# A MEDIA TALE OF TWO CITIES: QUEBEC REFERENDUM COVERAGE IN MONTREAL AND TORONTO

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This analysis focuses on the treatment accorded the Sovereignty-Association Referendum by the Montreal and Toronto media (3 newspapers, radio, television). It is concluded that the Montreal media treated all actors in a balanced fashion while the Toronto media strongly favored the protagonists of the No-committee.

Notre analyse porte sur le traitement accordé par les médias de Montréal et de Toronto (3 journaux, radio, télévision) au référendum sur la Souveraineté-Association. On conclut que les média montréalais ont traité tous les acteurs d une façon équilibrée mais que les médias torontois ont fortement favorisé les partisans du Non.

In the spring of 1980, Rene Levesque's Parti Quebecois government fulfilled its promise to place before the Quebec electorate the question of the future relationship between la belle province and the rest of Canada. In November 1979, following three years of governing and much speculation and debate, the government of Quebec released its White paper on Sovereignty Association, Quebec-Canada: A New Deal (Government of Quebec, 1979). As that title indicates,

the plan did not call for a complete break from
the rest of the country. Rather, should inde-
pendence be achieved, negotiations with the
government of Canada would follow to determine
an agreement on money, customs, and other forms
of economic cooperation. The White paper indi-
cated that the question of Sovereignty-Associa-
tion would be submitted to the Quebec population
in the form of a referendum (p. 70). The White
paper also defined agents of the competing sides
in the debate. The agents would be known quite
appropriately by the titles of NO COMMITTEE and
YES COMMITTEE: the former committee opposed the
concept of sovereignty association, while the
latter committee supported Levesque's sover-
eignty theme.

In late December 1979, the proposed wording
of the referendum question was made public.
Within weeks, the newly elected leader of the
Provincial Liberal Party, Claude Ryan, responded
with a Beige Paper, **A New** Canadian Federation
(Globe and Mail, 10 January 1980, 11 - 19),
wherein he proposed a scheme of "renewed federa-
lism" which would redefine the nature of the
Canadian federal system.

After a debate in the National Assembly
(from March 4 to March 21) the final wording of
the referendum question appeared as follows:

> The government of Quebec has made pub-
> lic its proposal to negotiate a new
> agreement with the rest of Canada,
> based on the equality of nations; this
> agreement would enable Quebec to ac-
> quire the exclusive power to make its
> laws, levy its taxes and establish
> relations abroad--in other words, sove-
> reignty--and at the same time to main-
> tain with Canada an economic associa-

tion including a common currency. Any change in political status resulting from these negotiations will be submitted to the people through a referendum.

On these terms, do you give the government of Quebec the mandate to negotiate the proposed agreement between Quebec and Canada? YES____ NO____ (Assemblée nationale du Québec 1979, 4808)

This wording represents what was referred to as the "soft question." The referendum itself would thus only be a preliminary step to enable negotiations to proceed. The results of the negotiations would be submitted to the Quebec populace in a second referendum. This was the position stressed by Premier Levesque in his campaign messages. The opposition, however, was equally emphatic in pressing the point that the whole issue of Quebec separatism hinged on the vote. On April 15, Levesque announced the opening of the thirty-five day referendum campaign, to be followed on May 20th, by the referendum vote itself.

## METHOD

This article examines media coverage of the official referendum campaign in the French and English media capitals of Canada: Montreal and Toronto. Three types of media were analyzed: radio, television and newspapers. With respect to radio, the major half-hour newscasts, between 5:30 and 6:30 p.m., on the Radio Canada and CBC networks were analyzed for referendum news items. Likewise for television, the daily national news telecasts, "Le telejournal" and "The National" were monitored. These broadcasts originate in Montreal and Toronto respec-

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tively. As well, to add the newspaper dimension to the study, an analysis of three daily papers from each city was undertaken: from Montreal, Le Devoir, La Presse, and Le Journal de Montreal, and from Toronto, The Globe and Mail, The Toronto Star, and The Toronto Sun. The front page news, editorial commentary, as well as editorial page and op-ed page feature material and cartoons dealing with the referendum were examined . Intercoder reliability for the study was calculated at 86.7% (Holsti, 1969, p. 40).

The resulting data set consisted of 1,168 cases: 315 radio stories, 322 television stories, and 531 newspaper items. This last figure includes 234 front page stories, 90 editorials, 145 features, and 62 editorial cartoons.

