

Referendums and Elections: How Do Campaigns Differ?

Lawrence LeDuc
University of Toronto
CANADA

Campaigns are as important in determining referendum outcomes as they are in elections, perhaps even *more* important. Between the time that a referendum is called and the day that the result is announced, there usually stands a hard fought campaign lasting several weeks or months. Over the course of that campaign, public opinion can often shift dramatically. In a number of the referendum cases to be examined here, polls taken in advance of the campaign period would have suggested quite different results from those which actually occurred. The dynamics of a referendum campaign can often be harder to anticipate than those of an election, and the breadth of participation of the electorate cannot always be assumed. It follows, therefore, that the outcome of many referendums is not easily predictable, even in some cases where the distribution of public opinion on the issue of the referendum is well known. The short term perceptions of the referendum question on the part of voters, the images that they may hold of the groups and individuals involved, or their reactions to the discourse of the campaign, can be as important to the voting decision as their opinions or beliefs on the fundamental issue itself. While longer term factors such as partisanship or ideology may also be important, the short-term impact of campaign strategies and tactics can often make a substantial difference in determining referendum outcomes.

A referendum presents a somewhat different set of choices to the voter than does an election. No political parties or candidate names appear on the ballot. In a referendum, unlike an election, voters must decide among alternatives that are sometimes unfamiliar and perhaps lacking in reliable cues. One might therefore expect a greater degree of volatility and uncertainty in referendum voting behaviour than is typically found in elections. Particularly in those instances where the issue(s) of the referendum are entirely new to the voter, the learning process of the campaign becomes critical to the determination of the outcome. Bowler & Donovan (1998) note that voters draw upon a variety of sources in forming opinions about the sometimes complex and confusing initiatives which appear on some U.S. state ballots. Among the most frequently mentioned sources of such information are campaign pamphlets, newspaper and television editorials, and direct mailings from various campaign organizations. Voters in such situations take cues from these and other sources. Hence, knowing that the prominent consumer advocate, Ralph Nader, backed a 1988 California proposal on auto insurance and opposed several competing proposals put forward by business groups was instrumental in shaping opinion on five insurance propositions which appeared together on the ballot (Lupia, 1994). Similarly, knowledge that the tobacco industry was behind a 1994 California proposition to loosen local smoking restrictions led to its defeat (Bowler & Donovan, 1998:58-65).

In instances such as these, voters clearly need the campaign in order to come to a conclusion about an issue on which they are being asked to render a decision. Only through the various information sources available to them over the course of a campaign will voters be able to form opinions on new and unfamiliar (or only partly familiar) political questions which are

presented to them. In other situations however, voters may be able to make up their minds much more quickly on the basis of partisan or ideological cues, or familiarity with one or more issues in a long standing political debate. Strong supporters of the Parti Québécois, for example, would hardly have needed a campaign in order to make up their minds how to vote in the 1995 Quebec sovereignty referendum, given that the Asovereignty \cong issue had been debated for more than twenty years and itself forms the basis on which the party system in Quebec is aligned. Yet, as we will see, even in that seemingly straightforward case, campaign factors which could not have been fully anticipated intervened to an extent sufficient to place the outcome in doubt (Pammett & LeDuc, 1998). Referendums such as the 1980 vote on nuclear power in Sweden, or the two Irish referendums on constitutional provisions governing abortion, may also serve as possible examples of issues on which a significant part of the electorate could be expected to have strong preexisting views. But in instances where parties are split, the ideological alignments are unclear, or the issue is unfamiliar, voters might be expected to be much more dependent on the campaign. Some referendums fitting such a profile might be those that involve multiple issues, complex international treaties, or large packages of constitutional provisions (e.g. the 1988 Australian constitutional referendums or the 1992 Canadian referendum on the Charlottetown constitutional agreement). Some of the referendums on European Union membership may fall between these two extremes because in these cases many voters will hold preexisting opinions about the larger issue of European integration but would not necessarily have anticipated all of the elements of the campaign debate or have fully formed opinions on the specific question on which they were being asked to vote. Other cases which may similarly fall into this somewhat uncharted territory may be those involving treaties such as Maastricht, on which Danish, French, and Irish citizens voted in the 1992 referendums. While many of these voters may have held opinions about the larger AEuropean question \cong , few could be expected to be conversant with the specific provisions of the Maastricht treaty. Such a campaign thus involves a learning process, in which voters acquire the amount of information necessary to allow them to make a voting decision, however small or large that may be. And, as these examples will also show, the lack of strong party or leadership cues makes the decision process more difficult for many voters, thereby producing greater uncertainty about the eventual outcome. It is not surprising then to find many instances of referendums in which the last few days of a campaign are crucial to the result, and public opinion polls reporting large numbers of Aundecided \cong voters right up until the day of the vote.

