using energy, unemployment, and inflation as the test issues. Their results indicated that overall news coverage was not influenced by a shift of public concern. Rather, media coverage was more likely to be led by reality and relevant events. Public concern, on the other hand, was determined more by reality indicators than by news coverage, indicating a limited effect of the media (p.53).

However, there has been some support of the thesis of the media's influence in shaping economic evaluations. Mutz (1992), in line with Haller and Norpoth (1997), discovered that personal experiences such as unemployment, along with local newspaper coverage, contributed to an individual's perception of the unemployment issue; with economic problems at the national level, people relied on media for information and making political judgment.

“Most of the studies indicated that media affect people's perception about the economic, but it is uncertain which of the two variables, news coverage or the economy reality, is more potent,” write Wu, Stevenson, Chen, and Guner (2001, p. 23). In their research media coverage was found to be a good predictor of the public's assessment of the economy during the downturn period even after the state of the economy is controlled for (p. 29). It was found that “citizens pay greater attention

to economic news during economic downturns. Furthermore, mass media during the slump seemed to reflect more of the public's perception about the economic situation and less of the economic reality. This phenomenon shows a strong symbiotic relationship between the mass media and the general public in an economic turmoil" (p. 30).

Wu, Stevenson, Chen, and Guner (2001) further concluded that "people's sentiments about the economy (both present and future) were not influenced by the news coverage but by the economic conditions" (p. 30). "Perhaps the public in this could personally sense the effect of an improved economy in their daily lives and therefore felt less need to consult the media in this regard," write Weaver, Graber, McCombs, Eyal, (1981). "On the other hand, since more people were affected by the bad economy during the downturn period, personal recession experiences made individuals more susceptible to the agenda-setting effect," write Lasorsa and Wanta, (1990, p.804). Yet another explanation might be that after some months of extensive coverage about economic recession, "people's attention spans simply diminished substantially, and they might well have been distracted by coverage devoted to the Gulf War," write Wu, Stevenson, Chen, and Guner (2001, p. 31). Iyengar and Simon (1993) further explain in their research that "with the Gulf War adding to the news agenda, the seriousness of the economy was pushed aside for some months, especially on the public's minds (p.374)."

Wu, Stevenson, Chen, and Guner (2001) concluded in their study that the conditioned impact of recession news on people's perception is assured (p. 32). "During an economic slump, the general public are more attentive to the news and,

therefore, more likely to be affected by recession coverage. Yet, the public seems to have a remarkably keen sense about the improving economy, so they could be oblivious to the continuous recession coverage in the recovery period. When public opinion is examined over the entire period, however, it is still the economic reality that works as the better predictor,” explain Wu, Stevenson, Chen, and Guner (2001, 32).

In another study, Mutz (1992) analyzed the combination of contemporary research on the effect of mass communication with findings on sociotropic voting to build a general model that explains the origins and effects of economic perceptions. This model is later on tested in the context of retrospective personal and social concerns about unemployment. “Survey evidence suggests that retrospective assessments of unemployment result primarily from mediated information rather than from direct experiences. Mass media are found to have an ‘impersonal impact,’ influencing social, but not personal perceptions of the issue, while personal experiences with unemployment influence exclusively personal-level judgments,” writes Mutz (1992, p. 483).

Mutz’s (1992) study also furthers an understanding of the process that underlies the formation of retrospective judgments by demonstrating how the process of impression formation may be fundamentally different when evaluating state as opposed to national economic conditions. “Findings suggest that the case against personal experiences as predictors of political preferences may be overstated as a result of reliance on national level-data” (p. 485).

According to Mutz (1992), early studies of economic influences on voting simply assumed that people voted their pocketbooks: “when national economic conditions worsened, more citizens experienced economic problems in their own lives, and these people logically voted against the incumbent party. When empirical findings at the individual level failed to support this explanation, research shifted from a focus on personal economic experiences to an emphasis on ‘sociotropic’ judgments; that is, individuals’ retrospective assessments of economic change at the collective level” (Mutz, 1992, p. 489).

Mutz (1992) says that “understanding the sources of these collective judgments is important because the accountability of political leaders centers on the accuracy of these perceptions; unlike personal experiences, collective economic perceptions may vary independently of the real world effects of economic policies. Mass media are found to play an important role in determining the extent to which pocketbook or sociotropic concerns shape political evaluations” (p. 485).

Past studies have focused their attention to economic influences in elections other than presidential and congressional ones; however the “measures of economic conditions have almost always been at the national level, with a few exceptions,” writes Mutz (1992, p. 489).

In the one study that directly examines state-level voting and state-level economic conditions, Chubb (1988), finds that “state economic conditions and the assumption of gubernatorial responsibility for them have a significant impact on gubernatorial election outcomes” but concludes that “the influence of state conditions is small in comparison with the effects of national economic conditions,” (p. 151).

According to Mutz (1992), the strengths of the pocketbook and sociotropic paths, are on fundamentally different levels, “personal experiences are exogenous, objective things that happen to a person, while perceptions of economic change are subjective assessments of social conditions. Since subjective reality almost always predicts attitudes better than objective reality, the winner in these contests should not be a surprise” (p.487).

Kiewiet (1983) writes that personal experiences with economic problems are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for viewing these issues as pressing personal problems; people who are currently employed or doing well financially may still be worried about these issues because they anticipate layoffs or salary cutbacks.

As described earlier, the Argentine middle classes and those doing well financially, being afraid of layoffs and salary cutbacks, protested against the system as well as those who did not have jobs. But what are the sources of economic perceptions at the collective level? What are the possible sources of information that led to perceptions that economic conditions have gotten better or worse? According to Mutz (1992), beyond generalizations from personal-level judgments, the two other possible sources of information on social conditions are mass media and other people (p. 489).

Erbring, Goldenbers, and Miller (1980) write that the key factor weakening the case for mass media effects with respect to economic issues in particular is that economic issues have “real world” consequences that researchers have long assumed to override potential media effects (p. 45). “Typically, ‘media dependency’ theories

downplay the potential for media effects in situations in which alternative information sources are available,” write Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976, p. 5).

Inflation and unemployment in particular affect many people’s lives on an everyday basis. Under these conditions, the media dependency literature suggests weak, if any, media effects on people’s perceptions of economic issues, since there are highly credible, more easily accessible sources of information available in the form of people’s own personal experiences (Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, 1976, p.7). “But to the extent that political behavior is based on perceptions of collective economic conditions, mass media may play an important role in this process,” argues Mutz (1992).

Mutz (1992, p. 489) further explains that recent evidence suggests that mass media’s primary impact may be on social-level perceptions. Studies of agenda-setting, for example, can be differentiated on whether personal- or social-level definitions of audience agenda are used. McLeod, Becker, and Byrnes (1974) point out that mass media are typically found to have a greater impact on people’s perceptions of the collective salience of issues than on the salience of the issues to individuals themselves.

In other words, “a person may not perceive some problems as more important to him or her personally just because he or she has seen much news concerning it, but that person would be very likely to think that it is an important issue to other people and, thus, an important social problem” (Mutz, 1992, p. 490). Tyler and Cook (1984) demonstrated that mass-mediated information has an “impersonal impact” on perceptions of the frequency or severity of a problem, but not on personal judgments

of concern or importance. Tyler (1980) found that mass media coverage of crime influenced perceptions of crime as a social problem, but not as a personal one. This could be an example of what is called “the third person effect” which suggests that people perceive others as influenced by mass media more than they themselves are. Mutz (1989) writes that several examinations of the “third person effect” have demonstrated that one major effect of exposure to mass media is to influence people’s perceptions of what others think regardless of whether it influences individuals’ personal perceptions.

“This collection of evidence suggests that despite the obtrusive nature of economic issues, mass media may still have some effect on perceptions of economic trends at the collective level,” writes Mutz (1992, p. 490). However, very little research bears directly on questions about the effects of mass media reporting of economic news on perceptions of economic conditions. A few studies, however, indirectly address these questions and are well worth mentioning in this regard.

In an effort to understand the origins of perceptions of economic trends, Weatherford (1983a) compared people who relied heavily on newspapers for political information with those who did not and found that personal experiences weighed more heavily in voting considerations among the information-poor subgroups, while the information-rich relied on perceptions of collective economic conditions. These findings mesh well with Adoni and Cohen’s (1978) suggestion that mass media use contributes to a subjective sense of economic knowledge; heavy media users in Weatherford’s study relied on their subjective perceptions whether they were correct or not, while low media users relied on an information source of which they could be

certain—their own personal experiences. The findings of Conover, Feldman, and Knight (1986) loosely paralleled these results: those having inaccurate information about unemployment and inflation relied on personal experiences to form collective economic perceptions, while respondents with accurate unemployment and inflation knowledge did not. “The extent to which people generalize collective or sociotropic evaluations from personal experiences seemingly depends on access to and assimilation of information about experiences beyond one’s own; that is, in all likelihood, information from mass media,” writes Mutz (1992, p. 490).

“As suggested by the literature in agenda-setting, the impersonal impact hypothesis, and related studies, I expect mass-mediated information to have its greatest effects on perceptions of economic issues at the collective level,” writes Mutz (1992). “In the absence of mass-mediated information, personal and collective concerns would become less distinct, and people would default to personal experiences and more parochial sources as the basis of their perceptions of social change” (p.490).

Furthermore, Mutz (1992) found that media exposure heightens the salience of social-level judgments as well as informing collective evaluations. The former effect may be seen as a variant of “priming” effect; by focusing on some issues more than others, media increase the importance attached to these issues in evaluating political events. In this case, however, the effect is not simply the priming of all considerations surrounding an issue but rather “sociotropic priming”: the priming of collective perceptions and a de-emphasis of personal concerns. “By heightening the importance of social concerns to political evaluations and decreasing the importance

of personal concerns, mass media contribute to the depoliticization of personal experience” (Mutz, 1992, p. 500).

On the whole, Mutz (1992) concludes that personal experiences do influence assessments of social conditions among the substantial proportion of the population that lacks alternative sources of information. However, social perceptions and mediated information matter more. This is especially true when one takes into consideration the fact that the highly involved people who follow political news and form attitudes on a sociotropic basis are also most likely to be the ones voting. At the national level in particular, reading about unemployment in the newspaper or hearing about it from friends with employment problems may indeed have greater political consequences than personally losing a job. The closer to home the political contest, however, the stronger one would expect the personal-socio link to become. In addition to serving to inform social-level judgments, mass media also serve as an obstacle to the politicization of personal experience. Mass media coverage primes the sociotropic side of the general model and decreases the importance of the pocketbook path (Mutz, 1992, p. 503).

Concrete/Obtrusiveness Issues versus Abstract/Unobtrusive Issues

Even though Mutz (1992) looked at the concept of issue obtrusiveness, it is important to fully review some additional work in which the concepts of issue obtrusiveness /concrete and unobtrusive /abstract are better explored.

Yagade and Dozier (1990) argue that the results of agenda-setting studies are mixed, depending on the issues studied and the research design employed. “The agenda-setting effect takes place under certain circumstances. As a ‘weak change

force,' the media agenda-setting effect may be overwhelmed by stronger change forces, such as interpersonal communication networks and the obtrusiveness of the issue" (p. 4).

Erbring, Goldenberg and Miller study (1980), found that agenda-setting effects were most pronounced among those with high media dependency, who lacked strong interpersonal communication links (p. 45). But in the McLeod, Becker and Byrnes (1974) study, agenda-setting effects were slightly stronger for those who most frequently engaged in political discussions (p. 161). "The different results of these studies may be due to the different issues under study or differences in the sample," write Yagade and Dozier (1990, p. 4).

"Obtrusiveness," explain Yagade and Dozier (1990), "is the degree to which an individual is affected by an issue, the degree to which the issue forces itself into lives of individuals. When issues are directly experienced by the public, those issues are obtrusive and relatively immune to media agenda-setting forces. Unobtrusive issues are those not directly experienced by individuals, issues which do not force themselves upon individuals" (p. 4).

Yagade and Dozier (1990) further explain the differences between obtrusiveness and abstractness arguing that "the abstractness of an issue is the degree to which an issue is difficult to conceptualized, to be made sensible. The more abstract an issue, the more difficult it is experienced. The more obtrusive an issue, the more directly it is experienced (p. 4). Issues can be classified as abstract or concrete, based on how they are perceived by the public" (p. 10).

In this particular work, unemployment and social unrest in Argentina can be considered obtrusive issues while the foreign debt negotiation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the country's economic deficit could be considered as abstract issues.

However, Yagade and Dozier (1990) considered that both (the abstractness and the obtrusiveness) of an issue, reduce agenda-setting effects for different reasons. "Media coverage of an obtrusive issue exerts little effect on issue salience because the issue is already directly experienced by individuals. Direct experiences overwhelm the influence of media coverage. Media coverage of an abstract issue likewise exerts little effect on issue salience, because individuals find it difficult to attach salience to something they don't comprehend," write Yagade and Dozier (1990, p. 5).

In their exploratory study, the Yagade and Dozier (1990) analyzed a content analysis sample of *Time Magazine* coverage of two "concrete" issues (drug abuse, energy) and two "abstract" issues (nuclear arms race, federal budget deficit), and the responses of 79 students in two journalism courses (the question asked was: What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?). They tested and confirmed their hypothesis: "the more concrete an issue, the more likely media coverage is related to issue salience" (p. 8). Specifically, the amount of media coverage affects the perceived salience of concrete issues, while the amount of media coverage does not affect the perceived salience of abstract issues. "A threshold point may exist where an issue is just too abstract to be changed on the public agenda by media coverage because (a) the issue is too difficult to visualize, and (b) the

information is too complex, requiring too much cognitive work to process,” explain Yagade and Dozier (1990).

Furthermore, Yagade and Dozier (1990) explain that subtle attributes of media content should be incorporated in agenda-setting theory. Issue abstraction is partly a product of how an issue is framed in media content. The news media define issues as abstract or concrete along a continuum. An issue is framed and given a set of meanings by the media. Thus, the media have some power to determine the terms in which issues are defined. The media may limit their own agenda-setting power by the manner in which they construct an issue as either abstract or concrete (p. 10).

Second Level Agenda-Setting (Framing)

McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, and Llamas (2000) explain that beyond the agenda of objects there is another basic aspect of communication content to consider. Each of these objects has numerous attributes, those characteristics and traits that fill out the picture of each object. When mass media present an object, they also tell us something about the attributes of the object. Some attributes are emphasized, albeit to varying degrees. Others are mentioned only in each object. Just as objects vary in salience, so do the attributes of each object. Just as there is an agenda of public issues, political candidates, or some other set of objects, there also is an agenda of attributes for each object. Both the selection by journalists of objects for attention and the selection of attributes for detailing the pictures of these objects are powerful agenda-setting roles (p. 78)

“These agendas of attributes are the second level of agenda-setting process. The first level of the agenda-setting process is the transmission of object salience.

The second level is the transmission of attribute salience,” write McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, Llamas (2000, p. 78).

Recent explication of a second level of agenda setting links agenda setting with a major contemporary concept—framing. According to Entman (1993), “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p.52).

McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, and Llamas (2000), also describe second level agenda-setting as “those elements prominent in the mass media’s picture of the world which influence the salience of those elements in the audience’s picture—through the explication of a second level agenda setting: attribute agenda setting” (p. 78).

McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, and Llamas (2000) researched the candidate images during the 1996 Spanish general election; they examined two attribute dimensions—substantive and affective descriptions—to test the hypothesis that media attribute agendas influence the voters’ attribute agenda. McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, and Llamas (2000) found strong evidences for the attribute agenda-setting influences not only by the strong degree of correlation but also by the time order established by the study design in which voter images of the candidates were measured subsequent to media presentations (p. 85).

Jasperson, Shah, Watts, Faber, and Fan (1998) suggested that “further theoretical elaboration of the agenda-setting perspective with a second-level, or framing, perspective offers a richer explanation of changes in public opinion” (p.

210). Using the paragraph as the coding unit, Jasperson, Shah, Watts, Faber, and Fan (1998) analysis traced four aspects of the federal budget deficit during the mid-1990s: non-confrontational talks, conflict and clashes, impasse, and crisis. The focus was on the general vocabulary of frames employed by journalists. Overall, the pattern of coverage for the topic—first-level agenda setting—explained 85% of the variance in public concern about the budget deficit. Additional analysis found that one of the frames, conflict and clash, also influenced public opinion. Adding this aspect of the budget deficit coverage to the analysis accounted for 92% of the variance in U.S. public opinion (Jasperson, Shah, Watts, Faber, and Fan, 1998, p. 210)

McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, and Llamas (2000) further explain that one of the most straightforward applications of the idea of attribute agenda setting is found in the influence of the mass media on the public images of political candidates. The theoretical distinction between the first and second levels of agenda setting—agendas of objects and agendas of attributes is especially obvious in an election setting. The candidates vying for a political office are, in the abstract, a set of objects. The salience of each of these candidates, frequently measured in political research as “name recognition,” can be influenced by news coverage and by political advertising. In this setting, where the objects are the candidates, the attributes are the various traits that define the images of the candidates in the media and among the voters (p. 81).

A different study by Hester and Gibson (2003), second level agenda-setting effect was measured from a content analysis of forty-eight months of print and broadcast news about the economy combined with time-series analysis with two

indicators of consumer economic evaluations and three measures of real economic conditions (p. 79)

Hester and Gibson (2003) proposed three hypotheses: (1) news coverage about the economy will be framed as negative more often than it will be framed as positive; (2) negatively framed news coverage of the economy will be more significant predictor of attitude toward current economic conditions than will positively framed news coverage; and (3) negatively framed news coverage of the economy will be more significant predictor of attitude toward future economic conditions than will positively framed news coverage (p. 79).

The authors discovered that economic news was framed as negative more often than as positive, and that negatively framed news coverage was one of several significant predictors of consumer expectations about the future of the economy. The study supports the argument that media coverage, particularly the media's emphasis on negative news, may have serious consequences for both expectations of and performance of the economy (p. 83).

This type of negative news coverage was very popular in the Argentine newspapers during the period of 2000-2002. According to Daniel Delgado (2003), "the media played an essential role during the crisis in shaping and promoting the political news in a negative way." In addition, Walger (2003) argues that "during the Argentine crisis, the media exploited the use of sensational news about political scandals" (p. 427).

According to Rey Lennon (2002), at the beginning of 2000 with President De la Rúa still in power, the Argentine media in general "gunned down the government

with great criticism.” “However,” he argues, “that attitude changed towards a moderate negative tone right after the International Monetary Fund’s resources arrived.” Rey Lennon (2002) writes that *La Nacion Newspaper* seemed to have been the only one trying to save De la Rúa’s government from falling apart due his close relationship with some of *La Nacion Newspaper’s* Board of Directors (March, 2002, <http://www.comunica.org>).

Rey Lennon (2002) implies that there has been a change of tone in the coverage of the media during the crisis. “The middle classes peacefully protesting against the government brought to the newsrooms a sense of a romantic scene where common people freely express their anger, without ideological divisions. This was the general motto used by the majority of the media,” writes Rey Lennon (2002). However, he argues that right after the renouncement of the two subsequent presidents, the media changed their tone to a moderate level. “Among the main newspaper’s pages there was some kind of upbeat coverage about the peaceful protests and some criticism of certain aspects of the new president’s (Mr. Duhalde) administration, but the news stories in general were nonaligned. The editor’s fear to a social breakdown is evident” (March, 2002, <http://www.comunica.org>).

As mentioned previously, Rey Lennon, together with *The Freedom Forum Organization* (2000), carried out research in agenda-setting in the city of Buenos Aires during the 1997 legislative elections. The investigation was divided into two areas: analysis of issue salience and issue attributes. After positively establishing the agenda-setting function of the media, the authors continued to measure the agenda of attributes of political candidates. When it came to demonstrating “the candidate’s

image,” the investigation found that the media’s priorities were: the candidates’ ideological aspects (42%), followed by their qualifications (28%), personality (20%), and ethics or corruptive image (10%) (p. 11).

Furthermore, the investigation also looked for the type of tone (negative, neutral, and positive) the media used to portray the political candidates. They found that an average of 34% of the coverage was positive, 34% neutral, and 32% negative. Interestingly, the majority of the newspapers coincided with the type of coverage. Only two newspapers differ from the rest in their use of attributes, one of them, *Ambito Financiero*, used more negative attributes while *La Nacion*, employed less negative attributes than the rest of the newspapers (p. 37).

Casermeiro de Pereson (2003) also carried out an analysis of attributes during the 1998 primary elections. The attributes were divided in two dimensions: “substantive dimension” and “affective dimension.” The “substantive dimension” was operationalized by four categories of attributes: ideology, qualification, ethical behavior (corrupted or not corrupted), and personality. This dimension involved the participant’s and media’s descriptions about the candidates (p. 280).

McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, and Rey (1997) explain that the reduction of the agenda of attributes to these four macro categories (ideology, qualification, ethical behavior, and personality) reflects a big effort to find a methodological and theoretical support that identifies the basic aspects of the political candidate’s image, not only among the media but also among the voters (p. 706).

“On the other hand, the ‘affective dimension’ points to the general ‘tone’ of those ‘substantive dimension’s’ descriptions about the candidates,” write Casermeiro

de Pereson (2003), “in other words, it refers to the public opinion and media’s emotional response about the candidates (p. 280).

Casermeiro de Pereson (2003) found that the print media mostly portrayed the candidates throughout the ideological attribute (49%), followed by their qualifications (28%), ethical behavior (14%), and personality (4%). Television news programs also focused their attention mostly to the candidates’ ideological attributes (41%), followed by their qualification (21%), ethical behavior (19%), and personality (19%) (p. 287).

However, the investigation found that the public agenda’s priority was the candidates’ qualifications (48%) instead of their ideology (as portrayed by the media as being the most significant), followed by personality (27%), ideology (13%), and ethical behavior (12%) (p. 287).

In measuring the “affective dimension” (tone) of the candidates, Casermeiro de Pereson (2003) found once again the media’s tone and the public opinion’s tone varied when referring to the candidates. The study revealed that the tone of the newspapers was mostly neutral (53%), the television news program’s was positive (55%), and the people’s emotional responses to the candidates were mostly negative (58%) (p. 294).

Casermeiro de Pereson (2003) concluded that the “substantive dimension” of attributes showed no correlation between the public’s agenda and the newspaper’s agenda (.000). The author also found that correlation between the public’s agenda and the television news agenda was not significant (p. 211). More interestingly, when the “affective dimension” of attributes were measured, there was found a significant

negative correlation between the public's agenda and the newspaper's agenda (-1.000), as well as the public's agenda and the television news program's agenda (-.500) (p. 300).

Casermeyro de Pereson (2003) concludes that "the media's interests or criteria are very different from the public's interests or necessities. The media always seemed to place the candidates and the political parties in a state of 'conflict of interests' for access to powerful political positions, while the public show no interest in those attributes." Thus, the hypothesis implying the transference of attributes from the media to the public was not supported (p. 341).

Chapter Three: Methodology

The Research Method

In past research, agenda setting theory has been tested a number of ways and according to Wimmer and Dominick (2000), “the most common method involves using content analysis through grouping coverage topics into broad categories and measuring the amount of time or space devoted to each category.”

This study, a comparative content analysis, examined the front-page economic and political content published in the three major newspapers in the Republic of Argentina between 2000 and 2002. The purpose of this study was to discover whether or not the three newspapers supported or did not support the government’s transition. This was accomplished by examining the newspapers to discover whether their coverage consisted of positively worded stories or whether those stories were more negatively worded in the reports. Neutral stories were not considered for this research.