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework within which this study has been designed is essentially gatekeeping and agenda setting. The literature with respect to the political behavior of the mass media has been developing in Canada (Soderlund, et. al, 1980, 347 - 356) but the seminal studies are still to be found in the American literature (McCoombs, 1976, 1 - 7). While it is unnecessary to detail the theories here, in essence gatekeeping theories are based on two premises: the gatekeeper will control the quantity and character of content passing through the gate, and second, the content passing through the gate is likely to take on characteristics of the gatekeeper. The consequence of gatekeeping, then, is that the material selected by media from the environment results in an agenda for listeners, viewers, or readers (Benton and Frazier, 1974, 26 - 74.). The literature thus far maintains that the effect of setting agenda is that audiences are guided regarding what to

think about, rather than how to think about issues (McCoombs and Shaw, 1972, 176 - 178). A slowly developing body of literature suggests, however, that agenda setting may result in both as Kaid, Hale and Williams suggest: "The inconclusive and inconsistent findings of research on the agenda setting function of the mass media have stimulated a search for more precision in the measurement of mass media effects on public priorities and issue saliences" (1977, 584).

The officially bicultural/bilingual character of the Canadian context raises immediate questions regarding the kinds of agenda which are set in English and French Canada. In Canada a number of studies have focused on linguistic agenda. Scholars such as Frederick Elkin (1975) and Arthur Siegel (1974; 1979) suggest that basic differences exist in French and English news coverage. On the other hand, studies done on media coverage of recent federal elections by Romanow, Soderlund, Wagenberg and Briggs (1980) indicate that overall similarities between media agenda of the two languages are more striking than are differences. It must be admitted, however, that these same authors did find significant differences in reporting on the part of French-language and English-language newspapers with respect to the Canadian-American "Fish War" of 1978 (Wagenberg, Soderlund, Romanow, and Briggs, 1979, 1 - 21).

From this it was posited that the nature of the event itself may well be crucial in determining whether or not there are significant differences in coverage by each linguistic media group. Specifically, national elections, focusing as they do on the travels and travails of the major party leaders, tend to result in a more homogeneous media stance (Wagenberg, Briggs, Soderlund, and Romanow, 1983). An event

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such as the FLQ Crisis, (which Arthur Siegel studied), while having national repercussions, was nonetheless localized in Quebec. It is hypothesized that the Referendum, which also had explicit national ramifications, remained inherently a Quebec issue, and hence was likely to generate distinct linguistic media agenda.

## RESULTS

Table One shows the Rank Order of media coverage of the major political institutions in the Referendum campaign, as well as of the issues which dominated debate during the campaign.

With respect to political institutions, the Parti Quebecois clearly emerged as the most significant actor, finding mention in 46.5% of all stories. Closely grouped in second, third, and fourth positions, were the No Committee, the Federal Liberal Party and the Yes Committee with, respectively, mentions in 36.0%, 34.5% and 32.6% of the stories. Significantly, the Provincial Liberal Party lagged in fifth position, being mentioned in only 26.5% of the total stories. Taken as a group, institutions identified with the No option received more mentions than did those identified with the Yes option, 1,133 for the NO group as opposed to 924 for the YES group.

As regards Referendum issues, Table One also shows the fifteen most frequently mentioned themes. Of these, ten are clearly substantive issues, four deal with campaign conduct while one other, leadership, contains elements of both. The most dominant substantive issue is sovereignty association, which comes as no surprise considering the basic Referendum question. Other major substantive issues include national unity, federal-provincial relations, general

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## Table One

## Rank Ordering of Major Institutional
## Actors and Referendum Issues

| R/O | Institutional Actors | N | % of stories | | R/O | Issues | N | % of stories |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Parti Quebecois | 543 | 46.5 | | 1 | Sovereignty Association | 502 | 43.0 |
| 2 | No Committee | 421 | 36.0 | | 2 | Campaign Strategy | 321 | 27.5 |
| 3 | Federal Liberal Party | 403 | 34.5 | | 3 | National Unity | 284 | 24.3 |
| 4 | Yes Committee | 381 | 32.6 | | 4 | Federal Provincial Relations | 280 | 24.0 |
| 5 | Provincial Liberal | 309 | 26.5 | | 5 | Socio-Cultural (General) | 234 | 20.0 |
| | | | | | 6 | Constitutional Reform | 217 | 18.6 |
| | | | | | 7 | Public Opinion Polls | 189 | 16.2 |
| | | | | | 8 | Renewed Federalism | 177 | 15.2 |
| | | | | | 9 | Historical Reasons | 171 | 14.6 |
| | | | | | 10 | Economic Prosperity | 141 | 12.1 |
| | | | | | 11 | Preservation of French Culture | 117 | 10.0 |
| | | | | | 12 | Economic Development | 112 | 9.6 |
| | | | | | 13 | Leadership | 102 | 8.7 |
| | | | | | 14 | Wording of Question | 99 | 8.5 |
| | | | | | 15 | Use of Media by Yes/No Groups | 94 | 8.0 |

socio-cultural aspects, constitutional reform, "renewed federalism", historical reasons underlying Quebec's distinctive character, and the effects of the referendum on economic prosperity. Rounding out the list of substantive issues, but not in the top ten, are preservation of French culture and economic development.