The theoretical issues

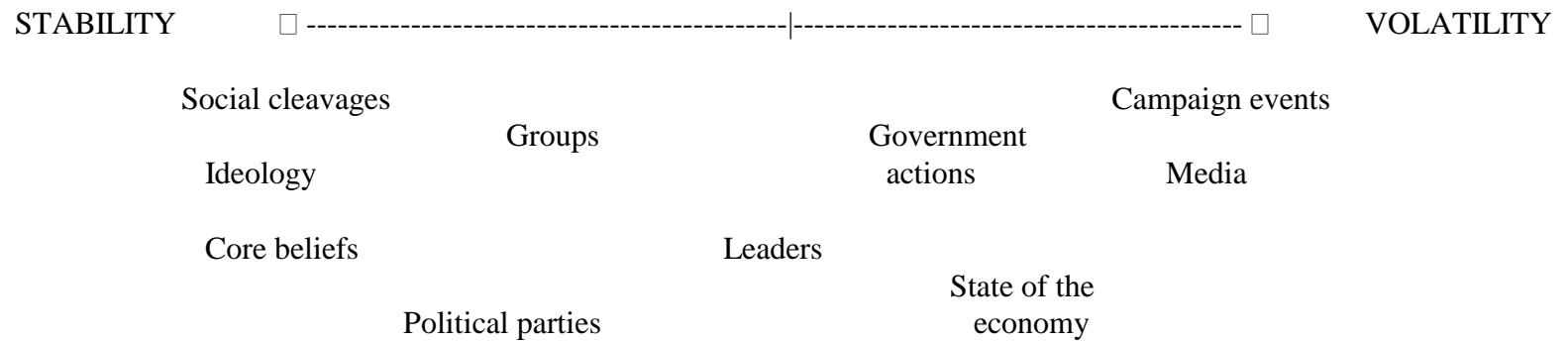
Let us consider the various ways in which referendum campaigns are similar to, and different than, models which obtain in a normal parliamentary election. Certainly, at least some of the factors which political scientists are accustomed to considering in studies of elections -- ideology, parties and partisanship, the images of political leaders; the issues underlying the ballot question, the impact of campaign strategies and advertising, the role of the media -- can be important to the outcome of a referendum in much the same way as in elections. These familiar factors however might be expected to vary considerably from one referendum case to another, because the political context in which a referendum takes place can vary considerably. The political context of the referendum therefore itself becomes a Avariable \cong , which in turn will

affect the weight which even familiar variables such as partisanship or ideology might carry in explaining behaviour and outcomes.

Referendum campaigns can easily become entangled with a range of other political questions, above and beyond the issue presented on the referendum ballot. In this respect, they may be somewhat like second order elections (van der Eijk et al, 1995; Reif & Schmitt, 1980). Examining the 1992 Danish and French referendums on Maastricht, Franklin et al (1995) concluded that shifting attitudes toward domestic political actors, or the relative popularity or unpopularity of the government of the day, can sometimes provide a more plausible explanation of shifts in voter sentiment than feelings about the referendum issue itself. However, the relative balance of such factors in a referendum campaign can vary considerably from one context to another. In the 1992 Canadian constitutional referendum, party positions were not as readily distinguishable because all of the mainstream political parties campaigned on the same side, urging voters to support the package of constitutional changes which had been negotiated by the federal and provincial governments (LeDuc & Pammett, 1995; Johnston et al, 1996). Similarly, the 1994 Nordic referendums on European Union membership, or the 1995 Irish divorce referendum, found many of the political parties who normally oppose each other in elections campaigning together on the same side of the issue. In contrast, both Quebec sovereignty referendums found partisan forces lined up predictably on the opposite sides of the question, and the relative popularity of these well entrenched party groups had predictably strong effects in determining the outcome (Pammett & LeDuc, 1998). Feelings about certain types of issues may change less readily than attitudes toward individual politicians or even political parties. For some voters, opinions on Quebec sovereignty or on European integration might reflect fundamental beliefs about the nation or a sense of political community. For others, such attitudes are less the product of deeply held beliefs than a shorter term electoral decision based on the persuasive arguments of an advertising campaign, apprehensions about the state of the economy, or judgments about the relative credibility of those delivering the message.