The Study Group

This research considered two categories of news agendas: economic and political news. It examined the content from front pages excluding Sundays, from January 2000 to December 2002. The content includes headlines, sub-headlines, and entire articles.

The economic news content was defined as follows: the Argentine foreign debt, which includes issues dealing with the International Monetary Found (IMF) and the World Bank; unemployment rate, includes news related to possible layoffs and lack of jobs; economic news in general or debates about possible economic solutions that will affect normal people in general, such as price increases in public transportation and banks freezing accounts; and recession news, including articles regarding the country's economic performance as a whole.

Political news content was defined by news with reference to: government institutions (Ministries, Departments, etc.); political parties (includes political debates among the parties and between the parties); elections news; government corruption (at all levels); news regarding unions including political protests, negotiations, and debates); and news regarding the *Piqueteros*, a non-Union social movement born as a consequence of workers being laid off, which includes street protests demanding social changes.

Once the political and economic stories are identified, this study will measure the story's tone or attributes (Appendix A). Positive attributes will be those stories that mention favorable qualities about an issue (s), person (s), idea (s), policy (s) or institution (s). Stories describing new proposals and solutions to problems will also be considered as positives. Negative attributes will be those stories that mention unfavorable qualities about an issue (s), person (s), idea (s), or institution (s).

A second independent coder coded one percent of the total number of stories, a total of fifty stories. The coder was a 27-year-old Spanish-speaking female from Argentina. There was a reliability coefficient of ($r = .96$). The newspapers have

been chosen according to their circulation's size, ideological differences, and social influence. *Clarín Newspaper* is a daily national newspaper founded in 1945. Its circulation average 421,000 from Monday to Sunday, and 821,000 on Sundays. Its estimated profit is \$1,750 millions (1999). It is a multi-target newspaper, mainly read by medium-upper class and medium-medium class. The newspaper belongs to the Clarín Group. It is owned by Ernestina Noble (the founder's widow), and Golden Sachs Group Inc. which owns 18 percent of the group's share. The Clarín Group has a debt of \$1.5 to \$2.0 million (2002); however, the newspaper is still in good shape. It is not well defined what type of ideology the newspaper holds. Its advertising accounts for forty percent of the newspaper's space. Most of the profits made are from classified advertising.

La Nación Newspaper is a daily national newspaper founded in 1870. It is owned by the Saguier family (66%). Its circulation is estimated at 170,000 (February 2001). It profits about \$234 million. As of 2002, *La Nación Newspaper* is the newspaper chosen by the upper social classes. Thus, it is considered the most influential among the groups with decision making power. It used to be conservative in regards to politics, liberal in regards to economic policies and catholic values. Lately, it has become more pluralistic with a social-democrat ideology. It has a "civic journalism" style. Advertising accounts for forty percent of the newspaper's space.

Página 12 Newspaper is a daily national newspaper founded in 1987. It was a great success when it came out. The press targeting the "intellectual left" has always been very popular in Argentina. However, the newspaper has been considered to be "the second" choice after *Clarín* and *La Nación*. Its circulation is unknown, but it

estimated to be around 10,000. Ideologically leftist, it uses creative and sarcastic headlines. It is said that Clarin Group bought *Pagina 12* a few years ago, but it has not been officially confirmed by the two parties.

Data Gathering

The purpose of the study was to discover if the three newspapers did or did not support the government transition using positive and negative wording. Therefore, stories considered to be neutral for their lack of either positive or negative wording were discarded in this research. A total of 4,326 stories were coded as either positive or negative. Of the total number, 2,033 were political stories and 2,293 were economic stories. Among the political news, *Pagina 12* had a total of 796 stories, *Clarín* had a total of 443, and *La Nación* had a total of 790. Among the economic news, *Pagina 12* had a total of 659 stories, *Clarín* had a total of 761, and *La Nación* had a total of 873.

In addition, the researcher coded the frequencies of negative and positive attributes in the economic and political stories by newspaper. Of the three newspapers, *Pagina 12* had the highest number of negative political stories, accounting for 401, as well as the highest number of negative economic stories, accounting for 456. In addition, *Pagina 12* showed a total number of 395 positive political stories and a total number of 203 positive economic stories.

Clarín showed the least number of negative political stories, accounting for 185 as well as the least number of negative economic stories, accounting for a total of 389. *Clarín* also had the fewest positive political stories, accounting for 258 but

surpasses *Pagina 12* in its total number of positive economic stories, accounting for a total of 372.

After *Pagina 12*, *La Nacion* showed the second highest number of negative political stories accounting for 383. Conversely, *La Nacion* had the highest number of positive political stories, accounting for a total of 408 as well as the highest number of positive economic stories, accounting for a total number of 436. Lastly, second to *Pagina 12*, *La Nacion* showed a total number of 437 negative economic stories.

Data Analysis

To count the frequency of units' occurrence in each category, the content was recorded as nominal data. A coding sheet was developed (Appendix B). A cross-tabulation analysis was used to determine the observed frequencies. In addition, Chi-Square was used in the cross-tabulation analysis to determine whether or not there was a statistical significance among the frequencies.

Research question one was addressed in both a qualitative and quantitative manner. A description of how the newspapers used their positive and negative attributes was addressed together with the stories' frequencies. The frequencies were placed in tables to show the changes throughout the three-year period of analysis.

Research question two was addressed by the cross-tabulation analysis results and Chi-Square was used to indicate any significant difference between economic and political coverage. The frequencies were placed in tables to show the changes throughout the three-year period of analysis.

Research question three was addressed by the cross-tabulation analysis results. The frequencies were placed in tables to show the changes throughout the three-year period of analysis.

Research question four was addressed by the cross-tabulation analysis results and Chi-Square was used to indicate any significant difference between the newspapers' negative and positive economic coverage as well as negative and positive political coverage.

Chapter Four: Results

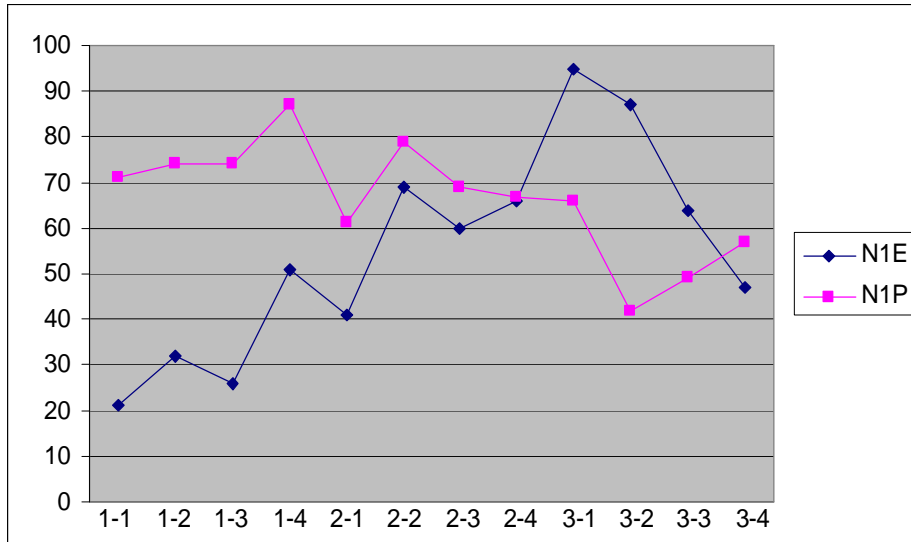
This study measured the frequency of political and economic news stories printed on the front page of the three major newspapers in the Republic of Argentina: *Pagina 12 Newspaper*, *Clarín Newspaper*, and *La Nación Newspaper*. Coding involved a total of 2,029 political news stories and 2,293 economic stories. In addition, the research analyzes the positive and negative tone of those stories. The researcher analyzes only weekday stories for a three-year period: 2000, 2001, and 2002. To better understand the changes through time, the three years studied were divided into twelve quarters to demonstrate the changes/shifts taking place before, during, and after the government transition while reporting political and economic news stories.

Research question 1 asked: “How does coverage of economic crisis issues differ from coverage of political crisis issues in each newspaper from 2000 to 2002?”

Pagina 12 Findings

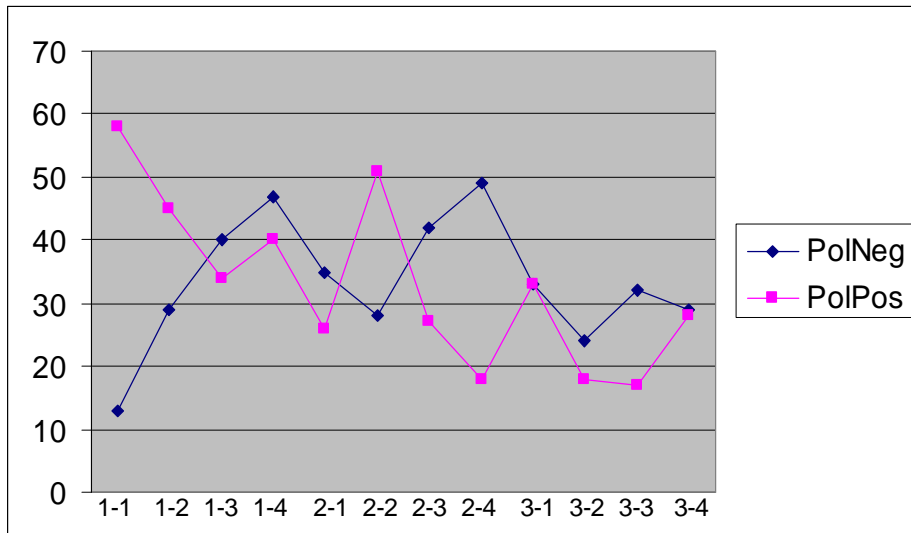
As seen in Chart 1, *Pagina 12's* coverage of political stories in the year 2000 almost always outnumbered the coverage of economic stories.

Chart 1: *Pagina 12*'s Economic (N1E) and Political (N1P) Coverage.



On the other hand, as shown in Chart 2, the frequency of the positive and negative tone of those political stories in the first year changes over time. *Pagina 12* begins the year 2000 with a high frequency of positive political stories. Positive stories were those that supported or agreed with President De la Rúa and his administration's decisions, and those that were against the main opposition party's assessment, in particular the Peronist Party. Most of the positive stories coded in the first quarter referred to those regarding former President Carlos Menem and members of his administration. The stories discussed the struggle of the Peronist Party to define its leaders and the present economic problems that were inherited from the Menem government. Stories such as De la Rúa's government investigating corruption cases of Menem's government were prominent. Here is one of the phrases *Pagina 12* uses to describe the issue: "Menem's friends. The whole retirement system for public employees has been wrecked."

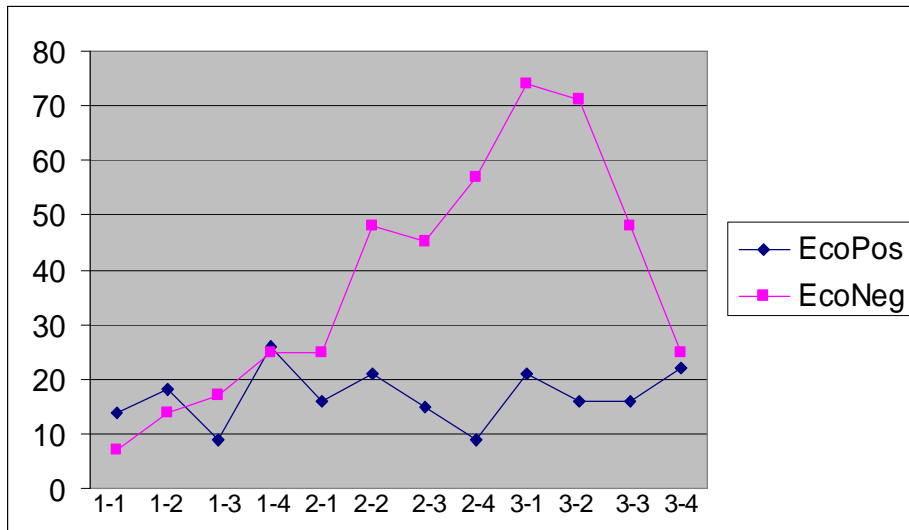
Chart 2: *Pagina 12*'s Negative Political (PolNeg) and Positive Political (PolPos) Coverage.



Pagina 12's priority of publishing stories about corruption cases in Menem's presidency is high. They include stories about investigations of overpriced government contracts made by members of the Menem's government and spurious public spending during the Menem presidency.

In addition, positive political stories highlights President De la Rúa's initiative to reach out to different parties and unions to agree on a sustainable social program, "the Government succeeded on getting all the Peronist's governors to agree on a 'social pact,'" *Pagina 12* writes. The small number of economic stories as seen in Chart 3, were focused on possible agreements in regards to the Argentine foreign debt with international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), and stories on the creation of new plans to improve tax revenues, "in the public meeting De la Rúa aggressively focused his speech against tax evasion," *Pagina 12* writes.

Chart 3: *Pagina 12*'s Negative Economic (EcoNeg) and Positive Economic (EcoPos)



As shown in Chart 2, *Pagina 12*'s positive political coverage decreases and its negative stories increase dramatically in 2000's second quarter (1-2). In this period, the government begins to be pressured by protesters and unions all over the country, an example of which is the protest in the province of Salta where the Government had to send the National Guard to stop the riots. The newspaper writes, "the situation is critical." *Pagina 12* begins to criticize the social conditions in the countryside, writing that "the conflicts are increasing." It presents stories about members of the government disagreeing in regards to the implementation of new socio-political and economic policies to solve the problems. It also begins to write about the possible failure of the measures the government is taking to reactivate the economy, "what happens if the improvement of the economy takes a long time and the new policies don't work?" *Pagina 12* writes.

As shown in Chart 2, the frequency of negative political coverage surpasses the positive in 2000's third quarter (1-3). Negative stories focus on the increasing

differences between the members of De la Rúa's administration and possible corruption cases among members of the cabinet, "a sector of the Government has a tendency of bribing judges in order to do political operations," *Página 12* writes. In August of 2000, the newspaper criticizes De la Rúa's government inability to differentiate itself from Menem's government and writes "the De la Rúa government's problem is not having been able to change some of the negative tendencies the Menem's government had."

Although *Página 12*'s negative coverage keeps increasing, its positive coverage is still high in 2000's third quarter (1-3) due to Vice President Carlos Alvarez's bribe allegation against several senators from his own party as well as the opposition (Peronist) party. In support of Alvarez, the newspaper writes "Alvarez studies a project to make the Senate more efficient and less corrupt." From then on, positive political stories are about the government focusing on fighting corruption and trying to solve the Senate bribe accusations. Though the newspaper clearly approves the vice president's actions, the negative stories keep outnumbering the positive ones with coverage on government members having been part of giving bribes to the opposition party.

At this time in 2000's third quarter (1-3), as shown in Chart 3, negative economic stories surpass the positive economic coverage, which rapidly drops. Negative economic stories refer to new unemployment rates and tax increases. "Two hundred and seventy thousand people were laid off, the Government decided to create new social programs to soften the bad news," *Página 12* writes, "the new unemployment rate will be announced today, the President will have to deal with the

worst numbers his inauguration.” “The low tax revenues are due to the continuing economic recession, the increment on taxes could end up in a vicious circle,” *Pagina 12* writes.

As shown in Chart 2, in 2000’s fourth quarter (1-4), things begin to shift again. Negative coverage continues to increase, but so does positive coverage. The coverage of the Senate bribe scandal is almost always, if not always, a front-page story and the vice president’s personal involvement in solving the case becomes also a priority for the newspaper as is indicated in the headline “Alvarez studies a project to improve Congress’s efficiency and lower corruption.” At this point, 2000’s fourth quarter (1-4), political stories registered their highest frequency in the three-year period (Chart 1). Stories about political instability due to the vice president’s resignation and the uncertain future of the President’s party are extensively covered in *Pagina 12*’s front page, “if De Santibanes is the President’s friend, he has to resign and not wait until the President fires him.”

While political coverage remains high, as seen in Chart 1, economic news stories increased dramatically in 2000’s fourth quarter (1-4). Interestingly, the frequencies of positive and negative economic stories are almost the same in number as seen in Chart 3. The negative coverage of economic stories is focused on the country’s economic uncertainty and the President’s inefficiency of solving the problems, “business uncertainty dominates the marketplace,” *Pagina12* writes. “The Alianza Party’s lack of clear signals on how to solve the economic recession and doubts about Machinea’s political future as the Minister of Economics,” the newspaper writes. In addition, economic negative coverage is represented by stories

on the country's possible inability to pay the foreign debt and foreign financial markets reaction to the country's economic measures, "Machinea recognized 'foreign markets are being harsh to Argentina,'" the newspaper writes.

Positive economic coverage in 2000's fourth quarter (1-4) is represented by stories about political support to certain economic laws claimed by De la Rúa's government, tax reductions, and possible agreements with the IMF, "Machinea could show its first success with the IMF: he will announce a new loan," *Página 12* writes.

Although political coverage remains higher than the economic in (2-1), it (political) declined drastically (Chart 1). One of the reasons for the reduction is the newspaper's decline in writing about the bribes in the Senate, one of the most publicized political scandals in the history of the country. The number of negative political stories nearly outnumbered the positive ones. Negative stories focuses on the disagreements among the members of the government's party in preparation for the next congressional elections "once again, the members of the Alianza Party seem to be incapable in communicating with each other," the newspaper writes. There are also stories on the president's desperate need to improve the situation "even with 30 decrees signed, it will be considerably more difficult that those measurements will help 'the people,'" *Página 12* writes. And although stories on the senate's bribes are much less in frequency in (2-1), there are still several front-page stories about it "there is nobody investigating the senator's illegal payoffs, they are sure the bribes existed. The prosecutors criticize the government," the newspaper writes. On the other hand, positive political stories referred once again to former President Carlos

Menem and cases of corruption happening during his government and stories on the Government's Party attempts to bring its party leadership together.

As shown in Chart 3, among the economic stories, negative coverage is prominent in the front pages; however, the difference between the positive and negative tone is not considerably larger for the first quarter of 2001 (2-1). Negative economic stories mainly point to the dreadful crisis affecting the country. "The Argentine financial crisis in the year 2000 is among the worst at the international financial level," *Pagina 12* writes. Stories on the reduction of people's salaries, increase of poverty levels, and unemployment increases, "the poverty rate has increased between 26.7 and 29.4 percent in the metropolitan area," "the fiscal balance will come with more unemployment," the newspaper writes.

The first week of March 2001 (2-1), a new Minister of Economics, Ricardo Lopez Murphy, steps in and the newspaper's response to his economic measures is clearly negative, "this menu of economic actions could be too severe for the government to handle," the newspaper writes. A week later as a consequence of the tremendous social and political pressure, Lopez Murphy resigns and a third Minister of Economics (in De la Rúa's term), Domingo Cavallo, steps in. The newspaper's reaction to the new minister is ambiguous. It refers to him as a capable minister by writing "Domingo Cavallo has been asked once again to put out the fire," at the same time it portrays him as highly ambitious and polarizing, "the ambitious super minister hopes to control all the key powerful positions in the government," *Pagina 12* writes.

On the other hand, positive economic stories in (2-1) talk about the new loan the country receives and the United States Federal Reserve announcement on interest rate reductions which means that the interest rate Argentina will pay is less than before, “the new credit obtained in addition to the reduction of interest rates changed Machinea’s humor,” the newspaper writes. However, the new loan and low interest rates were not enough to keep Machinea as the Minister of Economics.

In 2001’s second quarter (2-2), the number of economic stories increases dramatically (Chart 1). There are only nine more political stories than economic. Interestingly, while the negative economic coverage increased dramatically as shown in Chart 3, the number of positive political stories hits its second highest point (Chart 2). At this time, the new economy minister begins to take total control of the situation by strongly requesting Congress to pass special laws in order to prevent a devastated financial collapse. The negative economic coverage focuses on the amount of attention Cavallo is receiving from the media leaving the president as second in charge, “De la Rúa worries: the headlines talk about the economy and they all have the same main character, the (super) Minister, Domingo Cavallo,” the newspaper writes. Negative economic stories also focused on the desperate attempts from the minister to maintain the debt payments as well as stories focusing on the failure of paying them, “Cavallo had no other alternative than to pay the awfully high interest rates frightful for the future of the country’s economy,” “*The Wall Street Journal* affirms the country can’t pay its debt,” *Pagina 12* writes.

The positive political coverage, as shown in Chart 2, in the center of the worst time (2-2) of the economic crisis was about corruption cases and possible prison time

for former president Carlos Menem and members of his government due to their involvement in illegal arms dealings. *Página 12* clearly shows interest on this story. “Menem was yelled at by Yoma while visiting him (Yoma) in prison,” “Antonio Erman González could be the second person, a former member of the Menem’s government, to go to prison,” “he admitted there was illegal arms dealings,” the newspaper writes.

The third quarter of 2001 (2-3), shows a small decline in the number of both economic and political news stories (Chart 1). The smaller number of stories coded is a direct consequence of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 in the United States of America. Several front-page stories were related to those attacks and were not coded. Nevertheless, negative economic coverage remains high (Chart 3) and political positive coverage (Chart 2) drops dramatically. Negative economic stories continue to talk about the dramatic economic situation the country is in such as the plummet on tax revenues, the decline on car sales, the lack of economic measures to improve the situation, and the increase on cash withdraws from bank accounts. To a greater extent, stories began to talk about the rise of unemployment and cuts on public spending among the most needy people, “there are two hundred and six thousand more unemployed people than last year,” “there will be cuts even in the most needed sectors,” *Página 12* writes.

Negative political coverage in 2001’s third quarter (2-3) focuses on the lack of political support from members of Congress, Unions, and even members from the President’s own political party to the new Government’s economic measures, “the three main Unions decided to organize a strike to oppose the new cuts on public

spending,” *Pagina 12* writes. In addition, protests begin to be nationally organized for the first time by “non political groups,” *Pagina 12* writes.

In 2001’s fourth quarter (2-4), the frequency of political and economic news stories is exactly the same (Chart 1). *Pagina 12*’s negative economic coverage keeps rising while its negative political coverage hits its highest point (Chart 2). Negative economic stories point to tax revenues continuous decline, the unenthusiastic response from the national and international financial markets to the Argentina’s economic facts, the possible default on the foreign debt, and frozen saving accounts, “former Economic Minister, Jose Luis Machinea concludes that Argentina can’t pay the foreign debt, it will have to devalue its currency, and will have to freeze people’s saving accounts in order to stop the fleeing of cash,” the newspaper writes. In addition, the newspaper writes that “Argentina waits for a disorganized default; it will end the convertibility system, and will incite massive bankruptcies in the banking system.” Negative economic stories also focus on new records for the unemployment rate, the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) pessimism toward Argentina’s financial system, and the lack of alternatives the Minister of Economics, Domingo Cavallo, has to overcome such a calamity. “The new unemployment record hits another record, 720 thousand people have no jobs,” *Pagina 12* writes. On December 6, 2001 the International Monetary Fund declines the loan the government was desperately anxious for, *Pagina 12* writes “there won’t be any loan, the financial program has falling apart and Argentina has no way out.”