Four themes, which have been defined as having to do mainly with campaign conduct, showed themselves as important as measured by frequency of media mention. Thus, items dealing with campaign strategy by both sides emerge as the second most important issue coded. Beyond this, campaign related items seem to occupy a position of secondary importance. Reporting of public opinion polls falls into seventh place in the overall ranking, while the issues of **question wording and the use of media itself in the** campaign rank at the bottom of the top fifteen items. Leadership which, it is posited, has both substantive and campaign conduct characteristics, is again near the bottom of the list.

It is interesting to note that the issue of media's reporting on their roles in the campaign edges into the top fifteen Referendum issues discussed. This is an example of the emergence of a phenomenon of media behaviour in a political context which was first publicly identified by Walter Cronkite when he reviewed his own behaviour as a network news anchorperson at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago: namely, the media reporting on their own behaviour. As well, what is apparent to the authors from Table One is that the issue of leadership, which dominated media reporting of the two recent federal elections (see Romanow, Soderlund, Briggs and Wagenberg, 1982, Tables One and Two), is not afforded nearly as heavy a coverage in the Referendum campaign.

# Table Two

## Percentage of All Referendum Stories
## Dealing with Major Institutional Actors,
## by Language

|  | LANGUAGE | | | |
|  | FRENCH<br>N = 737 | ENGLISH<br>N = 431 | Phi | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Parti Quebecois | 48.3% | 42.5% | .06 | n.s. |
| Provincial Liberal Party | 28.5% | 23.0% | .06 | n.s. |
| Federal Liberal Party | 37.7% | 29.0% | .09 | .01 |
| Yes Committee | 39.9% | 20.2% | .20 | .001 |
| No Committee | 44.5% | 21.6% | .23 | .001 |

It is clear that campaign reporting empha-
sized discussion of rather broad substantive
issues dealing in general terms with Quebec's
relationship with the rest of Canada. In this
regard, it is significant to note that many
issues which one might have expected to be pro-
minent, (money, pensions, citizenship, circula-
tion of population, control of territory, trade,
and other rather specific items relating to the
consequences of sovereignty association) did not
figure prominently in media coverage.

Table Two begins a more detailed media
analysis. Data are grouped according to lang-
uage of transmission--French or English--ir-
respective of media. It is clear since fully
63% of the total stories on the Referendum were
in French, that the event did have a greater
press salience in Quebec. On the other hand,
when the percentage of total stories dealing
with the major institutional actors by each
language media group is considered, this obvious
difference becomes less prominent. Hence when
the major institutional actors, parties and
committees, are considered it is found that
there are both similarities and differences with
respect to coverage. In general the two provin-
cial parties received comparable treatment:
French coverage exceeded English but not in a
significant manner. The Federal Liberal Party
clearly received more attention from the French
language media, roughly in a proportion of four
to three. It is when the coverage accorded the
YES and NO Committees is reviewed that major
differences in patterns of coverage become
clear. In this case French language coverage
greatly exceeds that of the English language
media, in a ratio of almost exactly two to one.

Table Three, which contrasts patterns of
media coverage of the major institutional actors

Table Three

Percentage of All Referendum Stories Dealing
with Major Institutional Actors, by Media Type,
controlling for language.

| | LANGUAGE | | | | | | | | | |
| | FRENCH | | | | | ENGLISH | | | | |
| | TV n=188 | Radio n=216 | Print n=333 | Cramer's V | Sig | TV n=134 | Radio n=99 | Print n=198 | Cramer's V | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Parti Quebecois | 36.2 | 35.2 | 64.9 | .29 | .001 | 56.0 | 17.2 | 46.0 | .29 | .001 |
| Provincial Liberal Party | 19.1 | 18.1 | 40.5 | .24 | .001 | 36.6 | 11.1 | 19.7 | .23 | .001 |
| Federal Liberal Party | 44.7 | 35.2 | 35.4 | .08 | n.s. | 29.9 | 29.3 | 28.3 | .02 | n.s. |
| Yes Committee | 36.2 | 39.8 | 42.0 | .05 | n.s. | 33.6 | 24.2 | 9.1 | .27 | .001 |
| No Committee | 38.8 | 45.4 | 47.1 | .07 | n.s. | 37.3 | 25.3 | 9.1 | .30 | .001 |

between media, indicates that within the two major language groups the specific medium of reporting (i.e., television, radio, and newspapers) appears to affect the level of coverage.