Figure 1 provides a sort of conceptual map, on which a number of the variables which are familiar from the study of election campaigns might be rearranged to fit the more widely varying context of referendum voting. I will argue here that the closer a particular referendum comes to involving elements at the left hand side of the diagram, the more predictable the outcome should be and the more limited the effects of the campaign. As one moves towards the right hand side of the diagram, the greater the potential for volatility and the more inherently unpredictable the outcome. Thus, a referendum which involves a cleavage or ideological issue, and/or in which political parties take well known and predictably opposite positions, ought to see the least volatility. One which involves a new or previously undiscussed issue, or in which parties line up in a non-traditional manner, is more likely to promote some of the short-term variables towards the right side of the diagram, the possible impact of which often cannot be known until the campaign is well under way. Of course this schematic, when applied to real cases, may somewhat understate and minimize the potential for campaign effects, even in instances where the initial configuration of forces would seem to fall more towards the stability end of the continuum.

FIGURE 1
Campaign elements leading towards stability or volatility in referendum campaigns



For as we shall see subsequently, an important part of the dynamic of a referendum campaign involves changing and redefining the subject matter of the referendum through the campaign discourse. Hence, the 1986 Irish divorce referendum might have seen less movement over the course of the campaign had it been fought solely along religious or partisan lines. But the rather dramatic shift which took place in voter sentiment during that campaign was attributable in part to the success of certain actors in redefining the issue for the voters, i.e. in persuading them to view the matter as something other than a traditional cleavage issue (D'Arcy & Laver, 1990).

In this paper, I propose to examine a number of instances of referendum campaigns in which some of the variables referenced in figure 1 can be shown to vary in ways that are different in certain respects from the patterns typically found in elections. While models of electoral behaviour that are familiar to election scholars work reasonably well in explaining referendum voting (LeDuc & Pammett, 1995), the relative weight of campaign effects can vary substantially as the context in which a referendum takes place changes. Because referendums are relatively rare events in most countries, this contextual variation is most easily operationalized in a broadly comparative study. Here, I will consider a number of referendums which have taken place in fifteen western democracies over the past twenty years.¹ This mini-universe of 43 cases (table 1) includes 37 national votes and 6 significant sub-national cases X Scotland, Wales, Quebec (2) and Puerto Rico (2).² Although the goal of the paper is broadly comparative, I will concentrate on those cases where the availability of data, both on referendum campaigns and on elections, permits the most rigorous tests.

Why governments call referendums

Referendums arise under a variety of legal forms, but they don't just happen. The origin of a referendum is nearly always found in a conscious political decision taken by a party, organization, or group. Even in the case of citizen initiated referendums, the undertaking generally requires the political and financial resources of a well organized group in order to collect the thousands of signatures needed to get a proposed measure onto the ballot. In virtually all of the cases to be considered here however, the decision to hold a referendum was taken by a governing political party (or parties). Sometimes this occurred because the governing party concluded that a particular political agenda required demonstrated public support in order to carry it through. No British government today, for example, would risk joining the monetary union without obtaining public approval in a referendum, even though such a course is not legally required. Similarly, none of the governments of the Nordic countries in 1994 were willing to undertake the historic decision to join the European Union without the concurrence of their citizens. The 1988 Australian constitutional referendum came about because of the decision of the Labor government to appoint a constitutional commission, and the 1992 Irish abortion referendum took place because of the government's desire to separate the abortion issue from the debate on the Maastricht treaty. In each of these instances, and in dozens of others that might be used as examples, the political chain of events that led up to the decision to hold a referendum can be easily reconstructed. This does not mean however that the holding of a referendum on a particular issue is certain. The Parti Québécois, for instance, might have decided to pursue its