Discussed earlier, *Pagina 12*’s negative political coverage reaches its highest point in the three years of coding (Chart 2). The stories in this quarter (2-4) focus on

the lack of political leadership among the government to solve the economic situation, the big political lost the government's party had in the congressman elections in October 14, 2001, federal budget's negotiations with the province's governors, and stories on public national protests from the Unions and non-political ordinary citizens "the Peronist party, the Frepaso Party, the ARI, and the Frente Para el Cambio Party obtained the majority of the votes before a weak Alianza Party," "unemployed people begins a new era of solid activism," *Pagina 12* writes.

On December 21, 2001(2-4), the Minister of Economics, Domingo Cavallo and President Fernando De la Rúa resign after two days of social chaos, marcher's deaths' and rioting. "Riots, people killed, and protests, the end of Cavallo," "De la Rúa ordered an unlimited police repression leaving the country in an institutional empty hole," the newspaper writes. As a result, Adolfo Rodríguez Saa from the Peronist Party takes control of the government in December 23, 2001 (2-4). However, due to political disagreements with powerful members of his own party (Peronist), seven days later he resigns, "Rodríguez Saa's departure was like a punch in the stomach for the whole Argentine institutional system," the newspaper writes. On January 1, 2002, Eduardo Duhalde is chosen by the National Congress to be the next President of Argentina.

When comparing the results in Chart 1, in 2002's first quarter (3-1), economic coverage reaches its highest point as well as negative economic frequency of stories, as shown in Chart 3. Negative economic coverage points to Government measures to solve the economic situation. Price increases of basic products, frozen bank accounts, and the negotiations (or lack there of) with the International Monetary Fund to obtain

a new loan. “Duhalde’s plan lacks elements to activate the economy, they will only extinguish the fire,” *Pagina 12* writes. “Although they promise, the Government has yet to announce the return of deposits,” “pressured by the circumstances, the Government promised to open the accounts, the problem is how they will do that,” *Pagina 12* writes. “The financial help Argentina would get from the IMF, WB, and IBD will only help to repay those institutions,” “the IMF mission practically distrusts the Economic Ministry’s foresight,” *Pagina 12* writes.

Although economic coverage surpasses the political coverage in 2002’s first quarter (3-1), political coverage remains steadily higher and its tone is equally balanced with the same number of negative and positive stories. Among the positive coverage, the stories refer to President Duhalde’s intentions of changing the Supreme Court and the President’s wife, Hilda Duhalde, to be temporarily in charge of the Social Ministry. “The President plans to change the Supreme Court’s members by popular claim as well as his and other political parties demand,” “Hilda Duhalde is one of the biggest hopes this Government has, she seems to be able to manage any obstacle before her,” “Hilda Duhalde already has one million products to hand out among the poorest families,” *Pagina 12* writes.

Among the negative political stories, the coverage highlights common reaction to Duhalde’s appointment as President of Argentina, “another protest in the capital city was the response to his appointment,” *Pagina 12* writes. However, stories about the Government’s attempt to sue the Supreme Court’s members occupies most of the negative political stories, “the tools are there, the recipe to recycle the Supreme Court members is there, but there is no political desire to do it,” “the continuity of the

Supreme Court members symbolizes that in reality the Government does not want to listen people's claims," *Pagina 12* writes.

As shown in Chart 1, right after the government transition in 2002's first quarter (3-1) there is a clear shift in 2002's second quarter (3-2). Economic coverage declines rapidly and political coverage continues to rapidly shrink. In the economic stories, the negative tone also declines (Chart 3). Negative economic stories focus on a high inflation rate, the increase on poverty levels, and public services costs. "Suddenly, Argentines have to deal with high inflation," "the number of homeless people increases day by day," "the combination of unemployment, inflation, and lack of food is wiping out entire families," *Pagina 12* writes. "The lack of solution to the price increase of public services has created a fateful disagreement between the train and bus companies," *Pagina 12* writes. In addition, negative economic stories refer to the negotiations with the IMF. "Only the Government is enthusiastic about settling a deal with the IMF," "if the Country keeps going in the same direction and a new agreement with the IMF is signed, it seems there will be a deliberate decision to put five million more people under the poverty line," *Pagina 12* writes.

Although political coverage rapidly decreases in 2002's second quarter (3-2), the majority of its stories are negative and focuses on people's frustration with politicians (see Chart 2), "thirty four percent of the interviewees believe political leaders are the main worries in society," "opportunism won't deceive anybody, as nobody believes that current President Duhalde was not the same person who poorly governed the Province of Buenos Aires," *Pagina 12* writes. In addition, some of the negative political stories talk about the lack of support President Duhalde has, from

his own Peronist Party, to pass vital laws. “The intent of having a Federal Cabinet sank due to lack of support from the Peronist members,” “for the first time President Duhalde threatens to quit if Congress and the governors do not fulfill their concessions,” *Pagina 12* writes.

As shown in Chart 3, although the number of negative economic coverage rapidly decline in 2002’s third quarter (3-3), it remains much higher than the frequency of positive economic coverage. Negative economic coverage focuses on the negotiations with the IMF. “The IMF is now pressuring the Government to implement drastic changes in the financial system,” “it won’t be an easy week for the Minister of Economics, Roberto Lavagna, economic experts appear to agree more with the IMF and banks than with the Government’s ideas,” *Pagina 12* writes. In addition, stories keep focusing on the increasing unemployment and poverty rates, “the unemployment rate reached a new record of 21.5 percent, an additional 3 million more people in the country,” “poverty level affects 18.5 million,” *Pagina 12* writes.

As shown in Chart 2, in the political arena, there is a raise of negative political coverage in (3-3). These stories refer to public protests and the selection of a Peronist political candidate to run against former President Carlos Menem in the next presidential primaries. “The recent killings of two protesters throws away the peace trophy the Government claimed to have won a few months ago,” “yesterday’s massive and bipartisan public demonstration was to repudiate the economic model and to solve the protester’s killings,” *Pagina 12* writes. “The Government assured he was going to run. But Reuteman confirmed he is not a candidate,” “the Government

perceives the official candidate, Jose Manuel De la Sota, is not going to gain support,” *Pagina 12* write.

In 2002’s fourth quarter (3-4) *Pagina 12*’s political coverage surpasses the economic coverage for the first time in a year (see Chart 1). Positive political coverage increases (see Chart 2) while negative economic coverage continues to rapidly decrease (see Chart 3). Positive political coverage points to former President Menem’s legal difficulties and Duhalde’s success in obtaining political support to set a date for the primaries election. “The former president appeared in court, his ‘fans’ attacked the press,” “the United States put a thumbs down on Carlos Menem, the Bush administration evidently did not approve of Menem’s presidential intentions,” *Pagina 12* writes. “For the first time, Menem fears to be defeated by his own Peronist structure,” “Duhalde accomplished what until now appeared to be impossible: he obtained Governor Reuteman support to battle Menem,” *Pagina 12* writes. In addition, positive political stories refer to President Duhalde’s resignation (a condition he agreed to when accepting the President’s position). “It took a lot of work, but finally the Senate accepted Duhalde’s resignation as President of Argentina,” “Duhalde’s allies obtained the majority needed to approve the electoral calendar and set the date for new Peronist primaries, next February 23, 2003,” *Pagina 12*.

As shown in Chart 3, for the first time in almost two years, negative and positive economic stories equaled each other in the amount of coverage in 2002’s fourth quarter (3-4). Positive economic coverage focuses on people’s access to their bank deposits and better economic results in regards to the national industry,

“everything went smoothly when the Government decided to lift the bank accounts restrictions,” “the most powerful business men in the country think the improvement of the economy is possible,” *Pagina 12* writes. On the contrary, negative economic coverage focuses on inflation rate increases and its consequences, “the Government celebrates the latest production numbers, however, inflation keeps drastically cutting consumer’s buying power among the poorest people,” “because of the lack of affordable medicine, cardiac arrest hospitalizations have increased,” *Pagina 12* writes. In addition, the negotiations with the IMF remain critical, “the IMF continues to pressure Argentina to increase taxes and public services tariffs,” “Minister of Economics, Roberto Lavagna, did not have a good reception in Washington, the IMF does not intent to negotiate with this Government but with the following,” *Pagina 12* writes.

Pagina 12 Summary

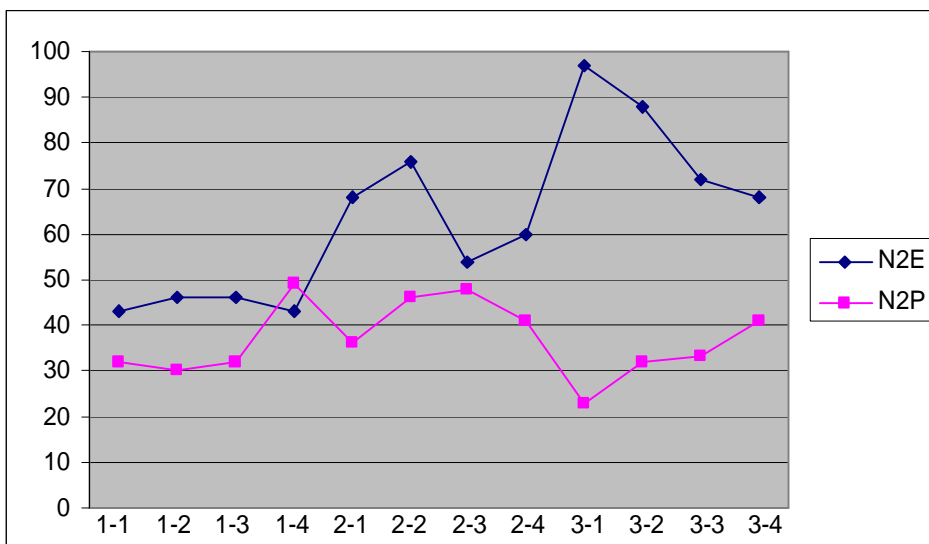
Overall, *Pagina 12* shows three significant shifts in its political and economic coverage as well as its positive and negative economic and political reporting. The first important shift occurs in 2000’s third quarter (1-3) when Vice President Carlos Alvarez states the possible existence of bribes among senate members, including members of his own party. It was at this point that *Pagina 12*’s political and negative political coverage significantly increases (see Charts 1 and 2). The second important shift occurs in (2-2) when former President Carlos Menem is accused of illegally smuggling weapons and is later arrested. This is when *Pagina 12*’s political (Chart 1) as well as positive political coverage (Chart 2) significantly increase. As shown in Chart 1, the third and most important shift for this research study occurs during

2002's first quarter (3-1) when economic coverage significantly exceeds political coverage. Here is where negative economic coverage also reaches its highest point in the three years of coverage (see Chart 3). Interestingly, right after the governmental transition, economic coverage as well as negative economic coverage dramatically declines and then toward the end of 2002 political coverage once again regains priority (see Chart 1).

Clarin Newspaper Findings

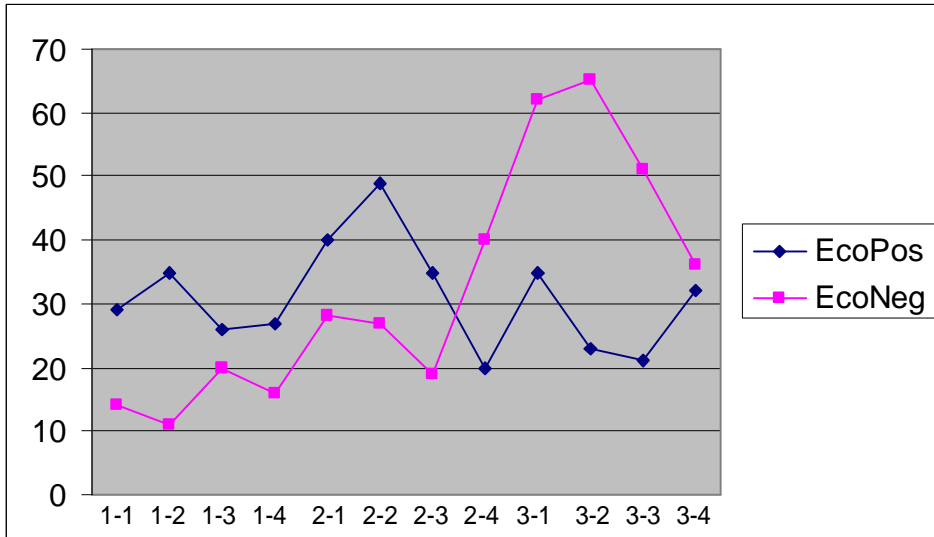
Throughout 2000, *Clarin Newspaper* focuses its coverage on economic stories (Chart 4).

Chart 4: *Clarin Newspaper's* Economic (N2E) and Political (N2P) Coverage.



As shown in Chart 5, *Clarin Newspaper's* positive economic coverage dominates in 2000's first quarter (1-1).

Chart 5: *Clarín* Newspaper's Negative Economic (EcoNeg) and Positive Economic Coverage (EcoPos).



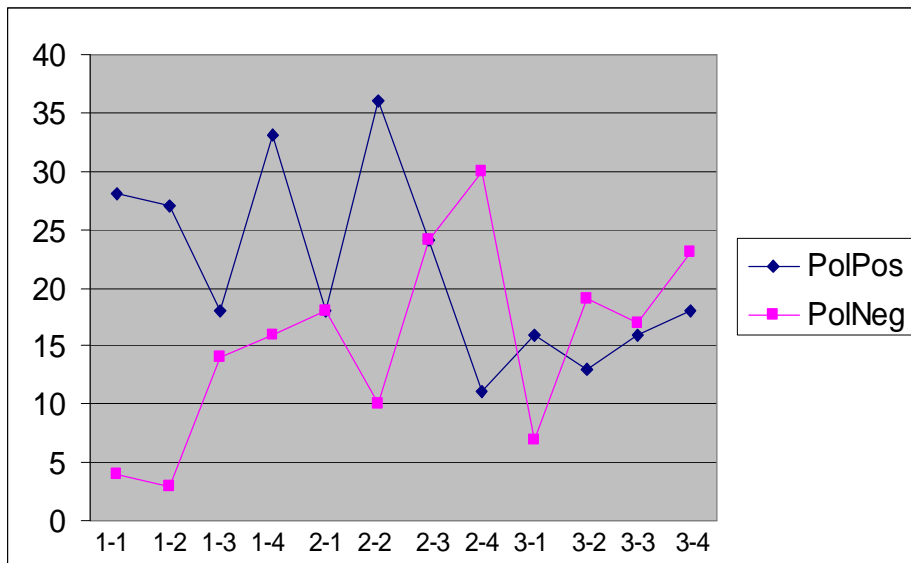
Clarín's positive economic stories highlight bad economic recession conditions inherited from former President, Carlos Menem; "De la Rúa inherited public deficit, unemployment, and recession," writes *Clarín*. De la Rúa's initiative in fighting tax evasion and stories on a new loan giving by international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and International Bank of Development were also among positive economic coverage, "the Government hopes to generate a sense of confidence among the citizens," "the goal is to stop spending government's money, members of the government think the agreement with the IMF is a success," *Clarín* writes.

In less frequency, negative economic coverage in 2002's first quarter (1-1) points to tax increases, salary cuts, and the crumbling of national industries, "another blow for people's pockets, half of the salary will be taken by new taxes," "soon enough there won't be any more nationally owned industries," *Clarín* writes. The majority number of political stories, as shown in Chart 6, is positive. Positive political

coverage highlights corruption cases during the Menem Presidency and De la Rúa's initiative to solve them, "the government analyzes corruption cases due to the overpriced government contracts during Menem Presidency," "De la Rúa attempts to publicly show he is capable of investigating cases of corruption under Menem's watch," *Clarín* writes.

During 2000's second quarter (1-2), the frequency of economic stories remains the same as 2000's first quarter (1-1), but positive coverage increases (see Chart 5).

Chart 6: *Clarín* Newspaper's Positive Political (PolPos) and Negative Political Coverage (PolNeg).



Positive economic stories refer to the improvement of tax revenues and international support to the new economic plan, "the new tax plan begins to show the results the government was waiting for," "the International Monetary Fund's expression of support has come at a good time for the government," *Clarín* writes. In addition, the newspaper seems to back up the new public spending cuts by writing of

its general benefits to the country's economy, "in response to the social effects (from cuts on public spending), the government takes measurements to attract investments," "Machinea's announcements were solid, and 'the economic measures were well accepted' the markets says," *Clarín* writes.

The frequency of political coverage remains the same as well as its positive tone. In 2000's second quarter (1-2), the news coverage focuses on the Mayor of Buenos Aires political election, and political agreements among different political sectors in order to improve the social unrest, "the Mayor's election was a success for the government, it is the first political test since De la Rúa's presidency," "the Government wants consensus, it wants to develop an agenda where all the sectors have a voice, it is trying to unify efforts," *Clarín* writes.

As shown in Chart 4, although the frequency of economic and political stories shows very little change in the third quarter (1-3), the tone of the stories changes. As shown in Chart 5, the gap between positive economic stories and negative economic stories lessens. Negative coverage of economic news increases. Stories on the growing unemployment rate and salary cuts are of main concern for the newspaper as well as public government spending, "the unemployment rate increased, with 347,000 new unemployed people, the situation is not simple," "more public spending, the economy 'is inefficient,'" *Clarín* writes. On the other hand, positive economic coverage in 2000's third quarter (1-3) focuses on the government being able to obey the IMF's rules at the same time is trying to activate the economy, "the Government can fulfill the IMF's requirements, it has collected its highest tax return in history,"

“the Department of Economics announces new credit’s opportunities to generate new expectations,” *Clarín* writes.

Although positive political coverage remains higher, negative political coverage increases dramatically in 2000’s third quarter (1-3) as shown in Chart 6. One of the main reasons is the Vice President’s, Carlos Alvarez, bribe accusation in the Senate where not only opposition political leaders were involved but also members of his own Alianza’s Party, “any political noise will affect the economy, Congress is paralyzed,” the newspaper writes. In addition, for the first time since De la Rúa took office “the Catholic Church expressed the most severe warning in regards to the social crisis the country is in,” *Clarín* writes. Positive political coverage also focuses on the good attitude the President has in solving the bribe’s case, “the President took the initiative and sent his ministers to the anticorruption office to be investigated,” “De la Rúa supported the Vice President’s investigation in putting the bribe’s accusation in the public agenda even though it could be a high political cost for him (President),” writes *Clarín*.

By the end of 2000 (1-4), and for the first time, political news coverage surpasses economic news coverage (see Chart 4). Positive political coverage rapidly increases (see Chart 6). The Senate’s crisis continues to be a priority for the newspaper, and Congress agrees to a new federal budget that was entirely necessary for the Government so it can obtain a new loan from the IMF. “The Santibanes exit could be De la Rúa’s possible solution for a grand dilemma,” “De la Rúa wants to put and end to the crisis,” writes *Clarín* in regards to the bribes in the Senate. “Governor

Carlos Ruckauf, from the opposition party, affirms ‘the Federal budget has to be signed’ because ‘Argentina needs it,’” *Clarín* writes.

Several factors influence positive economic coverage as it remains more frequent (27) than negative coverage (16) in 2000’s last quarter (1-4). The factors include a new loan from the IMF, increasing tax revenues, and positive reaction from the international financial markets to the Government’s economic and political actions, “with this loan Argentina can once again have access to the international market and it guarantees the foreign debt payments in September,” “this is the seventh consecutive month the tax revenues are up,” the newspaper writes.

Clarín continues this trend in the first quarter of 2001 (2-1) carrying a high frequency of positive economic news stories (40). In January 2001, the IMF grants Argentina \$2.9 Billion. *Clarín* reports highly of this event, “this new loan starts to show good results,” “the Government achieved one of the most successful deals since it took office,” it writes. The stories also talk about the international reaction to the new loan Argentina obtained and also highlights the improvement of the economy for ordinary people, “Greenspan applauded the convertibility system. Machinea is very happy,” “the worst is over, people should begin to spend now,” *Clarín* writes.

Although the Minister of Economics (Machinea) resigns, *Clarín* continues its economic coverage in (2-1) with a positive tone, “there was not any major surprise, the Government kept its calm,” “the new minister successfully passed his first tests before the financial market,” *Clarín* writes. At the end of March 2001 (2-1), the second Economic Minister, Ricardo Lopez Murphy resigns and President De la Rúa appoints Domingo Cavallo. With Cavallo in office for the second time as the

Minister of Economics, the newspaper's tone begins to change, "there is big uncertainty, the financial market is boiling, and people are protesting in the streets," *Clarín* writes. On the other hand, the majority of the stories remain positive, "those with a more positive attitude begin to talk about the Cavallo effect," "Cavallo says to have everything under control," *Clarín* writes.

Meanwhile, as shown in Chart 6, the positive political coverage drops dramatically in the first quarter (2-1) of 2001 in reaction to the Senate's bribery allegations being re-investigated. The newspaper writes that the bribes existed and that the money came from the Government Security Intelligence Office, however this time the story is not about investigating who bribes who but about the federal judge in charge of the investigation, "the judge has had bad conduct and performance," "the judge who investigated the worst political crisis now is judged", *Clarín* writes. In addition, negative political coverage is about the lack of political support the new Minister of Economics, Lopez Murphy has, "because of the severe crisis, politicians look cheerless," *Clarín* writes.

In 2001's second quarter (2-2), total economic news coverage continues to rise and overshadow political coverage (see Chart 4) as the gap between the two broadens. Positive political and positive economic coverage attain their highest point in the three years of coverage as shown in Charts 5 and 6. Positive economic stories focus on the new economic measures taken by Minister Cavallo, "the country has a way out with Cavallo," "Bush opened the possibility to financial bilateral help for Argentina," *Clarín* writes. In May of 2001 (2-2), Argentina receives a new loan from the IMF and tax revenues increase, "Cavallo can now show off this (tax revenues

result) as a positive sign for investors,” “the agreement with the IMF means there is support for Argentina even though the country did not accomplish its fiscal goals,” *Clarín* writes. Although positive economic coverage surpasses the negative, the gravity of the economic crisis is not easy to hide and *Clarín* reports on it writing about illegal working conditions, high poverty rate, and the potential bankruptcy of one of the most important formerly state owned companies, *Aerolíneas Argentinas*, privatized during the Menem’s presidency. “More than half of the women are working illegally with no medical insurance and retirement plans,” “fifty three percent of children under eighteen years old live in poor households,” *Clarín* writes.

This significant increase in the second quarter (2-2) of 2001’s positive political coverage focuses on members of the past government and former President Carlos Menem’s illegal weapons exportation to Croatia while Menem was president, “Erman Gonzalez is the first minister to go to prison,” “the prosecutor believes Menem is the head of the organization,” “the judicial situation of the former president is getting more and more complicated,” *Clarín* writes.

In 2001’s third quarter (2-3), economic coverage decreases while political coverage remains the same as the second quarter (see Chart 4). The most significant change in 2001’s third quarter (2-3) is the increase of negative political coverage (see Chart 6) and the decline of positive economic news stories (see Chart 5). Negative political coverage revolves around disagreements between President De la Rúa and one of the most important political leaders in Argentine politics, the Civic Radical Union Party’s leader and former Argentine President Raul Alfonsín. In addition, new public protests and Union strikes begin to increase dramatically, “the Government

fears rioting,” “the strike organized by the three most important Unions against the public budget cuts hurt the industry and the State,” *Clarín* writes. The Government’s political losses in the congressional elections add to the struggle in getting political support to pass new laws in Congress, “the budget cut initiative the government proposes clashes with the Peronist party’s claims,” the newspaper writes. On the other hand, some of the positive political stories remain focused on former President Menem and his possible jail time, “new information could complicate Menem’s situation,” “Switzerland accepts to investigate Menem,” *Clarín* writes.