For example, coverage of the Parti Quebecois is virtually identical in French language television and radio, yet is substantially higher among Montreal newspapers. Indeed, an examination of Table Three will indicate that, with the exception of the Federal Liberal Party (where television leads in coverage), Montreal newspapers lead in the coverage of all major institutional actors. In only two cases, however, are differences statistically significant.

In English language media, it is television which ranks first in percentage coverage of all major institutional actors. Certainly the most noticeable systematic difference is the extremely low attention to both the YES and NO Committees by the Toronto newspapers.

Overall, in terms of implications for gatekeeping and agenda setting, the audiences of the French language media were far more likely to encounter stories dealing with the major institutional actors. In fact, with respect to the Federal Liberal Party and the YES and NO Committees, the lowest percentage of French-language media attention actually exceeded the highest percentage of English-language media attention, and therefore it can be assumed that French language audiences would accord these actors far greater importance in the campaign than would English language audiences.

Table Four examines the differences in coverage of the fifteen leading referendum campaign issues by language. In terms of gatekeeping and agenda setting, with respect to overall

## Table Four

## Percentage of all Referendum Stories Dealing with Major Issues, by Language.

| ISSUE | LANGUAGE | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FRENCH<br>n = 737 | ENGLISH<br>n = 431 | Phi | Sig |
| Sovereignty Association | 42.6% | 43.6% | .01 | n.s. |
| Campaign Strategy | 30.4% | 22.5% | .09 | .01 |
| National Unity | 23.1% | 26.5% | .04 | n.s. |
| Federal Provincial Relations | 24.0% | 23.9% | .01 | n.s. |
| Socio-Cultural (General) | 17.2% | 24.8% | .09 | .01 |
| Constitutional Reform | 16.8% | 21.6% | .06 | .05 |
| Public Opinion Polls | 18.5% | 12.3% | .08 | .05 |
| Renewed Federalism | 14.2% | 16.7% | .03 | n.s. |
| Historical Reasons | 13.7% | 16.2% | .03 | n.s. |
| Economic Prosperity | 13.3% | 10.0% | .05 | n.s. |
| Preservation of French Culture | 10.6% | 9.0% | .02 | n.s. |
| Economic Development | 9.1% | 10.4% | .02 | n.s. |
| Leadership | 6.5% | 12.5% | .10 | .001 |
| **Wording for Question** | **9.0%** | **7.7%** | **.02** | **n.s.** |
| Use of Media by Yes/No Groups | 10.9% | 3.2% | .13 | .001 |

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similarities between the French and English agenda, there is a Spearman Rank Order Correlation of + 0.77. Leadership and media use are the two issues which there is the greatest difference in agenda placement, the former being eighth on the French language agenda and fifteenth on the English, while media use was eleventh on the French agenda and last on the English. On the whole, however, differences in the relative placement of issues on the two linguistic agenda were not great.

In exploring further the treatment of these issues, in addition to the substantive/campaign conduct issues dichotomy presented above, the substantive issues have been divided into three categories: (1) Political, including sovereignty association, national unity, federal-provincial relations, constitutional reform and renewed federalism (2) reasons underlying the referendum, including general socio-cultural aspects, historical reasons, and preservation of the French culture, and (3) Economic including economic prosperity and economic development. For this analysis, leadership has been grouped with campaign strategy, public opinion polls wording of the question, and media use in the Campaign conduct category.