TABLE 1
 Referendums in fifteen democracies since 1980

<u>Country</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Items</u>	<u>% Yes</u>	<u>% Turnout</u>
Australia	1984 12 01	Constitutional amendments	2	*	94
	1988 09 03	Constitutional amendments	4	*	92
	1999 11 06	Republic/preamble	2	*	95
Austria	1994 06 12	EU membership		67	81
Canada (Quebec) "	1992 10 26	Constitutional agreement		45	75
	1980 05 20	Sovereignty-association		40	86
	1995 10 30	Sovereignty		49	94
Denmark	1986 02 27	Single European Act		56	75
	1992 06 02	Maastricht treaty		49	83
	1993 05 18	Edinburgh agreement		57	86
	1998 05 28	Amsterdam treaty		55	75
Finland	1994 10 16	EU membership		57	71
France	1988 11 06	New Caledonia		80	37
	1992 09 20	Maastricht treaty		51	70
Ireland	1983 09 07	Prohibit abortion		67	53
	1984 06 14	Voting rights		75	46
	1986 06 26	Legalize divorce		37	61
	1987 05 26	Single European Act		70	44
	1992 06 18	Maastricht treaty		69	57
	1992 11 25	Abortion laws	3	*	65
	1995 11 24	Legalize divorce		50	62
	1996 11 28	Bail reform		75	29
	1998 05 22	N. Ireland/ Amsterdam treaty	2	*	56
	1999 06 11	Local government		78	51
New Zealand	1990 10 17	Legislative term		30	79
	1992 09 19	Reform electoral system	2	*	55
	1993 11 06	New electoral law		54	83
Norway	1994 11 28	EU membership		48	89
Russia	1993 04 25	Economic reforms +	4	*	65
	1993 12 12	New constitution		55	58

Spain	1986 03 12	NATO membership		53	59
(TABLE 1, cont.)					
Sweden	1980 03 23	Nuclear power		*	76
	1994 11 13	EU membership		52	83
United Kingdom					
(Scotland)	1997 09 11	Devolution/tax powers	2	*	60
(Wales)	1997 09 18	Devolution		50	50
United States					
(Puerto Rico)	1993 11 14	Political status		*	74
" "	1998 12 13	Political status		*	71
Uruguay					
	1980 11 30	Constitution		43	80
	1989 04 16	Amnesty law		57	77
	1989 11 26	Index pensions		82	88
	1992 12 13	Privatization		30	77
	1994 08 28	Electoral reform		31	85
	1994 11 27	Education/ social security	2	*	90
	1996 12 08	Electoral reform		50	93

* denotes multiple ballot questions

sovereignty agenda without a referendum, as indeed some groups within the party would have preferred. But it made a calculation in the course of devising its 1976 election campaign strategy that the commitment to conduct a referendum on the issue would allow it to Adecouple≅ the sovereignty question from other election issues, thereby placing it in a more competitive electoral position. The party=s unexpected victory in that election justified the strategy, but left the party with the commitment to hold a referendum later (Pinard & Hamilton, 1978).

The reasons why a governing party or coalition might opt for a referendum strategy are many and varied. Morel (1993) notes that divisions *within* a party on a sensitive issue are one of the most common reasons. By tossing the Ahot potato≅ to the electorate, party leaders may hope to quell dissent within the party on a divisive issue. The decision by the British Labour party to hold a referendum on the issue of British EC membership shortly after coming to power in 1974 provides one good example of this strategy. The Swedish and Austrian referendums on the divisive issue of nuclear power provide another illustration of circumstances in which a popular vote was used to prevent a difficult issue from tearing the party apart. A referendum may also be part of some larger political objective. The 1997 Scottish and Welsh devolution referendums, together with the 1998 referendum on local government in London, are clearly part of the Blair government=s wider constitutional agenda, which also includes Northern Ireland,

TABLE 2

A typology of the subject matter of referendums

I. Constitutional issues: Amendments to the constitution, changes in political institutions, forms of governance, basic laws, etc.

Examples

Most Australian referendums
The 1992 Canadian constitutional referendum
The 1993 Russian constitutional referendum
The 1992 and 1993 New Zealand referendums on electoral reform
The 1993 Brazilian referendum on a presidential system of government
The 1991 Swiss referendum to lower the voting age

II. Treaties and international agreements: All agreements between nations, supranational organizations, etc. whether such referendums are constitutionally mandated or not.

Examples

All referendums on European Union membership
The French, Danish and Irish referendums on the Maastricht Treaty
The 1986 Spanish referendum on NATO membership
The 1994 Swiss referendum on participation in UN peacekeeping forces
The 1998 referendum on the Northern Ireland peace agreement

III. Sovereignty: Referendums on territorial questions, issues of >national= self-determination, devolution of authority, federation, secession.

Examples

The Quebec sovereignty referendums
The 1988 French referendum on New Caledonia
The 1991 Ukrainian referendum on independence
The referendums on statehood for Puerto Rico (1967, 1993, 1998)
The Scottish and Welsh devolution referendums

IV. Public Policy: Referendums on important policy questions, including consultative votes on government proposals, abrogative votes on public laws, citizen initiatives, etc.