The decline in positive economic stories emphasizes the lack of available credit in Argentina, “the State will limit its expenses: it will only use tax revenue money for its public spending,” and new poverty records, “there are 206,000 more unemployed people than in May of 2000,” *Clarín* writes. On the other hand, economic positive stories remain focused on Cavallo’s last attempts to negotiate new credit with the IMF and political support from the international community in regards to Argentina’s effort to control public spending, “Brazil, Chile, and Mexico praise Argentina for its efforts to reduce public spending,” writes *Clarín*.

In the last quarter of 2001 (2-4), economic coverage increases by a few stories and political coverage decreases also by a few stories. However, for the first time, *Clarín’s* frequency of negative economic coverage surpasses the amount of positive economic stories (see Chart 5) and negative political coverage reaches its highest point while positive political reaches its lowest point in the three years of analysis, as shown in Charts 6. Negative economic coverage focuses on new unemployment and poverty rates, the boost on tax evasion, and the lack of Government leadership to

solve the devastating economic situation. “The lack of public announcements from the Government speeds up uncertainty in the financial market,” “Cavallo told Kohler (from the IMF) with a melodramatic tone that Argentina has ‘no more time,’” *Clarín* writes. On December 20th, due to the lack of access to international funds and most of all, tremendous public pressure, Minister Domingo Cavallo resigns.

Also in 2000’s fourth quarter (2-4) Unions and non-Unions protests against the economic model are more frequent and social unrest becomes uncontrollable, on December 21, 2001, President De la Rúa resigns, “De la Rúa resigns, he was cornered by the public riots and the 25 deaths,” *Clarín* writes. Negative political coverage during this time, highlights the government transition in which the opposition party (Peronismo) takes control of the Government. Toward the end of 2001 (2-4), after De la Rúa’s resignation, Adolfo Rodríguez Saá from the Peronist party takes office in December 23, 2001, with the condition he was going to stay for a short period until new elections takes place. He officially announces that the nation will default on its foreign debt. However, the prospect that Rodríguez Saá stays longer than the period he agreed with created a huge controversy among the members of his Peronist party, as a result Rodríguez Saá resigns, “the possibility Rodríguez Saá would stay over two years as President created the first and very controversial reaction against him,” “Argentina ends up this year feeling uncertain of what the future holds,” the newspaper writes.

In January 1, 2002, Eduardo Duhalde from the Peronist Party is chosen by the National Congress to be the President of Argentina. Interestingly, in the first quarter of 2002 (3-1), the frequency of economic coverage reaches its highest point while

political news coverage drops significantly marking the lowest number of political stories (see Chart 4) and negative political coverage (see Chart 6) registered in three years of analysis. As shown in Chart 5, negative economic coverage continues to increase. Negative economic coverage highlights the consequences of the Argentine peso's devaluation. The outfall includes price increases in basic food products, the decline of the Argentine peso's value, and the increase of the American dollar's value. Individual bank accounts are still frozen and banks state they do not have enough money to confront massive cash withdraws, "those with bank deposits will have their savings frozen for a long time," "the dollar's price is also controlled," *Clarín* writes. In addition the country's public continuous spending, "the deficit reaches 1.524 millions of pesos," and "the IMF is obstinate in showing some type of positive gesture to help Argentina," the newspaper writes.

On the other hand, some positive economic stories are reported in 2002's first quarter (3-1) and point to the new government's intentions to regain people's trust in the banking system, new economic proposals, and new negotiations with the IMF to obtain financial aid. "The new Government proposal seems to have more consensus among economists," "the Government anticipates changes and proposes solutions," "for the first time, it is said there will be new aid," "there are new negotiations with the IMF, a quick solution to the crisis is sought," *Clarín* writes.

Although discussed earlier, the number of political stories is the lowest in three years, the majority of them are positive. These stories refer to Duhalde's abilities to accord with the governors and unions. "Duhalde accomplished one more

step than De la Rúa,” *Clarín* writes, “the Government celebrates the governors gesture,” “peaceful demonstration, Duhalde listened to the protesters,” *Clarín* writes.

In 2002’s second quarter (3-2), economic coverage remains high but its frequency decreases while political coverage slowly increases. As shown in Chart 5, negative economic coverage reaches its highest point. Negative economic stories refer to a confusing financial banking system, private companies’ bankruptcies, price increases on a variety of services and products due to inflation, and the rise of poverty and unemployment. “Because of the strong price increases in basic foods, the number of poor people increased by 1,547,000,” *Clarín* writes. In addition, the Minister of Economics under President Duhalde, Remes Lenicov, resigns and the country’s economic uncertainty remains high. “Remes Lenicov’s resignation augments the institutional crisis,” *Clarín* writes. People bank’s accounts still frozen and the Government still can’t find a solution to it, “there is still no solution to the freeze (corralito),” *Clarín* writes.

Discussed earlier, political coverage in 2002’s second quarter (3-2) remains low and its coverage is mainly negative, as shown in Chart 6. Negative political stories focus on the lack of political support the Government faces to pass economic laws required by the IMF, especially the lack of support from some of his own Peronist party members. “Even pressured by the Government and the IMF, the Peronist Party could not impose its project,” “the President pressures Congress and threats to step down,” *Clarín* writes. “As the IMF requested in order to initiate talks,” *Clarín* writes, “the Economic Sedition Law is annulled.” The President’s success in making Congress annul this law as the IMF had asked is not well received by the

public who feel the economic model is not working anymore. At this time (2-3), new strikes and public protests take place, “the measure will include strikes, protests and other forms of disclaim,” “the protests ended with two more deaths, since December there have been 31 deaths,” *Clarín* writes. “The Government confronts its most difficult time, cornered by a bad economy, social crisis, and new social violence that had been under control a few months ago,” *Clarín* writes.

Interestingly, in 2002’s third quarter (3-3), the frequency of economic stories continue to decline while political coverage increases (see Chart 4). As shown in Chart 5, negative economic coverage remains high but declines significantly. Negative economic stories in this quarter highlight the increase of layoffs and new poverty rate. “There have been 329,000 lay offs since the beginning of 2002,” “the unemployment and poverty rate reach a new historical record,” *Clarín* writes. In addition, negative coverage underlines the lack of agreement between the IMF and the Government, “the IMF, which sees everything and knows everything about the Argentine economy, once again shows its preoccupation,” “the IMF says there is no concession to any new deal, a hard slap on the face for the Government,” *Clarín* writes. On top of the economic crisis a new, significantly controversial issue is born: ordinary people whose savings accounts have been frozen in the bank begin to file suit against the Government measure. “The verdict allows the plaintiff to order the banks to return his/her money,” *Clarín* writes. On the other hand, the Court’s verdict would complicate the future of the banks and does not help people quickly enough, “international experts worry about the withdrawal of deposits from the banking

system,” “people want to have immediate access to their deposits which were made with total trust in the bank,” *Clarín* writes.

Discussed earlier, political coverage slightly increases in 2002’s third quarter (3-3), but the number of negative and positive stories is nearly equal (see Chart 6). On the positive side (due that Menem is considered to be the main political opponent to President Duhalde), political stories report on former President Menem’s bank account in Switzerland, “corruption accusation: former President, Carlos Menem, finally acknowledges he has a US\$650,000 in a bank account,” *Clarín* writes. In addition, President Duhalde is said to be preparing new measures to get the electoral process ready in a few months to select a new president.

On the negative side, political stories in 2002’s third quarter (3-3) highlight new public protests against police repression that occurred during the last public protest under Duhalde’s presidency. “It was one of the strongest protests of recent years and the most important one since the De la Rúa’s debacle,” *Clarín* writes. Negative political stories also describe the undecided future of the electoral process, “the Electoral Chamber says the Government has yet to respond to its claims in order to prepare the electoral process,” *Clarín* writes.

In 2002’s fourth quarter (3-4), economic coverage declines while political coverage keeps rising. The number of negative economic stories as shown in Chart 5 drops considerably while positive economic stories steadily increase. The rise of positive economic coverage emphasizes stories about the opening of the frozen bank accounts to the general public and new negotiations with the IMF. “Around 700,000 people will benefit from this measure, almost 65% of the savings accounts are

opened,” *Clarín* writes. “the new Minister of Economics, Roberto Lavagna, said the negotiations are on the ‘right path’, however he recognizes that there are some points of discrepancy” “the Group of 7 decided the IMF should negotiate an agreement with Argentina,” *Clarín* writes. In addition, positive economic coverage highlights the country’s improvement in national productivity, “the Minister of Economics says the third trimester’s productivity will grow,” “once again, the local industry grew,” *Clarín* writes. Although negative economic coverage drops dramatically, its frequency is still higher than the positive coverage. In this case, the negative stories are about the dollar price increase and the higher living costs, “the living costs are once again the hardest problem for the poor people,” *Clarín* writes. In addition, 2002’s fourth quarter (3-4) presents several stories on child malnutrition and deaths as a consequence of poor living conditions, “even though this is the first tragic case, he is not the only child with severe malnutrition,” *Clarín* writes. There are also stories on the endless efforts the Government is making to obtain a new credit from the IMF, “once again the negotiations with the IMF failed,” *Clarín* writes.

As shown in Table 6, negative political coverage increases more than positive political coverage in 2002’s last quarter (3-4). Negative political coverage highlights political disagreements between the Government and other members of the Peronist Party (Menem’s followers) in agreeing to a primary election date and possible political law suit against the members of the Supreme Court for having approved the opening of people’s frozen banks accounts. “The Peronist war exploded in the Representative Chamber,” “the Peronist Party has virtually been divided in two sections and the two groups ignore each other,” *Clarín* writes.

In less frequency, positive political coverage underlines Eduardo Duhalde's success in reuniting the Peronist National Congress to create a new Electorate Board. "Duhalde obtained what he wanted: a key endorsement from Carlos Reuteman to create a new Electorate Board," "contrary to what Menem wants, the primary election will take place on January 19," *Clarín* writes.

Clarín Summary

Overall, *Clarín* shows consistency in its economic coverage throughout the three years of coverage. Only in 2000's fourth quarter (1-4), is there a shift from political coverage to economic reporting (see Chart 4). Along with *Página 12*, *Clarín* focuses much of its coverage on the bribes scandal and Congress approval of the national budget. A second and critical shift for this research study is noted in 2001's fourth quarter (2-4), where negative economic coverage rapidly increases in reaction to the economic crisis and positive economic reporting significantly declines (see Chart 5). At this point in time, *Clarín* begins to focus its coverage on negative economic stories. Interestingly, its negative political coverage remains high in 2001's fourth quarter (2-4) but dramatically drops after the government changeover in 2002's first quarter where positive political coverage once again becomes *Clarín's* priority (see Chart 6). Similar to *Página 12*, after the government transition in 2002's third quarter (3-2), *Clarín* reduces its number of economic and negative economic stories (see Charts 4 and 5). On the other hand, its negative political reporting regains the lead in 2002's second quarter (3-2) due to internal political fights President Duhalde encounters with members of his own party in preparation for the next presidential election (see Chart 6).

La Nacion Newspaper Findings

As shown in Chart 7, *La Nacion's* economic and political reporting differs in 2000's first quarter (1-1). In addition, as shown in Chart 8, the difference between the positive and negative tone among the political coverage is significant. The frequency of positive political coverage is at its highest point of the three years of analysis during 2000's first quarter (1-1).

Chart 7: *La Nacion's* Economic (N3E) and Political (N2P) Coverage.

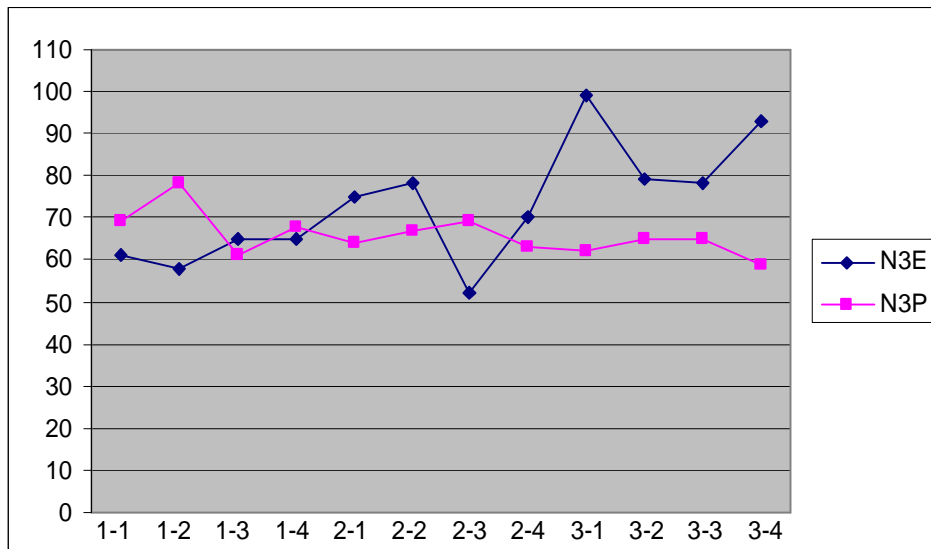
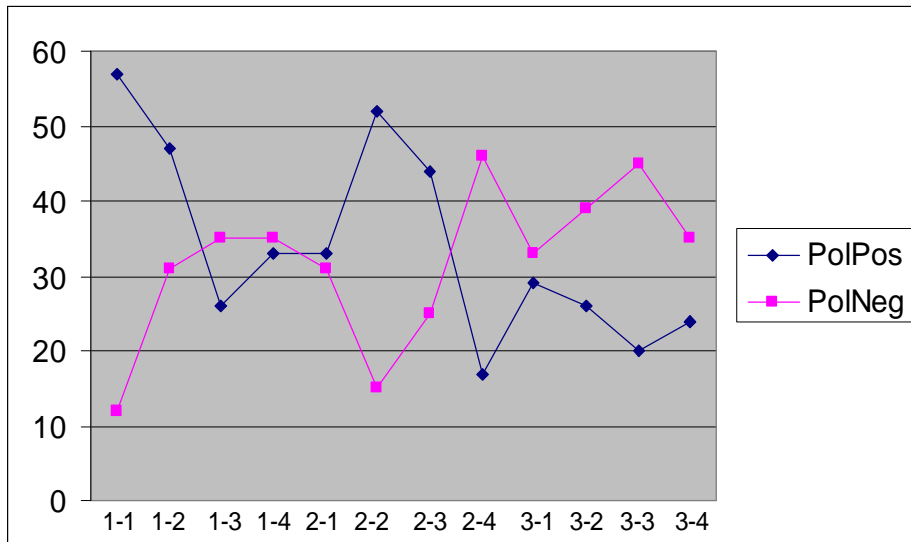


Chart 8: *La Nacion*'s Negative Political (PolNeg) and Positive Political (PolPos) Coverage.

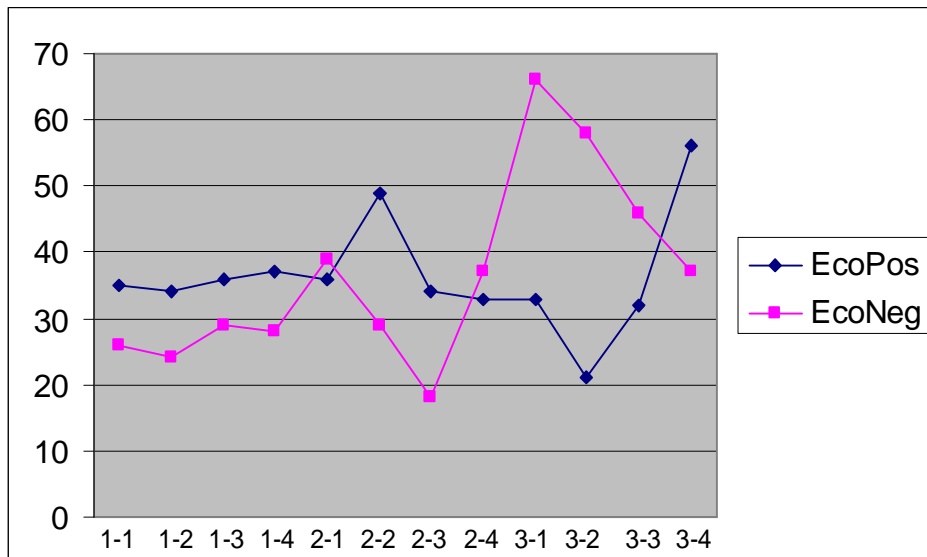


Positive political stories during 2000's first quarter (1-1) discuss corruption cases and government's expenditure during Menem's presidency, and De la Rúa's image as a capable President. "De la Rúa canceled a decree Menem signed before leaving office which allowed the Unions to manage millions of pesos," *La Nacion* writes, "in 1999, the Menem's Government over expended, De la Rúa inherited the fiscal deficit," the newspaper writes. "There is confidence in the fiscal program and in the Argentine plan," "De la Rúa quickly succeeds in achieving a presidential charisma," *La Nacion* writes. Positive political stories also refer to Government agreements with Unions and the main opposition party. "Daer (head of the Union) praised the President saying the Union supports him," *La Nacion* writes, "the Government and the CGT (main labor Union) made their first step toward an agreement," "senators from the Peronist Party seem to want to negotiate the Labor Reform project with the Government," *La Nacion* writes.

On the other hand, as shown in Chart 9, the difference between positive and negative economic stories remains steady throughout 2000. Positive economic news stories remain slightly higher in frequency throughout the year.

Positive economic coverage in 2000's first quarter (1-1) highlights the negotiations with the IMF, investment projects in Argentina, and constructive steps the Government is taking to stop the economic recession. "Machinea obtained a couple of good results in Washington," *La Nacion* writes, "Argentina will sign a new agreement with the *IMF*," "the objective is the Argentine Atlantic coast where millions of dollars in investments will soon arrive," *La Nacion* writes.

Chart 9: *La Nacion*'s Negative Economic (EcoNeg) and Positive Economic (EcoPos) Coverage.



"The Government looks for new tools to promote economic competition," "banks will give new credits at a lower rate," "*Standard & Poor*'s described as positive the Government's first steps," *La Nacion* writes.

On the other hand, negative economic reporting in 2000's first quarter (1-1) focuses on the depth of the economic crisis. "Once again, Argentina lives in a sad paradox with the deflation rate," *La Nacion* writes, "it is absurd Argentine companies have to exile to Brazil," "the city's poorest neighborhoods are expanding," "critical diagnosis about the socio-economic situation," "the crisis strongly hit the country side as well as the city," *La Nacion* writes.

In 2000's second quarter (1-2), political coverage increases while economic coverage slightly decreases. As shown in Chart 8, although positive political coverage remains higher, it severely drops while negative political coverage significantly increases. Positive political stories highlight President De la Rúa's effort to bring to an end tax evasion and his efforts to negotiate an agreement with the Peronist party in regards to the Labor Reform Law. "This is the first time members of the Government officially declare their worth at the beginning of their public duty," *La Nacion* writes, "De la Rúa threatens to imprison those who do not pay taxes." In regards to the negotiation between the two parties to find a common ground to approve the labor law, *La Nacion* writes "strongly supported by President De la Rúa, the law was passed," "the President himself tries to advance with a common agenda."

On the other hand, negative political coverage in 2000's second quarter (1-2) relates to the clash between the provinces and the Federal Government in regards to future cuts on public spending, social protests, and disagreements with the main opposition party to pass the Labor Reform Law. "The negotiations with the provinces are frustrated," *La Nacion* writes, "the Government fears new conflicts in different

provinces, yet there is no plan for action,” “this city has lived one of the most violent journeys the Province of Chaco has experienced,” “the gravity of the incidents stops the law’s approval, repression took place and Federico Storani confronts a political dilemma between the police and the protesters,” *La Nacion* writes.

Among the economic stories, positive coverage remains higher than the negative coverage in 2000’s second quarter (1-2). Some of the positive economic stories reflect the government’s announcements on national productivity and exports. “Exports to Brazil increased 80 million more than last year,” *La Nacion* writes, “the Government loudly announced that the industrial national production increased,” “according to a study, Argentina will grow 3.4%,” *La Nacion* writes. In addition, positive economic stories refer to the achievement of the fiscal deficit plan which had the IMF’s earlier consent,” *La Nacion* writes, “the IMF strongly supports the Government’s economic measures.”

In less frequency but still present, negative economic coverage points to the continuance of the economic recession and unemployment in 2000’s second quarter (1-2). “An endless problem, 72 percent of the new jobs are not registered to pay taxes on earnings,” “the exit of recession is slow,” *La Nacion* writes, “several analysts estimate Argentina won’t be able to accomplish its fiscal goal,” *La Nacion* writes.

In 2000’s third quarter (1-3), *La Nacion*’s coverage of economic stories surpasses the political reporting. Positive economic stories continue to exceed the negative economic coverage. Positive stories refer to tax revenue increases and its repercussions with the IMF. “High tax revenues could help attain the fiscal goal,” *La Nacion* writes, “tax revenue historical recovery,” “the increase generated confidence

among investors,” *La Nacion* writes. In addition, positive coverage focuses on the telephone system deregulation, and new credits from the Interamerican Bank of Development (IBD). “It is expected deregulation will reduce tariffs and bring more services offers,” *La Nacion* writes, “telephones: the decree to deregulate is ready, the consumers will have more price options and more services,” *La Nacion* writes. “Strong support from the IBD, new loan for 4,500 million,” “support from foreign banks to the country’s economy,” *La Nacion* writes.

Less frequently reported are negative highlights of the unemployment rate and recession in 2000’s third quarter (1-3). “Unemployment rate increased 0.9 percent, more than 4 million people are unemployed,” *La Nacion* writes, “recovery is still an illusion,” writes *La Nacion*. In addition, negative stories focuses on the fiscal deficit, “strong fiscal deficit in July disrupts the pact made with the IMF,” *La Nacion* writes, “there is difficulty to reduce spending, possible inability to pay,” “tax evasion estimated to be fifty percent,” *La Nacion* writes.

As shown in Chart 8, positive political coverage in 2000’s third quarter (1-3) drops severely and for the first time in the year 2000 negative political reporting receives more attention. Negative political coverage mainly focuses on the Senates bribes and disagreements between the President and the Vice-President in regards to the bribes investigation. “The worst crisis in the last fifteen years,” *La Nacion* writes, “the scandal has reached its highest tension point,” “due to the inability to fix the crisis, the Government opts for a decree,” *La Nacion* writes. As a consequence of the lack of political support to investigate the bribes in the Senate, Vice President, Carlos Alvarez, resigns. “Alvarez asked for better political gestures to overcome the

Senate's bribes," *La Nacion* writes, "the President denied the risk and corrected Alvarez," "President De la Rúa denied the Vice President's advice and confirmed support for Genoud (personally compromised by the bribes)," *La Nacion* writes.

In 2000's fourth quarter (1-4), *La Nacion's* coverage of political and economic issues remains balanced (see Chart 7). Its frequency of positive and negative political stories also stays balanced, while its coverage of positive economic stories continues to outnumber the negative reporting (see Chart 9).

Positive political coverage points to the end of the bribe's scandal and the agreement between the Government and the province's governors in a feasible fiscal pact, "Santibanes is replaced, the decision would put the political crisis to an end," "the Government obtained an accord from the Governors, one of the needed conditions to send positive signals to the financial markets," *La Nacion* writes.