In light of these categories an examination of the data in Table Four reveals that with the exception of federal-provincial relations, where coverage is equal, English language media tend to emphasize political issues slightly more than do their French counterparts. However, in only one case, (that of constitutional reform), is the difference statistically significant. Likewise, with regard to the reasons underlying the Referendum, differences are not striking, although English language media focussed on

## Table Five

## Percentage of all Referendum Stories Dealing With Major Issues, by Media Type, Controlling for Language.

| ISSUE | LANGUAGE | | | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | FRENCH | | | | | ENGLISH | | | | |
| | TV n=188 | Radio n=216 | Print n=333 | Cramer's V | Sig | TV n=134 | Radio n=99 | Print n=198 | Cramer's V | Sig |
| Sovereignty Association | 25.5 | 29.2 | 61.0 | .34 | .001 | 32.1 | 38.4 | 54.0 | .20 | .001 |
| Campaign Strategy | 30.9 | 28.2 | 31.5 | .03 | n.s. | 43.1 | 31.3 | 4.0 | .42 | .001 |
| National Unity | 15.4 | 21.8 | 28.2 | .12 | .01 | 17.2 | 26.3 | 32.8 | .15 | .01 |
| Federal Provincial Relations | 18.6 | 23.1 | 27.6 | .09 | n.s. | 30.6 | 27.3 | 17.7 | .14 | .05 |
| Socio-Cultural (General) | 8.5 | 5.6 | 29.7 | .30 | .001 | 29.9 | 21.2 | 23.3 | .08 | n.s. |
| Constitutional Reform | 11.7 | 13.9 | 21.6 | .12 | .01 | 20.9 | 30.3 | 17.7 | .12 | .01 |
| Public Opinion Polls | 17.6 | 14.8 | 21.3 | .07 | n.s. | 17.2 | 12.1 | 9.1 | .11 | n.s. |
| Renewed Federalism | 10.6 | 4.6 | 22.5 | .22 | .001 | 18.7 | 14.1 | 16.7 | .04 | n.s. |
| Historical Reasons | 4.8 | 7.9 | 22.5 | .24 | .001 | 26.1 | 7.1 | 14.1 | .19 | .001 |
| Economic Prosperity | 9.6 | 7.4 | 19.2 | .16 | .001 | 11.2 | 7.1 | 10.6 | .05 | n.s. |
| Preservation of French Culture | 1.6 | 1.4 | 21.6 | .33 | .001 | 11.2 | 7.1 | 8.6 | .05 | n.s. |
| Economic Development | 12.2 | 10.6 | 6.3 | .09 | .05 | 3.7 | 5.1 | 17.7 | .22 | .001 |
| Leadership | 2.1 | 0.9 | 12.6 | .23 | .001 | 11.9 | 8.1 | 15.2 | .08 | n.s. |
| Wording of Question | 6.9 | 4.2 | 13.2 | .14 | .001 | 7.5 | 11.1 | 6.1 | .07 | n.s. |
| Use of Media by Yes/No | 5.3 | 7.9 | 15.9 | .15 | .001 | 5.2 | 7.1 | 0.0 | .17 | .001 |

general socio-cultural aspects to a greater degree than did the French. Similarly, in the economic area, differences in coverage of economic development are not statistically significant. The greatest amount of difference occurred in the area of campaign conduct: the French language media stressed issues of campaign strategy, public opinion polls, question wording, and media usage, where the English language media focused on the leadership dimension to a degree far surpassing that of the French.

Table Five shows differences in media treatment of the above mentioned major issues within language groups. First, within the French media it is apparent that with the exception of the issue of economic development--where both television and radio coverage exceeded that of the Montreal newspapers--newspaper coverage of every other issue exceeded that offered by the electronic media. Moreover, in all but three instances, these differences were statistically significant.

With regard to differences in media coverage on the part of English language media, the situation is far more complex. In the case of seven of the issues, differences among the media are not statistically significant. On the eight issues where differences in coverage are statistically significant, newspaper coverage predominates in four: sovereignty association, national unity, historical reasons, and economic development. Of the remaining issues, television stressed the issues of federal-provincial relations and campaign strategy, while radio led in coverage of constitutional reform and use of media.

Interestingly, while differences in French and English coverage are apparent, the overall

# Table Six

## Percentage of All Referendum Stories (Studied in Context) Reflecting on the Major Personalities Involved in the Referendum in a Positive, Neutral, or Negative Manner, by Language

| LEADER | LANGUAGE | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | FRENCH | | | ENGLISH | | |
| | Positive | Neutral | Negative | Postive | Neutral | Negative |
| Levesque | 2.3 | 4.5 | 1.2 | 3.7 | 8.6 | 12.8 |
| Ryan | 0.9 | 4.2 | 1.1 | 7.4 | 7.9 | 3.0 |
| Trudeau | 1.5 | 3.1 | 1.2 | 8.6 | 7.0 | 2.6 |

issue agenda are quite similar. When the treatment of these issues by different media within the same language is examined definite patterns become apparent. In particular, it is the Montreal newspapers which dominate over television and radio in issue coverage on the French side. On the English side, media treatment is more congruent, and, although Toronto newspapers lead in issue coverage, their dominance is not nearly as great as is the case with the French.

A final dimension of Referendum coverage which was assessed is that of evaluative direction. Given the charges by both sides of "media bias" during the campaign (Globe and Mail, 18 April 1980; Carriere, 1980), an analysis of this phenomenon was undertaken and is summarized in Tables Six, Seven, Eight, Nine and Ten.

In assessing Table Six, which focuses on the overall evaluation of political leaders, two things become apparent. The first is that English language media are more prone to offer evaluative judgements, in both positive and negative directions, than are the French media. For all of the major political actors involved in the campaign, Levesque, Ryan, and Trudeau, English media were both more positively and negatively inclined.

The second point that emerges from the data is that the French media tended to be quite balanced in positive and negative commentary toward the major leaders. Levesque received a positive balance, +1.1; Ryan a negative balance, - 0.2; and Trudeau a positive balance, + 0.3. Such balance is noticeably lacking in English media evaluations of these same political leaders, where Levesque received a negative balance, - 9.1; Ryan a positive balance, + 4.4; while Trudeau received a positive balance, +6.0.

On the basis of these data there seems to be little doubt that in English media, Mr. Levesque's perceived negative qualities were highlighted, while the perceived virtues of Mr. Ryan and Mr. Trudeau found their way into Referendum reporting.

One can also examine treatment afforded these same three central actors in a somewhat different manner--specifically, by examining the quality of the language used in describing them, their actions, and their perceived attributes. In this qualitative treatment, adjectives used were identified and in subsequent coding by the authors, assigned positive and negative values based both on the actual word and the context in which it was used. Hence the selection process confined itself to those adjectives which were obviously favourable or unfavourable to the central actors. What is reviewed here is the quality of the agenda as a consequence of reportorial gatekeeping. It should be pointed out that such an examination is consistent with gatekeeping/agenda setting analysis, for it is the conscious reportorial selection of particular matter from the referendum environment that results in the establishment of agenda for readers, listeners and viewers.

These tables show a total of 112 evaluative adjectives used in the French-language media, roughly one per 6.5 stories, where in the English-language media 90 adjectives were used, roughly one per 4.5 stories. Hence on this measure of leader evaluation, as well as on the earlier one, there is a greater propensity towards using evaluative terms on the part of the English-language media.

If one examines linguistic differences in agenda, the most notable of these occurs in the

# Table Seven

## Percentage of Positive and Negative Adjectives Used to Describe Levesque, by Language

| FRENCH (n - 42) | | ENGLISH (n = 29) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Positive (61.9%) | Negative (38.1%) | Positive (27.5%) | Negative (72.5%) |
| -moderate | -cutting (II) | -media expert | -devious |
| -serene | -lost conviction | -casual | -feared |
| -relaxed (II) | -volatile | -intense | -runs in all directions |
| -full of energy | -nervous | -impressive (II) | -dishonest |
| -smiling | -irritated | -positive entity | -lost his marbles |
| -dignified (II) | -unkind | -persuasive | -untrustworthy |
| -real communi- ·cator | -manipulator | -emotional | -nervous |
| -linguistic master | -lacks respect | | -tired |
| -proud (II) | -confused | | -defensive |
| -forceful (II) | -liar | | -worried |
| -moving | -weary | | -playing with people |
| -passionate | -contradictory | | -vague |
| -vigorous | -deceptive | | -confusing |
| -firm | -arrogant | | -exhausted |
| -efficient | -dishonest | | -pensive |
| -charismatic | | | -crushed |
| -audacious | | | -racist |
| -calm | | | -double-talker |
| -charmer | | | -sarcastic |
| -aggressive | | | -obstacle to reform |
| -exceptional politician | | | -peddler of lies |
| -astute | | | |

# Table Eight

## Percentage of Positive and Negative Adjectives Used to Describe Ryan, by Language

| FRENCH (n = 32) | | ENGLISH (n = 16) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Positive (40.6%) | Negative (59.4%) | Positive (50%) | Negative (50%) |
| –in good form (III) | –disastrous | –serious | –shy |
| –happy | –likes confronta-tion | –scholarly | –ignorant of media |
| –conciliatory | –limping leader-ship | –conciliatory | –ridiculous |
| –warm | –irritated | –composed | –strained |
| –emotional | –intellectually dishonest | –jovial | –dour-faced (II) |
| –confident | –terse | –patriot | –non-entity |
| –philosophical | –repetetious | –confident (II) | –unexciting |
| –optimistic | –poor speaker | | |
| –at ease | –meagre | | |
| –marvelous orator | –not a leader | | |
| –aggressive | –Machiavellian | | |
| | –lost credibility | | |
| | –misinformed | | |
| | –tactless | | |
| | –misses the point | | |
| | –far-fetched ideas | | |
| | –negative | | |
| | –partisan | | |
| | –dominated by federals | | |