On the other hand, negative political coverage in 2000's fourth quarter (1-4) highlights political disagreements among members of the official party in regards to the future of the economy and new public distress. "Former President Raul Alfonsín attacked the convertibility system," *La Nacion* writes, "there are conflicts among members of the Civic Radical Union's Party in regards to the foreign debt payments," "different groups plan to march against the IMF's measures of cutting public spending," "high attendance (of protests) and great amounts of violence," writes the newspaper.

Positive economic coverage in 2000's last quarter (1-4) points to the new loan the IMF gave to Argentina. "The new loan could be received by the end of the year," *La Nacion* writes, "the IMF will reject criticisms about the Argentine economy,"

“with new credit, the Government hopes to create 400,000 new jobs,” “strong support from the United States to the new credit Argentina received,” writes *La Nacion*.

Meanwhile in lesser frequency, in 2000’s fourth quarter (1-4) negative economic reporting focuses on the lack of confidence the financial sector has in the Government’s measures to avoid an economic default. “Wall Street doubts about the Government’s political strength,” *La Nacion* writes, “Machinea does not leave out the possibility of a default,” “87 percent of the total credit lent to Argentina will be used to repay the debt, only US\$5 billion will be used for structural reforms,” *La Nacion* writes. In addition, negative economic stories refer to the unemployment rate, “unemployment is worse,” writes *La Nacion*, “strong increase of unemployment rate in a year, the worst in ten years,” *La Nacion* writes.

In 2001’s first quarter (2-1), economic coverage increases while political coverage slowly decreases. As shown in Chart 9, for the first time in a year, negative economic coverage surpasses positive reporting. Negative economic coverage reports on the lack of confidence the financial markets have on Argentina, “*JP Morgan* worries about the Argentine situation,” *La Nacion* writes, “the effects of Turkey’s financial crisis in the Argentine economy are worsening,” “once again Turkey’s market fell, strong impact on Argentina,” *La Nacion* writes. However, most of the negative stories were focused on the Economic Minister’s, Ricardo Lopez Murphy’s resignation. “Hard journey for the financial markets due to Lopez Murphy rumors of resignation,” *La Nacion* writes, “negative tendency in the stock market due to Cavallo’s entrance into the Government as the new Minister of Economics,” *La Nacion* writes. In addition, stories refer to the country’s high fiscal costs, “over

expenditure in the public accounts,” “according to Spain, Argentina is in bankruptcy,” *La Nacion* writes.

Although negative economic coverage surpasses the positive in 2001’s first quarter (2-1), the latter gets significant coverage. Positive economic stories focus on lower interest rates Argentina is paying on its debt, “Argentina saves 300 million in interests,” *La Nacion* writes, “the Government is paying the lowest interest rate since 1999,” “the Government obtained 4,219 million more in tax collection than it expected,” *La Nacion* write. In addition, it writes about economic improvement of certain areas, “slow improvement in some sectors of the economy,” “home buying interest increased, less pessimism,” *La Nacion* writes.

As shown in Chart 8, political coverage in 2001’s first quarter (2-1) is fairly balanced. Positive political coverage points to the efforts the Government is making to improve the negative public image it has. “De la Rúa strongly ordered to resolve the real problems, the Government wants to show dynamism and confidence,” *La Nacion* writes, “the Government creates a plan against corruption,” *La Nacion* writes. In addition, positive political stories are related to corruption cases during Menem’s Government, “today and tomorrow De la Rúa’s Government will signal that it really wants to investigate money laundry cases in Argentina,” “Moneta (former banker and close friend of Menem) is compromised with money laundry,” *La Nacion* writes. Lastly, positive stories also focus on Domingo Cavallo’s last actions as Minister of Economics to avoid an economic / political / social collapse, “trust in Cavallo to overcome the crisis,” *La Nacion* writes, “important political support to the new

economic measures,” “former presidents back De la Rúa and the new measures,” *La Nacion* writes.

On the other hand, negative political coverage in 2001’s first quarter (2-1) focuses on stories about the bribes at the senate and political disagreements among the Government’s political party members. “It has been proven the Government bribed 8 senators,” “the Alianza Party pressured De la Rúa, first political debate in 2001,” *La Nacion*. In addition, negative political coverage highlights De la Rúa’s struggle to govern, “De la Rúa has difficulties to govern with decision and authority,” *La Nacion* writes, “the Government announces the new measures within a very tense political atmosphere,” “De la Rúa faces his last opportunity to save the country from collapsing,” the newspaper writes.

In 2001’s second quarter (2-2), economic coverage remains higher than political. As shown in Chart 9, positive economic coverage rapidly increases. This coverage points to the support for the Minister of Economics, Domingo Cavallo, “the IMF showed its support for Cavallo,” “Cavallo seems not to have limits when thinking big,” *La Nacion* writes. In addition, positive stories talk about Argentina acquiring new financial help from the IMF. “The new agreement with the IMF has been signed,” “the IMF says the plan must have international support,” “the market responded positively to the new negotiation,” *La Nacion* writes.

In 2001’s second quarter (2-2), positive political coverage as shown in Chart 8 increases substantially while negative political coverage reaches its second lowest point since the beginning of the year 2000. Positive coverage focuses on former President Menem’s imprisonment. “Menem is accused of being in charge of an illicit

association: prosecutor asked for his testimony,” *La Nacion* writes, “powerful characters and companies during the Menem’s era belong to the most resonant corruption cases,” *La Nacion* writes. “Menem can’t leave the country without informing the judge,” “for the first time in the history of Argentina, a former president is imprisoned,” *La Nacion* writes.

In 2001’s third quarter (2-3), political coverage remains steady when comparing it to the economic coverage of news (see Chart 7). As shown in Chart 8, although its positive frequency remains higher than its negative, it (positive) decreases considerably and its negative coverage rapidly increases. Positive political coverage focuses on the Governors agreement with the Federal Government to a new fiscal pact. “The Government will announce the fiscal pact agreed to by the provinces,” *La Nacion* writes, “De la Rúa obtained important political support,” *La Nacion* writes. In addition, several peaceful protests begin to take place, “it was a triumph for the federal authorities that the march was peacefully organized,” “the Government wants to find out if those who receive government pensions are pressured to protest,” “De la Rúa decisively warns the Piqueteros (protesters),” *La Nacion* writes.

On the other side, in 2001’s third quarter (2-3) negative political coverage points to the disagreements between the federal government and the provinces and the Governments defeat in the Senator’s political election. “Governors threaten to take funds from the federal government,” *La Nacion* writes. “Rodolfo Terragno beats De la Rúa’s favorite candidate by criticizing the Government as a strategy,” “the Peronist

party would sue the Government for the provinces' funds: there is anger with De la Rúa for his intentions to cut the provinces' funds," *La Nacion* writes.

As shown in Chart 7, economic coverage drops severely in 2001's third quarter (2-3) and reaches its lowest point as well as negative economic coverage (see Chart 9). Positive economic reporting also declines, but remains higher than its negative number of stories. Positive coverage highlights stories about international aid and the support Argentina receives as well as the financial market's positive reaction to the new assistance. "It is hoped the markets will have a positive day," *La Nacion* writes, "President Bush offered his first real support to Argentina after the country's first financial crisis," "United States proposes to the IMF to send the aid earlier," "in ten days the IMF would transfer US\$6,200 million," *La Nacion* writes.

As shown in Chart 7, a drastic shift occurs in 2001's fourth quarter (2-4); economic news coverage rapidly increases and receives more attention than political news stories. In addition, negative economic coverage drastically increases and outnumbers the positive frequency (see Chart 9). Negative stories highlight Argentina's lack of financial credit and the financial markets lack of confidence in the country's economy. "Tense climate in the local financial market," *La Nacion* writes, "the crisis beats the citizen's spirit," "the Government has accepted that Argentina does not have any more international aid," *La Nacion* writes. In addition, stories about frozen bank accounts become visible, "there are still problems to withdraw over \$1,000.00," "banks provided money, but there was cash shortage, dollars are not to be seen," *La Nacion* writes. At last, negative economic stories also focus on social protests and President De la Rúa's resignation in December 2001. "Social

commotion: a day with violence and fear,” “spontaneous and violent people came together to protest against the Government,” *La Nacion* writes.

Although negative economic coverage rapidly increases in 2001’s fourth quarter (2-4), the frequency of positive economic reporting is still significant. Those stories point to Argentina’s last attempt to receive international aid. “The United States Treasury Department and the United States Federal Reserve approved the aid,” “after President De la Rúa’s personal involvement, the IMF will send a delegation,” “there are still enough funds for this month, it is hoped the IMF will transfer more,” *La Nacion*.

As shown in Chart 7, political coverage remains steady in 2001’s fourth quarter (2-4) when comparing it to the third quarter (2-3), however its negative coverage increases drastically reaching its highest point in three years of analysis (see Chart 8). Negative political coverage points to the loss the Government’s party experienced in the Congressmen’s political election in October 2001. “As a consequence of frustration, distrust, or simply disinterest, the majority of the votes in the capital city can not be counted, they are considered null,” *La Nacion* writes, “the Peronist party won the majority of the votes, they are about to dominate both chambers in Congress,” *La Nacion* writes. In addition, negotiations for a common agreement between the Federal Government and the Governors end at the same time social protests increase. “A Peronist man is first in occupying the President’s place in case De la Rúa resigns,” *La Nacion* writes, “due to the dramatic situation, the Peronist Party hypothesizes a replacement,” “the Government will not be able to avoid the

seventh social protest,” “De la Rúa renounced: pressured and without political support, uncertainty in the future of the economy,” *La Nacion* writes.

The year 2002 begins with a new President in power, Eduardo Duhalde, from the Peronist Party, who was chosen by the National Congress. As shown in Chart 7, in 2002’s first quarter (3-1) right after the governments transition, economic reporting as well as negative economic coverage (see Chart 9) reach their highest frequencies. These stories focus on confusion among citizens especially in regards to the corralito (frozen bank accounts). “Consumers found themselves in such a dissimilate panorama that it is preferred to wait for a few more days,” *La Nacion* writes, “the crises: the opening of the frozen saving accounts becomes complex,” “the Supreme Court sent the Government a signal: the maintenance of the frozen accounts is about to surpass what is reasonable, thus there is a risk the tribunal won’t approve it,” *La Nacion* writes. In addition there are stories focusing on unemployment rate and price increase on basic products. “Massive lay offs and persistent deterioration in the possibilities to find some type of jobs permits an unemployment rate close to 22 percent,” *La Nacion* writes, “school goods and uniforms are more expensive and have to be replaced, the family’s economy is being attacked and it is taking away the last bills left in the Argentines pockets,” *La Nacion* writes. Negative economic stories are also represented by the IMF’s rejection to help Argentina with new aid and by international pressure Argentina is receiving from foreign investors, “Spanish President, Pedro Aznar, warned Argentina and asked for an economic program capable of generating trust among investors,” *La Nacion* writes. “For the first time, the IMF publicly said ‘Argentina won’t overcome the crisis without suffering’,”

“once again the IMF alerted the Government about the bad consequences if the unlimited opening of the bank accounts continues,” *La Nacion* writes.

La Nacion's political reporting continues its steady path in 2002's first quarter (3-1). Interesting enough, although the political crisis is profound and negative political coverage remains higher than positive, the latter (positive) increases rapidly during this time. Positive political reporting focuses on Duhalde's political support from different political parties in order to contain the crisis. “President Duhalde gained support from the Peronist Party, Civic Radical Union and the Frepaso Party; Argentina begins to reorient a delicate path toward its institutional life,” *La Nacion* writes. “The Government's intention is to obtain political, social, and the industrial sector's consensus to advance in a sustainable economic plan,” *La Nacion* writes. Positive stories also refer to President Duhalde's signing of the Federal Agreement Pact with the provinces' Governors to reform the Argentine political system and the general approval of the national budget for 2002, “the Governors said yes to the President,” “the Senate made a step forward and passed the National Budget Law for the year 2002, the most acclaimed law the Executive Branch wanted to pass,” *La Nacion* writes. Yet as mentioned earlier, negative political frequencies exceed the positive reporting in 2002's first quarter (3-1), where these stories refer to the lack of trust of President Duhalde in regards to his capability to govern and improve the conditions of the country. “Several members from the national cabinet confessed that the president's initiative generated grief among them,” *La Nacion* writes, “nobody gives his/her life for President Duhalde, only the Peronist Party from the Buenos Aires province trusts him; he belongs to a political dynasty that has fallen into the

most social discredit that has ever occurred since the return of democracy,” *La Nacion* writes. Lastly, negative stories also refer to the Catholic Church’s and public’s pressure on the Government to carry out serious changes as well as open the bank accounts to the public. “The church asks for resignations: the institution did not stop negotiations but put conditions to continue moving forward,” *La Nacion* writes, “Piqueteros (protestors), Unions, and savings account owners will agree today to pursue a street protest in the Capital city,” “tension increases between the Government and the Supreme Court, the Court allows people to take legal action against the Government for keeping their saving accounts frozen,” *La Nacion* writes.

As shown in Chart 7, in 2002’s second quarter (3-2), economic coverage rapidly drops. At this time, negative economic coverage continues to be significant but it also quickly declines. These stories refer to the IMF’s refusal to grant Argentina new financial aid, “the Government fears new social and political complications if new international aid does not arrive,” *La Nacion* writes. “The IMF made clear yesterday that Argentina still has to complete an exhaustive fiscal and financial reform program in order to obtain some type of aid,” *La Nacion* writes. In addition, negative stories report on price increases on basic products, services, and the poverty rate. “Consumer prices increase 4 percent in March, the inflation rate for the first trimester of 2002 reaches 9.7 percent,” *La Nacion* writes, “in the Capital city and Buenos Aires suburbs one fourth of the population is poor, this means they do not make enough money to afford adequate nutrition,” *La Nacion* writes. In addition, negative stories refer to the corralito’s (frozen bank accounts) uncertainty. “The new scenario: uncertainty with the future of the corralito,” *La Nacion* writes, “those who

get up early today to go to the banks will find there is not enough cash to withdraw from the ATM's," *La Nacion* writes.

Political reporting keeps its steady path in 2002's second quarter (3-2) as shown in Chart 7. However, its positive tone decreases while negative tone increases (see Chart 8). Negative political stories report about the general political opposition the Government finds to move on with its political and economic plan. "The opposition party leader and former President, Raul Alfonsin, called President Duhalde and threatens him to end the political pact," *La Nacion* writes, "Bankruptcy Law: Duhalde expressed his disappointment because his regulation did not pass," "Duhalde thinks about the future of the economy, the country and his own in an uncertain and tense personal atmosphere," "the Government failed in its intent to approve the modification of the Economic Sedition Law," *La Nacion* writes. In addition, negative political stories refer to pessimism in regards to the social and political situation in Argentina, "the polarization between the political parties and society has produced a country without plans and hopes," "yesterday they crushed Duhalde Government's conviction; that the political and social conflicts were resolved," *La Nacion* writes.

In 2002's third quarter (3-3), economic coverage remains a priority. Although the numbers of negative stories remain of main concern, it continues to decline while positive coverage rapidly increases (see Chart 9). Positive economic stories point to some economic improvement in exports and tax revenues increase. "The drought in the United States paradoxically helps Argentina's economy," *La Nacion* writes, "President Bush gave Argentina important commercial benefits that were lost years

ago, he incorporated fifty-seven Argentine products in the American market,” the newspaper writes. “Tax collection: ‘historical record,’ those were the words the Government used to describe the amount of tax revenues,” *La Nacion* writes. In addition, positive news highlight Argentina’s possible agreement with the IMF to obtain a new loan, “the Government stops legal actions against the corralito (frozen bank accounts) until December: this provisional solution would give the Ministry of Economics time to develop, with more tranquility, a deal with the IMF,” *La Nacion* writes. “Paul O’Neill compromised yesterday in speeding up the agreement between Argentina and the IMF, which could be signed at the end of the month,” the newspaper writes.

Discussed earlier, although the frequency of negative economic stories drops, it is still of main concern in this quarter (3-3). Those stories focus on the lack of an agreement with the IMF, “the chances of an agreement with the IMF decline as well as the foundation for a fiscal reorganization,” *La Nacion* writes, “the crisis: for the IMF the situation continues to be difficult,” the newspaper writes. In addition, price increases on basic products and unemployment rate are reported as negative economic news. “Price increases keep punishing the poorest people,” “there are 3,038,000 people without jobs, it represents a historical record,” *La Nacion* writes.

In its political news coverage, *La Nacion* maintains in 2002’s third quarter the same frequency as its last quarter (3-2), but the gap between its negative and positive coverage continues to grow as shown in Chart 8. Negative political coverage increases and focuses on President Duhalde’s favorite candidate Governor Carlos Reuteman’s rejection to run for president. “His rejection left President Duhalde

without his vital piece to confront Carlos Menem in the Peronist Party's presidential primaries," "the Peronist Party electoral indecision," the newspaper writes. In addition, negative political stories point to unaccomplished Government's promises such as the falling of the political reform initiative, "the promoted political reform initiative has ended even when legislators declare the necessity of showing austerity and political renovation gestures," *La Nacion* writes. "The Government gives up and promotes the idea of transparency as its electoral flag for the Peronist primary election next November 24th," the newspaper writes.

In the last quarter of 2002 (3-4), economic coverage rapidly increases while political reporting slowly decreases (see Chart 7). Positive economic coverage reaches its highest point in three years of analysis and surpasses the negative reporting for the first time in a year (see Chart 9). These stories focus on bank savings returned to depositors and increase on tax revenues. "Banks begin to return frozen savings: the measure will benefit around 700,000 depositors," *La Nacion* writes, "the crisis: relief for the State, tax revenues in October reached over \$4,700 millions, with growth greater than 30 percent in relation to October from last year," the newspaper writes. In addition, positive stories report about the general improvement of the economy such as the lessening of the inflation and the cost of living. "People believe things are better, it is demonstrated in economic facts," *La Nacion* writes, "the percentage of company's demand for employees in September increased 10.6 percent compared to October," "it is truth: only 9 months away from the devaluation and massive cash withdraws, financing is back," *La Nacion* writes. Furthermore, *La Nacion* reports about improvement in the national manufactures and

exports boost. “Chile reopened the market for Argentine meat, it represents \$70 million in demand,” *La Nacion* writes, “soy beans continue to be good news for Argentina,” “after 27 years, industrial production grew,” the newspaper writes.

Negative economic stories in 2002’s fourth quarter (3-4) still focus on a high poverty rate and its consequences, “infant malnutrition turned out to be much worse than it was hoped for,” *La Nacion* writes, “sixty percent of Tucuman Province’s population is unemployed, children do not have anything to eat,” “the problem affects 15,000 underprivileged children,” *La Nacion* writes. Negative stories also refer to the Argentine Government differences with the IMF in order to obtain a new grant. “The negotiation with the IMF is in a difficult phase,” *La Nacion* writes, “the Minister of Economics, Roberto Lavagna, came back without an accord and the Government toughened its position with the IMF,” *La Nacion* writes.

Although political coverage remains lower than economic reporting in 2002’s fourth quarter (3-4), the frequency of positive political stories increases while negative political coverage decreases (see Chart 8). Positive reporting relates the government’s victory over its political opponents by preventing a political legal contesting the Supreme Court decision to keep the bank accounts frozen. “Court: the Peronist Party is about to start the legal suit,” *La Nacion* writes, “after five tries, the Peronist Party achieved its goal,” the newspaper writes.

Even though negative political coverage decreases in this quarter (3-4), it is still higher than its positive reporting. These stories highlight the lack of transparency in the future primary elections. “Lack of transparency, flexibility in the devices control, and severe irregularities and unequal treatment in the collection of data,” *La*

Nacion writes, “Judge Servini de Cubria considered ‘unconstitutional’ the official beginning to primary elections,” “another judicial and political scandal is expected when the Peronist chooses its candidates,” the newspaper writes.

La Nacion Summary

Overall, *La Nacion* shows a very balanced coverage between its economic and political news throughout the three year period. Its political coverage remains quite steady during the three year period, but the economic coverage shows a few changes in its path. The first shift occurs in 2001’s third quarter where economic coverage drops rapidly. One reason for its decline is due to the great amount of coverage *La Nacion* gives to the terrorist attacks that takes place in the United States on September 2001. The second important and vital shift for this research occurs during the government transition in 2001’s fourth quarter (2-4) when economic coverage surpasses political coverage (see Chart 7). Also in this quarter negative economic reporting surpasses positive economic coverage (see Chart 9). In addition, *La Nacion*’s negative political coverage reaches its highest number of stories (see Chart 8). In 2002’s first quarter, *La Nacion* reaches its highest number of economic (see Chart 7) and negative economic stories (see Chart 9). In 2002’s second quarter (3-2), as well as the other two newspapers, *La Nacion*’s economic and negative economic coverage rapid declined after the government’s transition in 2002’s first quarter (3-1). Toward the end of 2002, *La Nacion* continues to focus on economic stories as shown in Chart 7, interestingly, its negative economic stories continues to drop while positive economic coverage steadily grows (see Chart 9).

Research question 2 asked: “Viewing the issues of political crisis versus economic crises, does one issue dominate the news agenda through the three-year time frame or is there a shift in the agenda by the examined newspapers?”

As shown in Table 1, *Pagina 12* carried a total of 796 political stories and 659 economic stories during the three years of this study. Political coverage was 55% of all stories studied and economic coverage was 45%. In 2000’s first quarter (1-1), the difference of frequencies between political (71) coverage and economic (21) coverage is significant as well as in the second quarter where political stories were 74 and economic stories were 32.

Table 1: *Pagina 12* Political and Economic Coverage.

Year	Quarters	Political	Economic	% Political	% Economic
2000	1st Qtr	71	21	77	23
	2nd Qtr	74	32	70	30
	3rd Qtr	74	26	74	26
	4th Qtr	87	51	63	37
2001	1st Qtr	61	41	60	40
	2nd Qtr	79	69	53	47
	3rd Qtr	69	60	53	47
	4th Qtr	67	66	50	50
2002	1st Qtr	66	95	41	59
	2nd Qtr	42	87	33	67
	3rd Qtr	49	64	43	57
	4th Qtr	57	47	55	45
Total Stories	1455	796	659	55	45

As shown in Table 1, the difference of frequencies continues to exist until 2001’s fourth quarter (2-4) where the number of political stories 67 is almost equal to the number of economic stories 66. The major switch occurs in (3-1) after President De la Rúa resigns and a new President, Eduardo Duhalde, takes control of the Government. This quarter (3-1) accounts for a total number of 95 economic stories

and a total of 66 political stories. Although economic stories begin a rapid decline in 2002's second quarter (3-2), economic number of frequencies (87) dominate the number of political coverage (42). Toward the end of the year 2002, the number of political stories (57) once again surpasses the number of economic stories (47).

As shown in Table 2, *Clarín Newspaper* carried a total of 443 political stories and 761 economic stories during the three years of this study. Political coverage amounted to 37% of all stories studied and economic coverage was 63%. Until 2000's last quarter (1-4), economic coverage dominated the headlines.

Table 2: *Clarín* Political and Economic Coverage

Year	Quarters	Political	Economic	% Political	% Economic
2000	1st Qtr	32	43	43	57
	2nd Qtr	30	46	40	60
	3rd Qtr	32	46	41	59
	4th Qtr	49	43	53	47
2001	1st Qtr	36	68	35	75
	2nd Qtr	46	76	38	72
	3rd Qtr	48	54	47	53
	4th Qtr	41	60	41	59
2002	1st Qtr	23	97	19	81
	2nd Qtr	32	88	27	73
	3rd Qtr	33	72	31	69
	4th Qtr	41	68	38	62
Total Stories	1204	443	761	37	63

The first three quarters have each an average of ten more economic stories than political ones. The last quarter of the year 2000 (1-4) shows a shift where the number of political news (94) surpasses for the first time the number of economic news (43). However, from then on, economic stories will dominate front page headlines. In (3-1) economic news dominance is notable having a much greater number of 97 stories while political reporting only shows a total number of 23 stories.

In (3-2), there is a decline in the number of economic stories (88) and a small increase in the number of political stories (32). Toward the end of 2002 this trend continues and the gap between political and economic coverage continues to diminish.

As shown in Table 3 *La Nacion Newspaper* carried a total of 790 political stories and 873 economic stories during the three years of this study. Political coverage amounted to 48% of all stories studied and economic coverage was 52%. For the first two years (2000-2001), *La Nacion* does not show an apparent news dominance. Its coverage is fairly balanced until 2002's first quarter (3-1) when its economic reporting rapidly increases with a total number of 99 stories while its political reporting shows a total of 62 stories. From then on *La Nacion's* economic coverage will dominate the year 2002.

Table 3: *La Nacion* Political and Economic Coverage

Year	Quarters	Political	Economic	% Political	% Economic
2000	1st Qtr	69	61	53	47
	2nd Qtr	78	58	57	43
	3rd Qtr	61	65	48	52
	4th Qtr	68	65	51	49
2001	1st Qtr	64	75	46	54
	2nd Qtr	67	78	46	54
	3rd Qtr	69	52	57	43
	4th Qtr	63	70	47	53
2002	1st Qtr	62	99	39	61
	2nd Qtr	65	79	45	55
	3rd Qtr	65	78	45	55
	4th Qtr	59	93	39	61
Total Stories	1663	790	873	48	52

Finally, cross-tabulation analysis was used to compare the differences in frequencies with the frequencies and Chi-Square was used to determine the statistical difference among the frequencies. Although this analysis does not examine the

newspapers individually and it does not show the domination of one issue over the other one, it does show the difference in frequencies between economic and political coverage simultaneously. The frequencies were computed using the statistical analysis software SPSS. As shown in Table 4, there is a significant difference in the frequency of economic and political coverage in the three newspapers during 2000's first, second and third quarter; in 2001's first and second quarter; and in 2002's first, second, and fourth quarter.

Table 4: Chi-Square Test of Newspapers' Economic and Political Frequencies.

Year	Quarters	Value	df	Chi-Square Significance
2000	1st Qtr	22.937	2	.000 (*)
	2nd Qtr	15.926	2	.000 (*)
	3rd Qtr	22.943	2	.000 (*)
	4th Qtr	4.338	2	0.114
2001	1st Qtr	12.678	2	.002 (*)
	2nd Qtr	6.608	2	.037 (*)
	3rd Qtr	2.24	2	0.326
	4th Qtr	2.258	2	0.323
2002	1st Qtr	17.04	2	.000 (*)
	2nd Qtr	10.434	2	.005 (*)
	3rd Qtr	5.538	2	0.063
	4th Qtr	8.088	2	.018 (*)

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

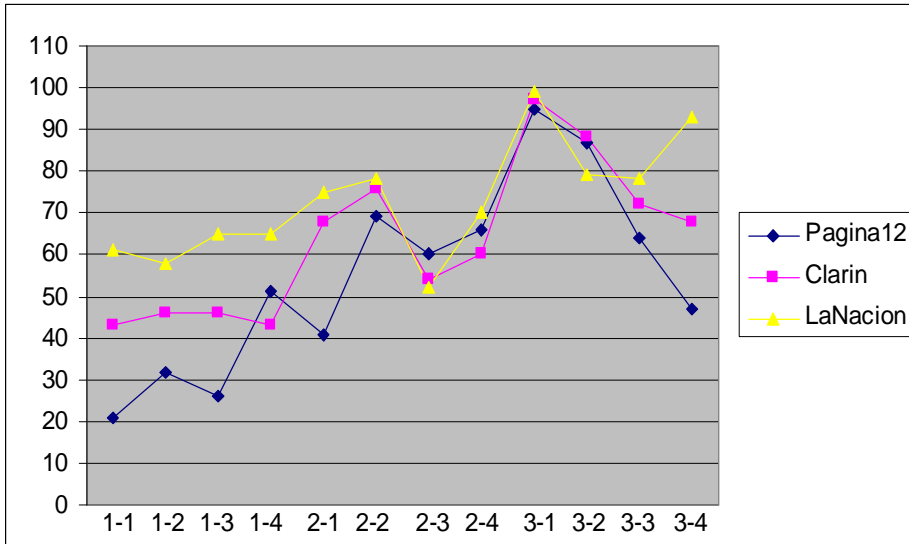
Research question 3 asked: Are shifts in the agenda during this time period more applicable to one newspaper than another newspaper? Each newspaper shows a unique agenda and a distinct shift. As shown in Chart 1, *Pagina 12's* political news stories dominate the agenda until 2002's first quarter (3-1) when the shift to economic stories becomes the main focus. This change takes place immediately after the new

government takes control. On the other hand, while political reporting dominates *Clarín Newspaper's* first year of analysis as shown in Chart 4, its economic reporting begins to lead significantly its agenda in 2001's first quarter (2-1) and throughout the end of 2002.

At last, although *La Nación Newspaper's* total economic stories surpasses the number of political stories throughout the three year period of analysis, a clear economic dominance begins in 2002's first quarter (3-1) with the new government in power, and its dominance is noticed until the end of 2002.

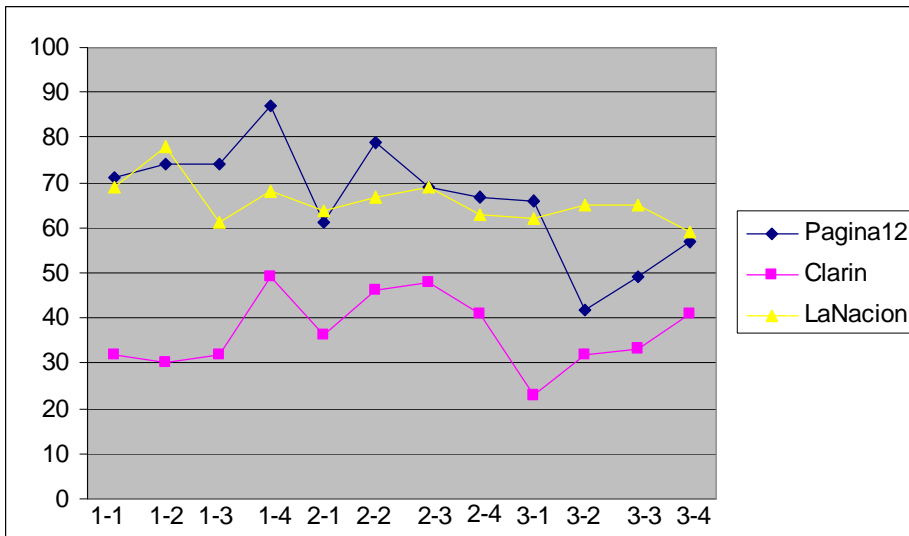
Although each newspaper has its own unique agenda when it comes to the selection of political and economic stories, the three newspaper's economic coverage shows to be extraordinarily similar (see Chart 10). The direction of the course in the first year is almost the same although the numbers of stories differ from newspaper to newspaper. From 2001's second quarter (2-2) until 2002's third quarter (3-3), the three newspapers show not only a very similar path but also contain almost the same number of economic stories (see Tables 1, 2, and 3). The changes taking place in Chart 10 are vital for this research study. The increasing occurrence of economic coverage within the three newspapers as time progresses toward the government transition in 2002's first quarter (3-1) and the sudden drop thereafter could confirm that agenda-setting took place.

Chart 10: *Pagina 12*, *Clarín*, and *La Nación*'s Economic Coverage



Still, when comparing the three newspaper's political coverage, each one shows a distinct path neither similar in direction nor in frequencies as their economic reporting (see Chart 11).

Chart 11: *Pagina 12*, *Clarín*, and *La Nación*'s Political Coverage



Research Question 4 asked: If agenda setting takes place, will agenda issue shifts be framed differently from newspaper to newspaper?

Political Coverage

A total of 968 negative political stories were coded and a total of 1061 positive political stories were found in the three newspapers. In addition, a total of 1011 positive economic stories and a total of 1282 negative economic stories were found.

As shown in Table 5, *Pagina 12* showed a total number of 401 negative political stories and 395 positive political stories during the three years of this study. Negative political coverage amounted to 51% of all stories studied and positive political coverage was 49%.

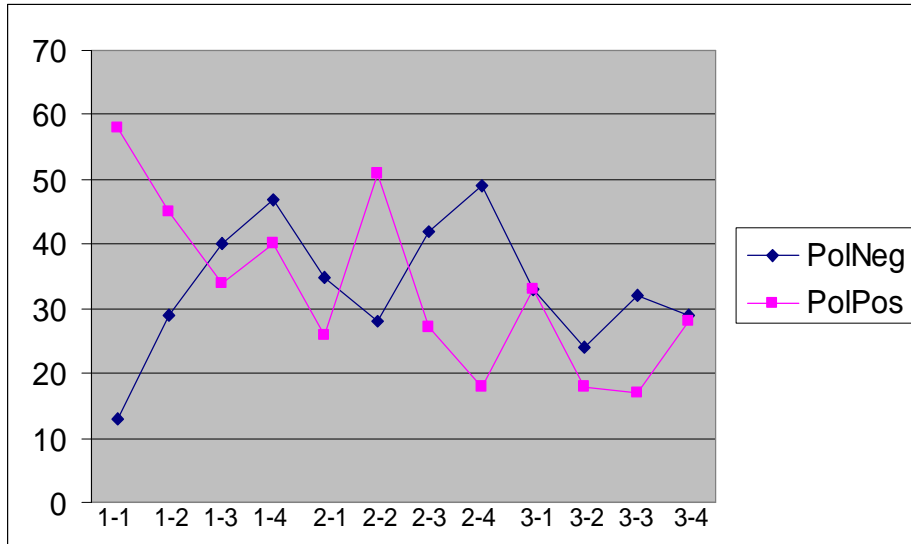
Table 5: *Pagina 12* Negative and Positive Political Coverage

Year	Quarters	Negative Political	Positive Political	% Neg. Political	% Pos. Political
2000	1st Qtr	13	58	18	82
	2nd Qtr	29	45	39	61
	3rd Qtr	40	34	54	46
	4th Qtr	47	40	54	46
2001	1st Qtr	35	26	57	43
	2nd Qtr	28	51	35	75
	3rd Qtr	42	27	60	40
	4th Qtr	49	18	73	27
2002	1st Qtr	33	33	50	50
	2nd Qtr	24	18	57	43
	3rd Qtr	32	17	65	35
	4th Qtr	29	28	50	50
Total Stories	796	401	395	51	49

Pagina 12's number of total political stories is fairly balanced during the three year period; there are only 6 more negative political stories than positive ones.

However, the framing of those stories clearly varies throughout the three years. As shown in Chart 12, *Pagina 12* presents four major shifts: in 2000's third quarter (1-3), in 2001's second quarter (2-2), in 2001's third quarter (2-3), and 2002's fourth quarter. The first shift (negative political stories surpasses positive ones) reflects stories about the increasing differences between the members of De la Rúa's administration and possible corruption cases among members of the cabinet. The second shift (where positive political stories surpass negative ones) points to corruption cases and possible prison time for former president Carlos Menem and members of his government. The third shift (negative political surpass positive ones) takes place in 2001's third quarter (2-3) and highlights the lack of political support President De la Rúa has from members of Congress, Unions, ordinary citizens and even members from the President's own political party to the new economic measures. The fourth and last shift takes place in 2002's fourth quarter where positive political stories regain space over negative political coverage. Positive political coverage points to former President Menem's legal difficulties and Duhalde's success in obtaining political support to set a date for the primaries election.

Chart 12: *Pagina 12*'s Positive (PolPos) and Negative (PolNeg) Political Coverage.



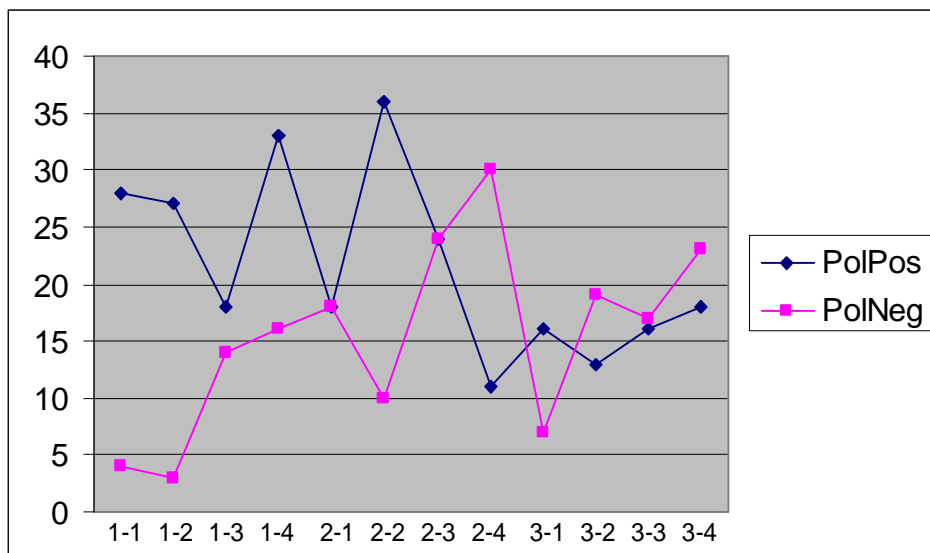
As shown in Table 6, *Clarín* carried a total number of 185 negative political coverage and 258 positive political stories during the three year period of this study. Negative political coverage amounted to 42% of all stories studied and positive political coverage was 58%.

Table 6: *Clarín* Negative and Positive Political Coverage.

Year	Quarters	Negative Political	Positive Political	% Neg. Political	% Pos. Political
2000	1st Qtr	4	28	1	99
	2nd Qtr	3	27	1	99
	3rd Qtr	14	18	43	57
	4th Qtr	16	33	32	68
2001	1st Qtr	18	18	50	50
	2nd Qtr	10	36	21	79
	3rd Qtr	24	24	50	50
	4th Qtr	30	11	73	27
2002	1st Qtr	7	16	30	70
	2nd Qtr	19	13	59	41
	3rd Qtr	17	16	51	49
	4th Qtr	23	18	56	44
Total Stories	443	185	258	42	58

As shown in Table 6, *Clarín Newspaper's* total number of positive political stories surpasses the number of negative stories by a total of 73. Chart 13 demonstrates the changes in frequencies *Clarín* encompasses during the three year period. It shows three important shifts. The first shift (negative political surpasses positive coverage) occurs in (2-4), when President De la Rúa resigns. The second and most important shift for this research occurs in 2002's first quarter (3-1) right after the government transition. Negative political reporting in this quarter dramatically drops while positive political coverage increases. The focus in this quarter is to highlight President Duhalde's ability to bring together the governors in order to agree in a fiscal plan, and his intentions to offer the possibility of an open dialogue between all political and non political groups in order to calm social discontent. The last shift (negative coverage surpasses positive coverage) occurs in 2002's second quarter (3-2) and focuses on President's Duhalde lack of political and popular support to pass economic laws demanded by the IMF.

Chart 13: Clarín's Positive (PolPos) and Negative (PolNeg) Political Coverage.



As shown in Table 7, *La Nacion* carried a total of 382 negative political stories and 408 positive political stories during the three year period of this study. Negative political coverage amounted to 48% of all stories studied and positive political coverage was 52%.

As shown in Tables 7, *La Nacion's* frequency of political stories is fairly balanced. Positive coverage just surpasses the negative coverage for only 26 stories.

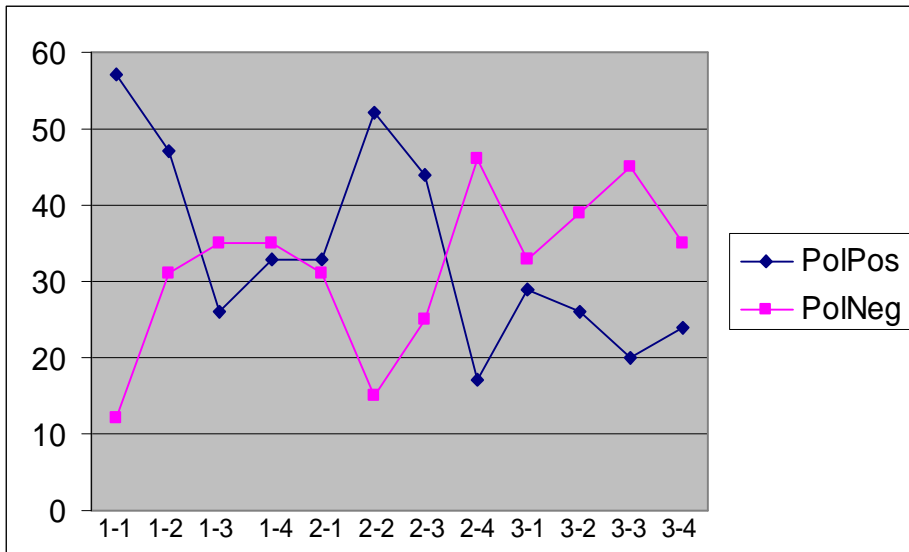
Table 7: *La Nacion* Negative and Positive Political Coverage.

Year	Quarters	Negative Political	Positive Political	% Neg. Political	% Pos. Political
2000	1st Qtr	12	57	17	83
	2nd Qtr	31	47	40	60
	3rd Qtr	35	26	57	43
	4th Qtr	35	33	51	49
2001	1st Qtr	31	33	48	52
	2nd Qtr	15	52	22	78
	3rd Qtr	25	44	36	64
	4th Qtr	46	17	73	27
2002	1st Qtr	33	29	53	47
	2nd Qtr	39	26	60	40
	3rd Qtr	45	20	69	31
	4th Qtr	35	24	59	41
Total Stories	790	382	408	48	52

As shown in Chart 14, *La Nacion* presents four main shifts throughout the three years of analysis. The first shift (negative political coverage surpasses positive coverage) occurs in 2000's third quarter (1-3) during the bribes scandal in the country's Senate. The second shift (positive coverage surpasses negative coverage) occurs in 2001's first quarter (2-1) and highlights the last efforts President De la Rúa makes in order to change his bad public image, corruption cases against former

President Menem, and the efforts the Minister of Economics, Domingo Cavallo, is making to reverse the critical situation. The third shift (negative political coverage surpasses positive political coverage) is seen in (2-4) during President De la Rúa's resignation. And the fourth and most important finding for this research study is the shift taking place in 2002's first quarter, right after the transition takes place. At that moment, negative political coverage drops severely while positive political reporting rapidly increases showing clear support for governmental change.

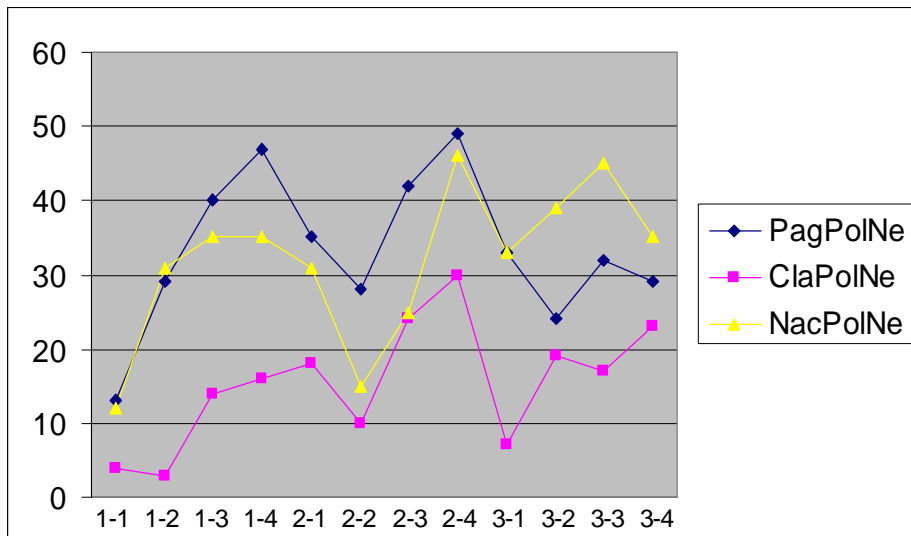
Chart 14: *La Nación's* Positive (PosPol) and Negative (NegPol) Political Coverage.



As shown in Chart 15, the frequency of negative political stories in each newspaper throughout the three year period of analysis varies greatly. The path or frequency of negative political stories in each newspaper increases and decreases three times; the three newspapers increase their negative political coverage in 2000's fourth quarter (1-4) during the Senate's bribes scandal, then there is a decline during 2001's second quarter (2-2) during former President Menem's imprisonment, and comes back up in 2001's fourth quarter (2-4) when President De la Rúa's resigns

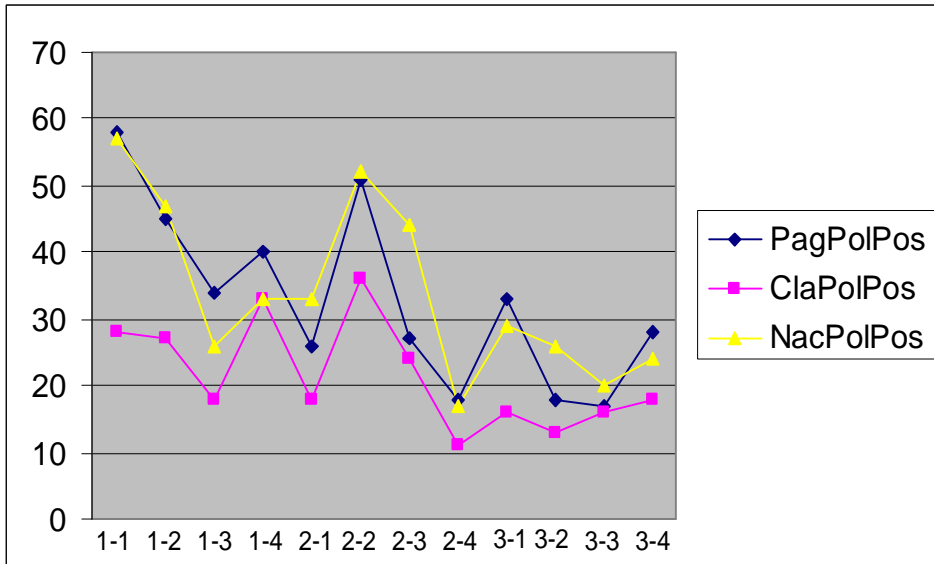
under tremendous political and social pressure. After the change of government during 2001's last quarter (2-4), the three newspapers rapidly decrease their negative political coverage in 2002's first quarter. This shows an important shift and clear support for the new government. From 2002's second quarter (3-2) each newspaper increases its negative political coverage as a result of internal political fights among the government.