# Table Nine

## Percentage of Positive and Negative Adjectives Used to Describe Trudeau, by Language

| FRENCH (n = 38) | | ENGLISH (n = 45) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Positive (73.7%) | Negative (26.3%) | Positive (68.9%) | Negative (31.1%) |
| –logical (VI) | –cynical | –logical (IV) | –contemptuous |
| –philosophical | –disdainful | –democratic nature | –arrogant |
| –implacable reasoning (II) | –threatening | –compromiser | –liar (II) |
| –great orator | –hard–line | –best leader (II) | –stonewalling |
| –objective | –not indispensible | –media expert | –disdainful |
| –useful | –cold | –powerful | –tired (II) |
| –serious | –hesitant | –animated | –dishonest |
| –star | –unrealistic | –confident | –giver of crumbs |
| –Quebec Citizen (II) | –moved too slow | –challenging | –reluctant |
| –dramatic | –disengaged | –vintage form | –flexibility of a straight jacket |
| –dignified (II) | | –entertaining | |
| –firm | | –great speaker | |
| –powerful | | –relaxed | –unrealistic |
| –forceful | | –professional | –obstacle to refor |
| –brilliant strategist | | –emotional | |
| –calm | | –proud | |
| –able | | –serious | |
| –serene | | –firm | |
| –exceptional politician | | –determined | |
| –impeccable judgement | | –professorial | |
| | | –expert | |
| | | –wise | |
| | | –tells it ,as it is | |
| | | –persuasive | |
| | | –intelligent | |
| | | –passionate | |
| | | –like early Trudeau | |

case of Premier Levesque.   Here 61.9% of adjec-
tives  used by the French media were favourable,
while 38.1% were negative.  English media treat-
ment  of Levesque was quite the opposite of  the
French,  in  that only 27.5% of  the  adjectives
used were positive, while fully 72.5% of English
adjectives were negative.  Mr. Ryan received the
fewest  number of adjectival references in  both
English and French media treatment.   The French
evaluation was on the whole negative (nearly 60%
counted on the negative side),  while his treat-
ment  at the hands of English media was  exactly
equal.   Mr.  Trudeau,  was the recipient of the
most adjectives by media in both languages, and,
second,  that this evaluation was strongly posi-
tive  in  both English and French  media  (73.7%
positive  in  French and 68.9% positive in  Eng-
lish).

      Pursuing  this analysis  further,  one  can
establish  "profiles" for the three major actors
as  they were presented by the media to  readers
and audiences in Montreal and Toronto.   Trudeau
as depicted by the English language media can be
characterized  as having the following  profile:
a logical,  professional,  expert  leader,  with
impressive  speaking  skills.  In  the  French-
language  media agenda,  a very similar  profile
appears:  Trudeau  again emerges as a  logical,
intellectual  leader,  with great oratorical and
strategic  skills.  The English agenda  depicts
Ryan as a serious,  scholarly leader,  confident
of victory, who, however, can appear ridiculous,
is ignorant of the media,  and seems not to have
the spark and dynamism of the other leaders.  In
the French agenda,  Ryan does not fare quite  so
well.  While he is seen as scholarly, confident,
and  optimistic,  his profile is in general much
more negative:  he appears as a poor orator, his
leadership disastrous,  and he himself as  tact-
less, misinformed, and even intellectually  dis-

# Table Ten

## Percentage of All Referendum Stories
## Reflecting on the "Yes" and "No" Options
## in a Positive or Negative Manner, By Language

| | FRENCH (n = 732) | | ENGLISH (n = 431) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Positive | Negative | Positive | Negative |
| "Yes" Option | 7.1% | 5.0% | 8.1% | 16.2% |
| "No" Option | 9.3% | 3.5% | 16.1% | 7.3% |

honest. It is when one examines treatment af-
forded Levesque that striking differences become
apparent. For example, a resident of Toronto
whose access to the media studied here was
limited to English, could only perceive Levesque
as a devious, dishonest manipulator, whose im-
pressive ability to use the media makes him all
the more dangerous. In sharp contrast, the
Montreal resident is presented the profile of a
leader who, although verbally abrasive, is none-
theless a proud and forceful master communicator
whose emotional involvement in the campaign
lends him a charismatic charm.