Chart 15: *Pagina 12* (PagPolNe), *Clarín* (ClaPolNe), and *La Nación* (NacPolNe) Negative Political Coverage.



However, as shown in Table 16, the newspapers frequency of positive political stories is much more correlated than their negative political reporting. The highest frequency of positive political stories among the three newspapers takes place during 2000's first quarter (1-1) when De la Rúa begins to govern and during 2000's fourth quarter (1-4) during the Senate's bribes scandal. Also, a large number of positive political stories can be seen in 2002's second quarter (2-2) when former President Carlos Menem is arrested, and in 2002's first quarter (3-1), when the new government takes control of the country.

Chart 16: *Pagina 12* (PagPolPo), *Clarín* (ClaPolPo), and *La Nación* (NacPolPo) Positive Political Coverage.



A cross-tabulation analysis was used to compare the differences in frequencies and Chi-Square was used to determine the statistical difference among the negative and positive political coverage. Once again, this analysis could only determine the difference in all the newspapers simultaneously. Table 8, shows there is a significant difference in frequency between the positive and negative use of attributes in the political reporting among the three newspapers during 2000's first quarter (1-1), 2001's second quarter (2-2), and 2002's first (3-1) and second quarter (3-2).

Table 8: Chi-Square Test of Newspapers' Positive and Negative Political Frequencies.

Year	Quarters	Value	df	Chi-Square Significance
2000	1st Qtr	15.039	1	.000 (*)
	2nd Qtr	1.029	1	0.184
	3rd Qtr	1.761	1	0.113
	4th Qtr	1.136	1	0.169
2001	1st Qtr	0.467	1	0.283
	2nd Qtr	14.313	1	.000 (*)
	3rd Qtr	0.099	1	0.418
	4th Qtr	0.613	1	0.253
2002	1st Qtr	20.163	1	.000 (*)
	2nd Qtr	12.631	1	.000 (*)
	3rd Qtr	0.476	1	0.282
	4th Qtr	1.723	1	0.114

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Economic Coverage

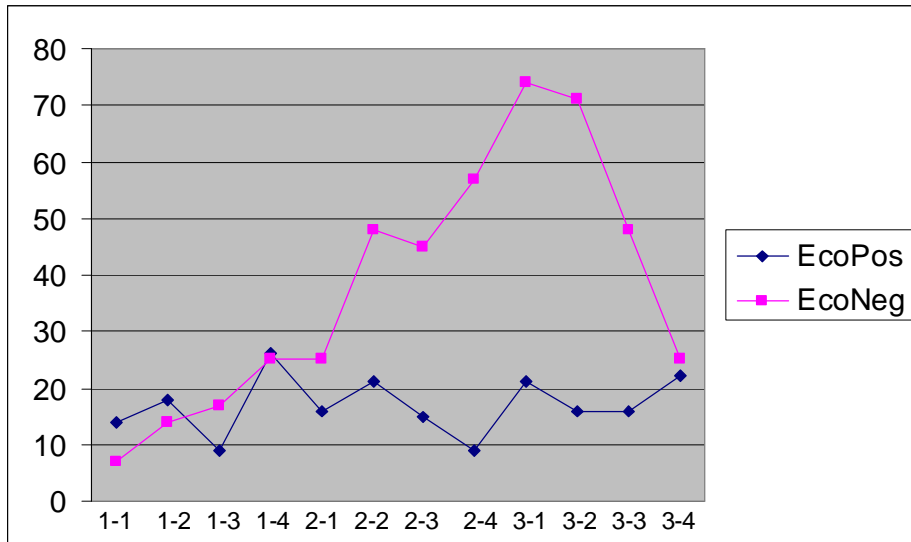
As shown in Table 8, *Pagina 12* carried a total of 203 positive economic stories and 456 negative economic stories during the three year period of this study. Positive economic stories totaled 31% of all stories studied and negative economic coverage was 69%. As shown in Chart 17, *Pagina 12* presents four main shifts: in 2000's third quarter (1-3), in 2000's fourth quarter (1-4), in 2001's first quarter (2-1), and 2002's second quarter (3-2). The first shift (negative economic stories surpasses positive ones) reflects stories about the new increase in unemployment rate and tax revenues decline.

Table 9: Pagina 12 Negative and Positive Economic Coverage.

Year	Quarters	Negative Economic	Positive Economic	% Neg. Economic	% Pos. Economic
2000	1st Qtr	7	14	33	67
	2nd Qtr	14	18	43	57
	3rd Qtr	17	9	66	34
	4th Qtr	25	26	49	51
2001	1st Qtr	25	16	60	40
	2nd Qtr	48	21	70	30
	3rd Qtr	45	15	75	25
	4th Qtr	57	9	86	14
2002	1st Qtr	74	21	78	22
	2nd Qtr	71	16	82	18
	3rd Qtr	48	16	75	25
	4th Qtr	25	22	53	47
Total Stories	659	456	203	69	31

The second shift in 2000's fourth quarter (1-4), positive economic coverage surpasses negative coverage, and the stories focus on political support to certain economic laws claimed by De la Rúa's government, tax reductions, and possible agreements with the IMF. The third shift (negative economic stories surpasses positive coverage) occurs in (2-1) and the stories refer to the reduction of people's salaries, increase of poverty levels and unemployment rate, and two Ministers of the Economy resigning. From (2-1) until (3-1), negative economic reporting severely increases. However, from that point on (after the government transition) its negative economic reporting rapidly shift directions and declines toward the end of the year. This drastic decline of negative economic reporting is of vital importance for this research study because it demonstrates a clear change of agenda in support of the new government.

Chart 17: Pagina 12 Negative Economic (EcoNeg) and Positive Economic (EcoPos) coverage.



Clarín Newspaper has a total of 372 positive economic stories and 389 negative economic stories during the three years of this study. Positive economic stories amounted to 49% of all stories studied and negative economic coverage was 51%.

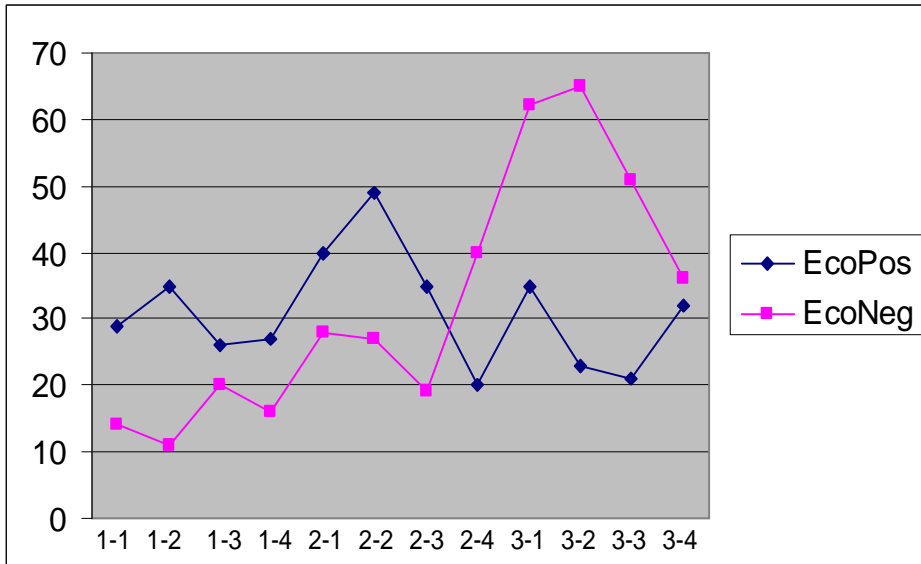
Clarín Newspaper on the other hand demonstrates only one but significant shift for this study. As shown in Chart 18, its positive economic coverage is of main concern until 2001 last quarter (2-4) when President De la Rúa resigns and the new government takes control. At that point, positive economic coverage drastically declines and negative economic reporting rapidly increases showing a clear shift in coverage.

Table 10: Clarin Negative and Positive Economic Coverage.

Year	Quarters	Negative Economic	Positive Economic	% Neg. Economic	% Pos. Economic
2000	1st Qtr	14	29	33	67
	2nd Qtr	11	35	24	76
	3rd Qtr	20	26	43	57
	4th Qtr	16	27	37	63
2001	1st Qtr	28	40	41	59
	2nd Qtr	27	49	36	64
	3rd Qtr	19	35	35	65
	4th Qtr	40	20	66	34
2002	1st Qtr	62	35	64	36
	2nd Qtr	65	23	67	33
	3rd Qtr	51	21	71	29
	4th Qtr	36	32	53	47
Total Stories	761	389	372	51	49

During the next two quarters (3-1 and 3-2), continues to rise but in 2002's third quarter (3-3) where negative economic coverage begins a rapid decline and positive economic reporting starts to regain priority toward the end of 2002. The decline of negative economic stories after the transition is vital to this study because it shows support for the new government's economic standing.

Chart 18: *Clarín* Negative Economic (EcoNeg) and Positive Economic (EcoPos) Coverage.



La Nacion carried a total of 436 positive economic stories and 437 negative economic stories. Positive economic stories amounted to 50% of all stories studied and negative economic coverage was 50%.

La Nacion Newspaper demonstrates five important shifts. In 2001's first quarter (2-1), in 2001's second quarter (2-2), in 2001's fourth quarter (2-4), in 2002's second quarter (3-2), and in 2002's fourth quarter (3-4). As shown in Chart 19, the first shift (negative economic coverage surpasses positive reporting) focuses on the first Minister of Economics' resignation, and the resignation of the second Minister of Economics, Ricardo Lopez-Murphy.

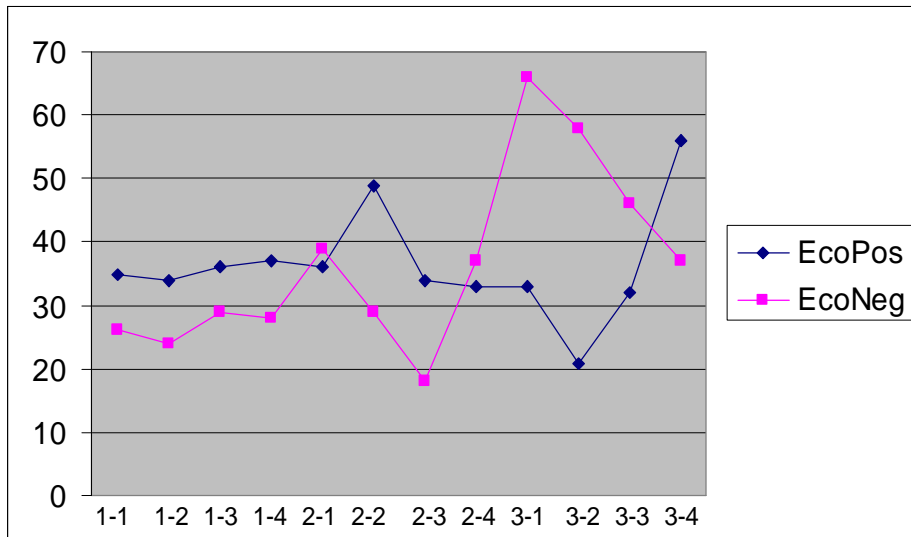
Table 11: *La Nacion* Negative and Positive Economic Coverage.

Year	Quarters	Negative Economic	Positive Economic	% Neg. Economic	% Pos. Economic
2000	1st Qtr	26	35	43	57
	2nd Qtr	24	34	41	59
	3rd Qtr	29	36	45	55
	4th Qtr	28	37	43	57
2001	1st Qtr	39	36	52	48
	2nd Qtr	29	49	37	63
	3rd Qtr	18	34	35	65
	4th Qtr	37	33	53	47
2002	1st Qtr	66	33	67	33
	2nd Qtr	58	21	73	27
	3rd Qtr	46	32	59	41
	4th Qtr	37	56	40	60
Total Stories	873	437	436	50	50

The second shift highlights the support for the third Minister of Economics under De la Rúa's Government, Domingo Cavallo, and about Argentina acquiring new financial help from the IMF. The third shift occurs during the government's transition in (2-4), negative economic reporting points out Argentina's lack of financial credit and the financial markets lack of confidence in the country's economy in addition to stories about people's frozen bank accounts. From that point on, negative economic coverage continues to increase and reaches its highest peak in (3-1). The third and most important shift for this research occurs in 2002's second quarter (3-2) when negative economic coverage begins to rapidly drop after the government's transition. This shows *La Nacion* also changed its economic coverage after the new government took power. Toward the end of the year 2002, *La Nacion* shows a fourth shift, its negative economic coverage rapidly declines while its positive reporting significantly increases in (3-4). At this point its stories refer to

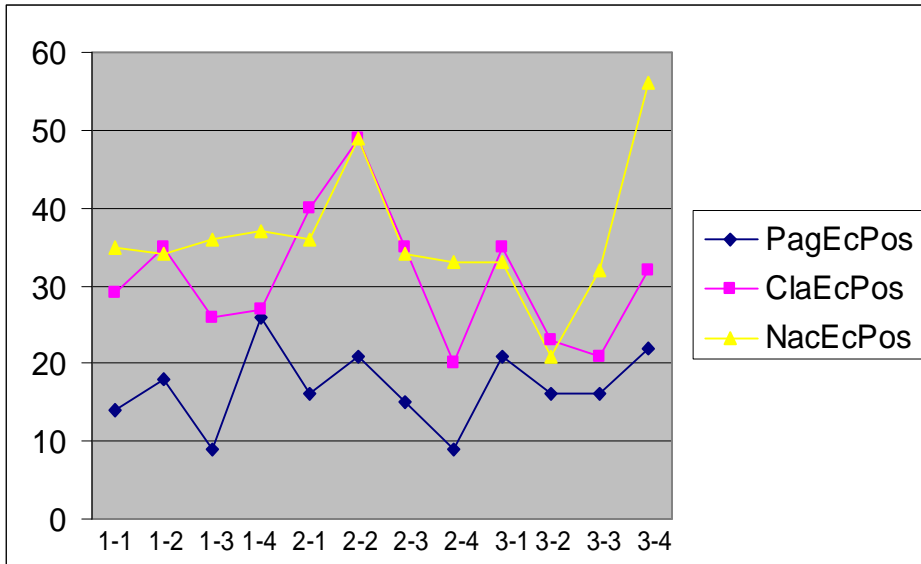
savings returned to depositors and increase on tax revenues in addition to the general improvement of the economy such as the decline of the inflation rate and improving the cost of living.

Chart 19: *La Nacion* Positive Economic (EcoPos) and Negative Economic (EcoNeg) Coverage.



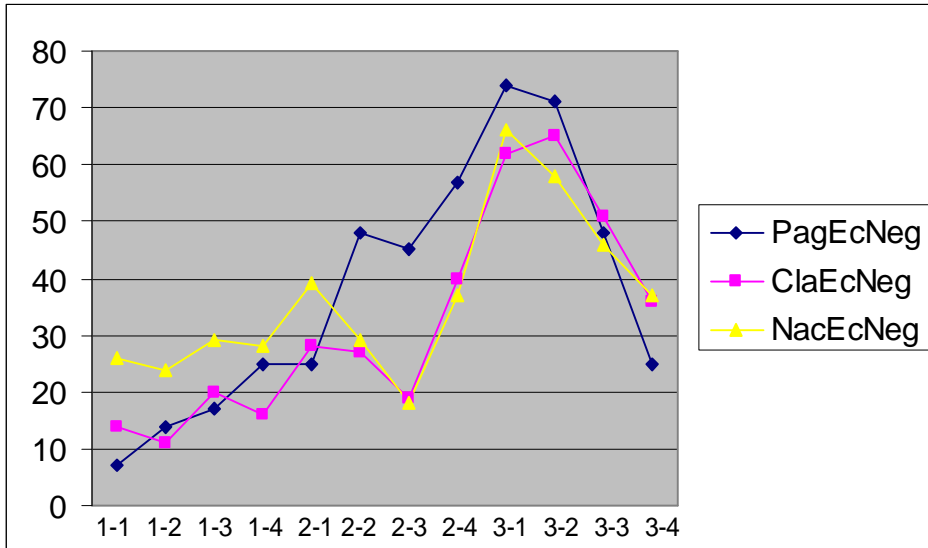
As shown in Chart 20, positive economic coverage differs greatly among the three newspapers. Positive economic frequency of stories among the newspapers differs, although it can be observed some similarities along the way between *Clarín* and *Página 12* in 2000's fourth quarter (1-4), and *La Nacion* and *Clarín* in 2001's second quarter (2-2) and third quarter (2-3) as well as 2002's first quarter (3-1) and 2002's second quarter (3-2).

Chart 20: *Pagina 12* (PagEcPos), *Clarín* (ClaEcPos), and *La Nación*'s (NacEcPos) Positive Economic Coverage.



As shown in Chart 21, the newspapers' frequency of negative economic stories is much more correlated than their positive economic reporting. The change in story frequencies among the newspapers throughout the three years is related; especially those between *Clarín* and *La Nación* from 2001's third quarter (2-3) until the end of 2002. The increasing amount of negative economic coverage toward the end of 2001 and the sudden drop of negative economic reporting after the government transition shows an evident change of agenda from the three newspapers.

Chart 21: *Pagina 12* (PagEcNeg), *Clarín* (ClaEcNeg), and *La Nación*'s (NacEcNeg) Negative Economic Coverage.



Furthermore, Table 9 also shows there is a significant difference in frequency between the positive and negative use of attributes in the economic reporting among the three newspapers during quarters 1, 6, 9, and 10.

Table 12: Chi-Square Test of Newspapers' Positive and Negative Economic Frequencies.

Year	Quarters	Value	df	Chi-Square Significance
2000	1st Qtr	14.463	1	.000 (*)
	2nd Qtr	0.991	1	0.19
	3rd Qtr	1.495	1	0.134
	4th Qtr	1.136	1	0.169
2001	1st Qtr	0.441	1	0.289
	2nd Qtr	14.313	1	.000 (*)
	3rd Qtr	0.046	1	0.457
	4th Qtr	0.788	1	0.22
2002	1st Qtr	19.404	1	.000 (*)
	2nd Qtr	13.649	1	.000 (*)
	3rd Qtr	0.702	1	0.234
	4th Qtr	2.183	1	0.085

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Interestingly, significance difference in frequencies among the negative and positive economic stories were also found simultaneously in the three newspapers among the following quarters: 2000's first quarter (1-1), 2001's second quarter, 2001's first quarter (3-1), and 2002's second quarter (3-2).

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Discussion

As Dearing and Rogers (1996) write, “the task of the scholar of agenda-setting is to measure how the salience of an issue changes, and why this change occurs. This salience on the media agenda tells viewers, readers, and listeners ‘what issues to think about’” (p.4). This study’s main goal was to determine Argentine newspapers’ position during the crisis and aimed at answering two main questions: Did or did not the newspapers support the transition from one government to the next? If they did or did not support the transition, how did they report it to the public?

Pagina 12 Newspaper showed a higher number of political stories (796) than economic stories (659) throughout the three year coverage. Of its total of political stories, 401 were negative and 395 were positive. For the first two years, *Pagina 12* demonstrated a clear preponderance of political coverage. On the other hand, its economic coverage rapidly increased over time and became the priority in the beginning of 2002 with the new government in power. Once economic news reached its peak right after the government transition in 2002’s first quarter (3-1), it rapidly declined toward the end of the year when political news regained priority again.

There was a clear relationship between *Pagina 12*’s economic coverage and negative economic stories; their paths were almost identical. The coverage of both issues increased over time until reaching their highest level in 2002’s first quarter (3-

1) right after the government transition. From thereafter, with the new government in power, the number of negative economic stories rapidly declined toward the end of 2002.

Pagina 12's political coverage varied greatly during the three years. It showed its highest number of negative political stories in 2001's fourth quarter (2-4) prior to and during De la Rúa's resignation. Following this period, right after the government's transition, there is a significant increase of positive political stories in 2002's first quarter (3-1). In addition, a vital shift for this study occurs after the government's transition where negative political coverage as well as negative economic reporting rapidly declined toward the end of 2002.

From the research data, one can conclude that *Pagina 12* supported the government's transition. It clearly showed a consistent increase of negative economic and political stories until President De la Rúa's resignation. After the government's transition, the amount of economic coverage and negative economic and political stories rapidly declined.

Clarín Newspaper showed a much higher number of economic stories (761) compared to the number of political stories (443). Of its economic coverage, 389 stories were negative and 395 were positive. Of its political stories, 258 were positive and 185 were negative. *Clarín's* economic agenda dominated the three year period; only in the last quarter of 2000 (1-4) did political coverage surpass economic coverage by a few stories. *Clarín's* highest level of economic coverage occurred in 2002's first quarter (3-1) immediately after the government's transition, and at the same time, its political coverage reached its lowest level. From then on, economic

coverage began a steady decline to the end of the year while political news embarked on a steady increase. *Clarín* reached its negative economic reporting peak during 2002's second quarter (3-2); thereafter and also important for this study is that *Clarín's* negative economic reporting shows a drastic change and begins a rapid decline toward the end of 2002.

Clarín's political coverage during the first two years was mainly positive until 2001's fourth quarter (2-4) when negative political coverage reached its peak. In 2002's first quarter (3-1), after the government transition, *Clarín's* negative political coverage dramatically dropped while positive political coverage slightly increased. Unlike its negative economic coverage declined toward the end of 2002, negative political reporting rises in 2002's second quarter (3-2) from a very low level to gradually increase toward the end of the year.

From this data it can be concluded that *Clarín* also supported the transition. Although its negative economic coverage did not decline until 2002's third quarter (3-3), it also stopped increasing. While *Clarín* showed an increase of negative political reporting in 2002's second quarter (3-2), its negative political coverage rapidly declined and its positive political coverage slightly increased in 2002's first quarter (3-1), right after the government's transition. These findings could explain that *Clarín* supported the change of government.

La Nación Newspaper's number of economic stories (873) was slightly higher than their political stories (790). Of its economic stories, 436 were positive and 437 were negative. Of its political coverage, 408 were positive and 382 were negative. Of all the three newspapers, *La Nación* shows more balanced reporting between its

economic and political stories. For the first two years, *La Nacion's* does not show a dominance of one issue over the other, issue salience seemed to vary but remained balanced. In 2002's first quarter (3-1), right after the transition, *La Nacion* reached its highest level of economic coverage as well as its highest number of negative economic stories. Like the other two newspapers, *La Nacion* also shift its coverage and rapidly decreased its economic coverage as well as its negative economic coverage toward the end of 2002 while positive economic stories regain coverage.

La Nacion's political coverage also varied during the first two years; however, in 2001's fourth quarter prior the transition, *La Nacion* shows its highest number of negative political stories and its lowest number of positive political stories. Right after the transition takes place, *La Nacion* decreases its negative political reporting and increases its positive political reporting.

From this data one can conclude that *La Nacion* also supported the transition. This is well demonstrated by the immediate drop in frequency of economic stories as well as negative economic stories and negative political stories after the government transition.

A cross-tabulation analysis was used to determine the differences in the types of coverage. In addition, Chi-Square was used in the cross-tabulation analysis to determine whether or not there was a statistical significance among the frequencies. Although this test could not statistically analyze each newspaper individually, it could uncover, as shown in Table 13 and Chart 22, that there was a significant difference among the newspapers' economic and political coverage in eight of the twelve quarters measured: 2000's first (1-1), second (1-2), and third quarter (1-3); 2001's

first (2-1) and second quarter (2-2); and most importantly for this study, is the significant difference found in 2002's first (3-1) and second (3-2) quarter right after the governments transition; and last but not least, there is also a significant difference in frequencies during 2002's fourth quarter (3-4).