Table Ten, dealing with the evaluative
dimensions of Referendum coverage, shifts the
focus from leaders to positions supporting the
Yes and No options. Consistent with this analy-
sis of leader evaluation, French-language media
highlight the positive aspects of both sides in
the campaign, even though the No option has a
substantially higher positive balance of commen-
tary, + 5.8 to + 2.1 for the Yes option.

Again, in sharp contrast to the French-
language pattern, and consistent with earlier
analysis, the English-language media strongly
favour the No option, with a positive balance of
+ 8.8, while opposing the Yes option with a
negative balance of commentary of - 8.1. In
summary, what the linguistic agenda depict with
respect to the Yes and No options is the follow-
ing: the French-language media on the whole
support both options, with an edge to the No
side; the English-language media are very sup-
portive of the No option and highly critical of
the Yes option.

## DISCUSSION

In terms of the media studied, the Referendum did indeed generate greater reportorial interest in Montreal than in Toronto. Montrealers were the potential recipients of nearly twice as many Referendum stories as were Torontonians. However, an examination of the internal configuration of this reporting reveals interesting parallels as well as hypothesized differences. Parallels in coverage are mainly evident in the area of issues. Here, although in actual number the French stories greatly exceeded the English, a Spearman Rank Order Correlation of + .77 indicated quite similar overall issue agenda. Considering that all three issues, where French-language coverage is statistically greater than English, deal with campaign conduct, it is argued that this difference springs not from French-English distinctiveness, but simply from the provincial nature of the Referendum.

In other areas of Referendum coverage hypothesized differences appear confirmed. In the area of institutional actors, there is not only a greater volume of French-language coverage, but in percentage terms statistically significant differences in three of the five cases. In two of these, the Yes and No Committees, moreover, the extent of differential coverage is strikingly evident.

**In addition,** when one turns to patterns of evaluation, both with respect to leaders and the Yes and No options, the effects of language on differences in coverage are most prominent. French-language media overall were less judgemental in their reporting of the Referendum. The evaluative material which did appear was balanced with respect to support for the Yes and

No options as well as the leaders associated with these options. English reporting, in contrast, produced greater percentages of evaluative material. Moreover, such material was consistently supportive of the No option while hostile to the Yes option and Mr. Levesque.

Another interesting point concerns the active involvement of federal politicians in a Provincial Referendum. Justification for such involvement is obvious, in the sense that the Referendum consequences far transcended the boundaries of Quebec. Be this as it may, the data do suggest that the federal role in the Referendum campaign was certainly substantial and perhaps decisive. In terms of frequency of mention, in the French-language media, Federal Liberal coverage exceeded that accorded to their Provincial counterparts by over 10%. Moreover, the positive personal evaluation of Mr. Trudeau in the French-language media exceeded the positive personal evaluation of Mr. Levesque, in so far as journalist's use of adjectives was concerned (as in Tables Seven and Nine.) However it must be pointed out that, in terms of broader contextual descriptions of leaders in stories, Mr. Trudeau lagged slightly behind Mr. Levesque in positive coverage (as in Table Six). This finding acquires an even greater salience given the negative personal evaluation of Mr. Ryan in the French-language media, in both adjectival and contextual measures.

Conventional wisdom in the literature holds that electors select information from the environment in a manner which is consistent with preconceptions of leaders, parties, and issues (Blumler, 1979; Becker, 1979). In the context of this referendum and in terms of the media studied, the implications of this phenomenon are that, in Montreal, one could find in the media

sufficient material to provide attitudinal sup-
port for either the Yes or No options. On the
other hand, the Toronto media audiences were
bombarded with a pro-No option, pro-Trudeau,
anti-Yes option and anti-Levesque agenda. If
sovereignty association in fact implied separa-
tism, it is clear that Toronto-based media op-
posed separatism and supported national unity.

Given the outcome of the Referendum, the
defeat of sovereignty association, it is easy to
focus on the nation-unifying character of the
Toronto-based media. However, had the Yes op-
tion prevailed, one might speculate that the
tone of English-language media reporting would
have contributed to a crisis atmosphere in which
political negotiation and compromise would have
been difficult to achieve. According to the
Toronto-based media, had the outcome favoured
the Yes option, it would clearly have been the
worst of times. According to the Montreal-based
media, "it was the best of times, it was the
worst of times."

## FOOTNOTES

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