Table 13: Chi-Square Test of Newspapers' Economic and Political Frequencies.

Year	Quarters	Value	df	Chi-Square Significance
2000	1st Qtr	22.937	2	.000 (*)
	2nd Qtr	15.926	2	.000 (*)
	3rd Qtr	22.943	2	.000 (*)
	4th Qtr	4.338	2	0.114
2001	1st Qtr	12.678	2	.002 (*)
	2nd Qtr	6.608	2	.037 (*)
	3rd Qtr	2.24	2	0.326
	4th Qtr	2.258	2	0.323
2002	1st Qtr	17.04	2	.000 (*)
	2nd Qtr	10.434	2	.005 (*)
	3rd Qtr	5.538	2	0.063
	4th Qtr	8.088	2	.018 (*)

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Chart 22: Chi-square Political and Economic Three Newspapers

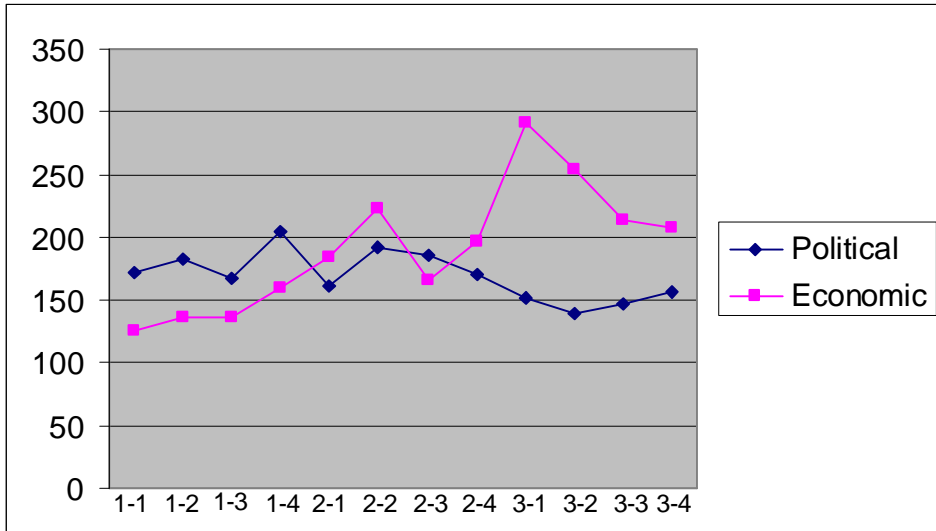
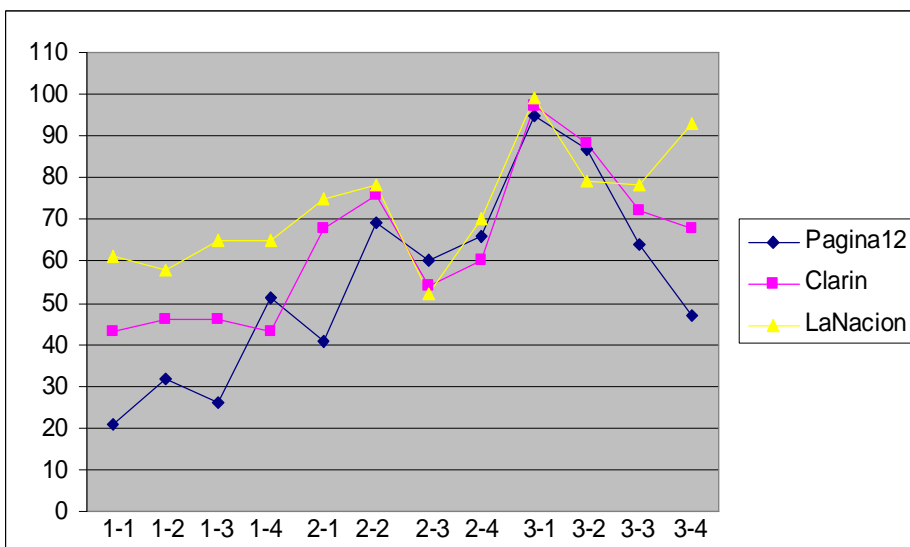


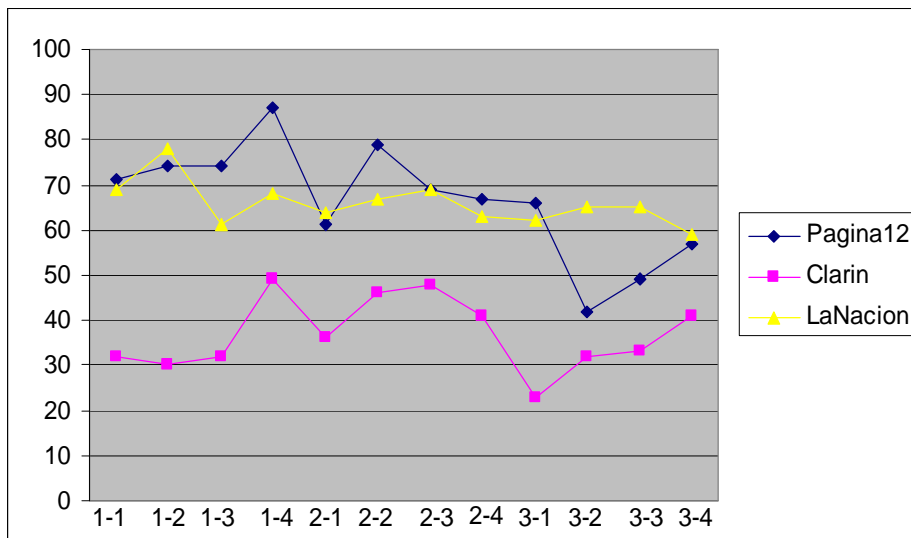
Chart 23 clearly shows each newspaper's total economic coverage. However, as described earlier, all of them follow a very similar path between 2001's third quarter (2-3) and 2002's third quarter (3-3), right before and after the government's transition.

Chart 23: *Pagina 12*, *Clarín*, and *La Nación*'s Economic Coverage



Unlike economic coverage, Chart 24 shows each newspaper's frequency of political reporting declining toward the government's transition in 2002's first quarter (3-1) and second quarter (3-2). It then rebounds toward the end of 2002 while economic coverage continues to decline.

Chart 24: *Pagina 12*, *Clarín*, and *La Nación*'s Political Coverage



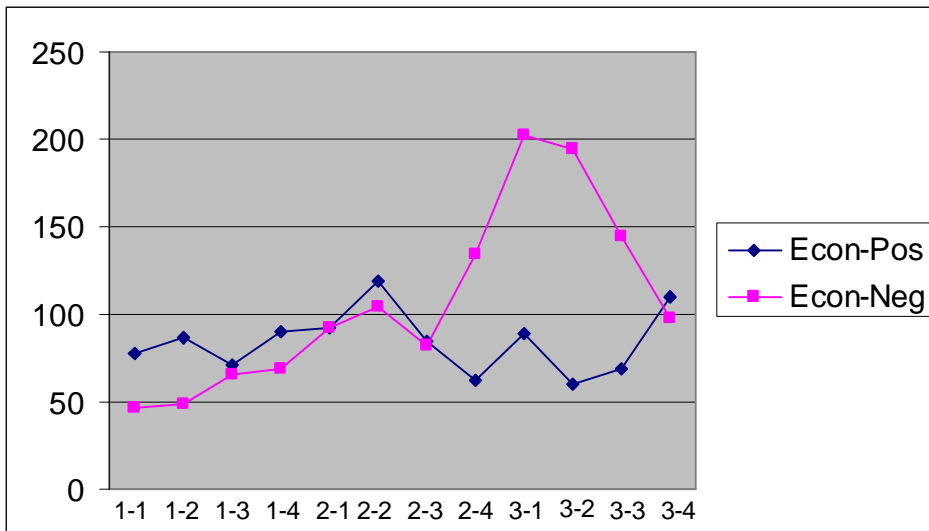
In addition, a cross-tabulation analysis was used to determine the differences in coverage and the Chi-Square test was employed to show the statistical significance among the positive and negative coverage of economic news (see Table 14 and Chart 25). Although this test could not statistically analyze each newspaper individually, it could uncover that there was a significant difference in frequency between negative and positive economic coverage among the three newspapers in the following quarters: 2000's first quarter (1-1), 2001's second quarter (2-2), 2002's first quarter (3-1), and 2002's second quarter (3-2).

Table 14: Chi-Square Test of Newspapers' Positive and Negative Economic Frequencies.

Year	Quarters	Value	df	Chi-Square Significance
2000	1st Qtr	14.463	1	.000 (*)
	2nd Qtr	0.991	1	0.19
	3rd Qtr	1.495	1	0.134
	4th Qtr	1.136	1	0.169
2001	1st Qtr	0.441	1	0.289
	2nd Qtr	14.313	1	.000 (*)
	3rd Qtr	0.046	1	0.457
	4th Qtr	0.788	1	0.22
2002	1st Qtr	19.404	1	.000 (*)
	2nd Qtr	13.649	1	.000 (*)
	3rd Qtr	0.702	1	0.234
	4th Qtr	2.183	1	0.085

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Chart 25: Chi-square Positive/Negative Economic Three Newspapers



As shown in Chart 26, each newspaper's positive economic coverage shows a distinctive pattern. However, from 2001's second quarter until after the governments transition in 2002's second quarter (3-2), the shifts are similar to one another. In 2001's last quarter, the frequency of positive economic stories drops drastically, demonstrating the newspapers' disapproval of the economic situation. Yet after the government transition, there is a clear shift in 2002's first quarter (3-1) where the newspapers (mainly *Pagina 12* and *Clarín*) suddenly show approval of the economic situation.

Chart 26: *Pagina 12* (PagEcPos), *Clarín* (ClaEcPos), and *La Nación*'s (NacEcPos) Positive Economic Coverage.

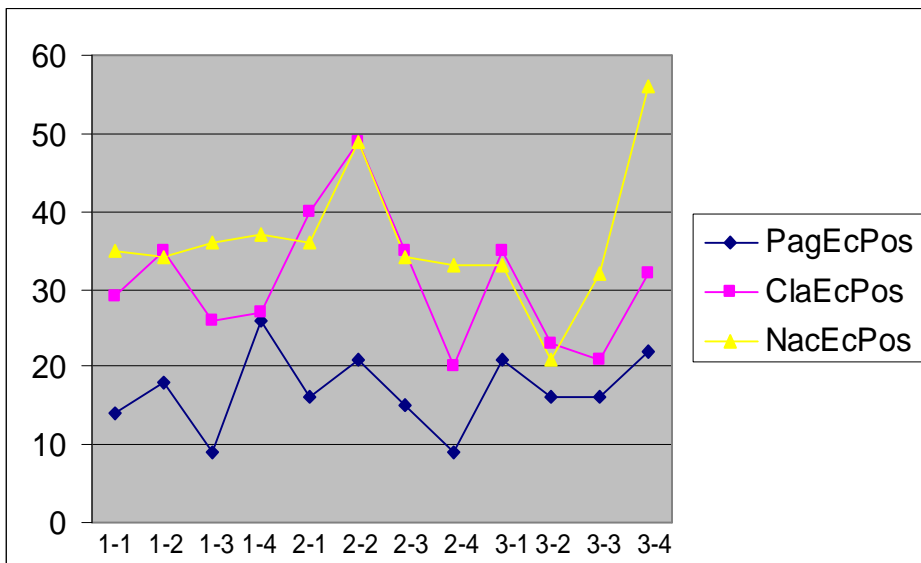
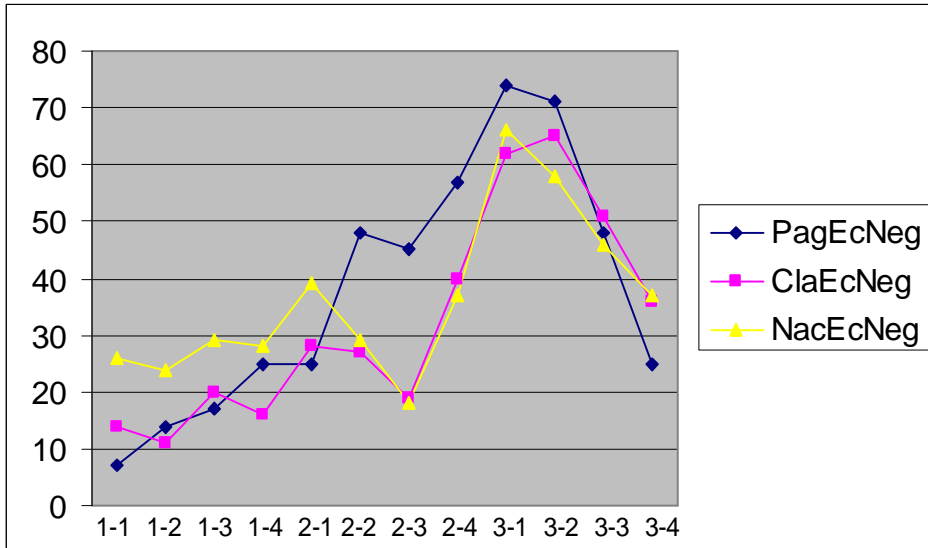


Chart 27 shows a vital finding from this research study. It shows negative economic coverage rapidly increasing as time progresses until the end of 2001 when it rapidly declines after the government's transition. From these important findings, it can be concluded that the newspapers have a clear interest in reporting negative economic stories until the government's transition in 2002's first quarter (3-1).

Chart 27: *Pagina 12* (PagEcNeg), *Clarín* (ClaEcNeg), and *La Nación*'s (NacEcNeg) Negative Economic Coverage.



In addition, a cross-tabulation analysis was used to determine the differences in coverage and the Chi-Square test was employed to show the statistical significance among the positive and negative coverage of political news. Although this test could not statistically analyze each newspaper individually, it could uncover that there was a significant difference in frequency between negative and positive political coverage in the same quarters the economic differences were found: in 2000's first quarter (1-1), 2001's second quarter (2-2), in 2002's first quarter (3-1), and 2002's second quarter (3-2) (see Table 13 and Chart 28).

Table 15: Chi-Square Test of Newspapers' Positive and Negative Political Frequencies.

Year	Quarters	Value	df	Chi-Square Significance
2000	1st Qtr	15.039	1	.000 (*)
	2nd Qtr	1.029	1	0.184
	3rd Qtr	1.761	1	0.113
	4th Qtr	1.136	1	0.169
2001	1st Qtr	0.467	1	0.283
	2nd Qtr	14.313	1	.000 (*)
	3rd Qtr	0.099	1	0.418
	4th Qtr	0.613	1	0.253
2002	1st Qtr	20.163	1	.000 (*)
	2nd Qtr	12.631	1	.000 (*)
	3rd Qtr	0.476	1	0.282
	4th Qtr	1.723	1	0.114

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Chart 28: Chi-square Positive/Negative Political Three Newspapers

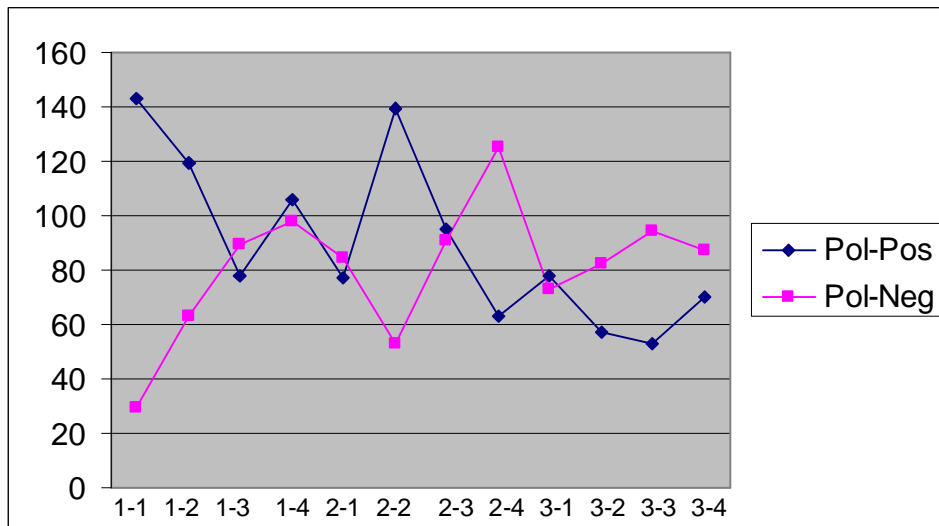
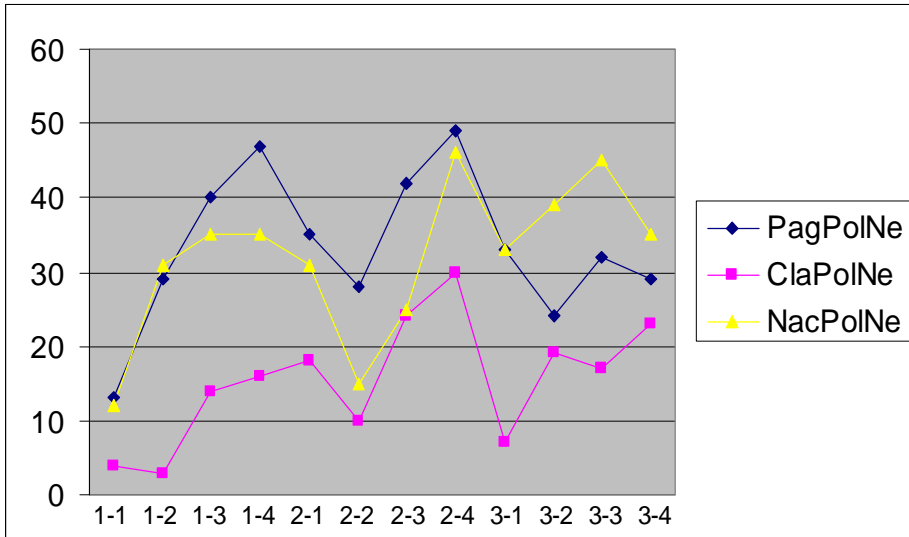


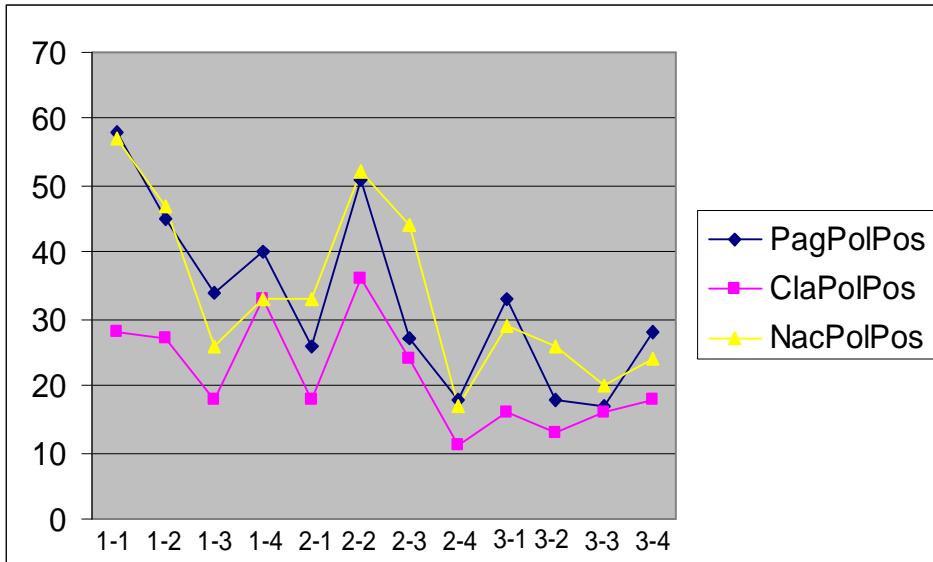
Chart 29 also shows a vital finding from this research study of the great increase in negative political coverage before the government's transition and a rapid decline of same right after the new government takes control.

Chart 29: *Pagina 12* (PagPolNe), *Clarín* (ClaPolNe), and *La Nación* (NacPolNe) Negative Political Coverage.



As opposed to Chart 29, Chart 30 shows the rapid decline of positive political news at the end of De la Rúa's government and a rapid upward swing after the transition in 2002's first quarter (3-1).

Chart 30: *Pagina 12* (PagPolPo), *Clarín* (ClaPolPo), and *La Nación* (NacPolPo) Positive Political Coverage.



The purpose of this study was to discover whether the three newspapers did or did not support the government’s transition. This was accomplished by examining the change in the newspapers’ coverage of economic and political stories as well as their positively and negatively wording.

This study shows that *Página 12*, *Clarín*, and *La Nación* supported the government changeover. The changes taking place before and after the transition among the newspapers’ are of statistical significance and support the newspapers’ agenda in backing the change in government.

These findings indirectly support what Argentine journalist and communications professor, Federico Rey Lennon, writes in his article titled “The Argentine Crisis and the Mass Media.” He quotes Mark Wheeler saying that “far away from being utopist spectators and mere social instruments that transmit simple facts, the mass media are being ‘social actors’ playing key roles to have political

control as if there were the ‘fourth state,’ and this responsibility is much more developed in Argentina at moments when social and political uncertainty takes place, as it is right now” (2002).

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The analysis employed in this study could not specifically answer the research questions asked. It could not respond to the differences in frequencies between each newspaper nor could it respond to each newspaper’s frequency differences in their use of attributes. This statistical analysis tested the three newspapers’ difference of frequency simultaneously and could not show which issue dominated during the three year period.

The data shows a drastic decline of economic and negative economic coverage after the government transition, as if economic conditions improved. Interestingly enough, the economic conditions after the transition actually remain the same or worse. These findings generally demonstrate the newspapers role in aggravating the crises through their active contribution in turning the government upside down. In addition, although agenda setting takes place, this study is unable to determine who is driving the political and economic agenda.

Suggestions for Future Research

Since this study was not constructed to determine which player was pushing the agenda, future studies should examine the issues on that level. This would mean adding components of public opinion and public policy research to a longitudinal model. This study was not designed to answer questions in that way.

Equally important would be to study the role of other newspapers and influential media, such as television and radio, during the crisis and whose agenda influenced the changes the most; whether it was the media, the public, opposition party policies, or other factors. Another topic for study would be to conduct an historical study which examined how the media performed during other economic/political/social crises in the country and how they carried out their duties under different governments.

As described earlier, the Argentinean media played a vital role during the crisis of 2000-2002. They provided vital information to anxious consumers demanding daily updates of the critical situation. This work is important because it shows how the three most influential newspapers reported on the issues people care about the most. The findings provide crucial information for those who believe in the power of the media.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Key Words/Key Phrases Table

Positive Tone

“It is intelligent...”

“It is good because...”

“It is better because..”

“It is honest...”

“It works...”

“It is efficient...”

“It is progressing...”

“It is convenient...”

“The people are demanding...”

“Pacifists people...”

“It justified...”

Negative Tone

“It is not bright...”

“It is bad because...”

“It is worst because...”

“It is dishonest...”

“It does not work...”

Appendix A (Continued)

“It is inefficient...”

“It is regressing...”

“It is boring...”

“It is inconvenient...”

“It is a social chaos...”

“Violent people...”

“It is unjustified...”

Appendix B: Coding Table

Date	Newspaper	Title	Key Words/Phrases	Economic	Political	Positive	Negative