Examples

The 1978 Austrian and 1980 Swedish referendums on nuclear power
The 1992 Uruguayan referendum on privatization of state industries
The Irish divorce and abortion referendums (1983, 1986, 1992, 1995)
The 1993 Italian referendum on decriminalization of drugs
Swiss initiatives on social insurance, tobacco and alcohol advertising, casino gambling, sales and gasoline taxes, federal holiday (1993)

restructuring of the House of Lords, and electoral reform. As is shown in table 2, the subject matter of referendums varies widely. Nevertheless, there are some clear patterns which allow us

to group referendums into certain broad categories of subjects. It might be expected that the subject matter of a referendum will be related in a variety of ways to its potential for volatility.³

When a governing party opts for a referendum strategy, it generally does so in the expectation that it will win, or that its position on a particular issue will be sustained. While there are instances in which a party may find itself trapped into a prior commitment to hold a referendum, as for example the New Zealand government did on the electoral reform issue in 1992, political leaders rarely stumble blindly into a referendum on an important political question. Even in those instances where a party is internally divided, it is generally possible to discern the preferred outcome of those who planned and organized the referendum strategy. Hence, Harold Wilson saw the referendum as a means of sustaining British membership in the European Community in 1975, even though many prominent members of his party continued to oppose it. Similarly, Felipe Gonzalez used the 1986 Spanish referendum on NATO membership as a means of quelling opposition to NATO involvement within his own governing party. But such strategies can easily fail. The volatility and uncertainty of a campaign can place at risk even the most carefully thought out referendum strategy. François Mitterrand may not have fully anticipated the high degree of political risk involved in putting the Maastricht treaty to a referendum in 1992, believing as he did that the treaty would be readily endorsed by French voters (Criddle, 1993). Neither did Canadian political leaders, having committed themselves to a referendum following the 1992 constitutional agreement, anticipate that the electorate would ultimately reject their carefully balanced package of reforms (LeDuc & Pammett, 1995; Johnston et al, 1996). While the strategy which lays behind calling the referendum may be clear, the outcome of the venture, once undertaken, is much more uncertain.

Participation and voter turnout

One of the first issues that arises in comparing referendum and election campaigns is that of voter turnout. Evidence suggests that turnout can vary much more widely in referendums than it does in elections. In Switzerland, where referendums are commonplace events, turnout is generally well below 50%, and can sometimes be much lower (Kobach, 1993). It can however rise to considerably higher levels when a particular issue engages wide voter interest or when a more intense campaign is waged by interested groups.⁴ In U. S. state referendums, turnout is notoriously low, and can be subject to even more extreme fluctuations. Butler and Ranney (1994) found that turnout over a large number of referendum cases in various nations averaged fifteen percentage points lower than that found in general elections in the same countries. Cronin (1989) found a comparable rate of drop-off -- i.e. the difference between voting the candidate and propositions sections of the ballot -- in American state referendums. However there is no reason to believe that turnout in referendums is *necessarily* lower than that found in elections. The turnout in some of the more important European referendums has generally been comparable to that found in national elections (table 3), and turnout in the 1995 Quebec sovereignty referendum registered an astonishing 94%, higher than in any provincial or federal election. Other important

TABLE 3
Selected turnout comparisons X referendums and general elections

		<u>%</u>	<u>+/-</u>
Australia	1987 federal election	94	
"	1988 constitutional amendments	92	-2
"	1998 federal election	95	
"	1999 republic/preamble	95	0
Austria	1994 EU referendum	81	-1
"	1994 parliamentary election	82	
Canada	1992 constitutional referendum	75	+5
"	1993 federal election	70	
Denmark	1992 Maastricht treaty	83	0
"	1993 Edinburgh agreement	86	+3
"	1994 general election	83	
Finland	1994 EU referendum	71	-1
"	1994 presidential election (2nd round)	82	
"	1995 parliamentary election	72	
France	1992 Maastricht treaty	70	+1
"	1993 national assembly election	69	
"	1995 presidential election (2nd round)	75	
Ireland	1992 parliamentary election	69	
"	1992 abortion laws	65	-4
"	1995 divorce amendment	62	-7
New Zealand	1992 electoral system referendum	55	-28
" "	1993 general election and referendum	83	0
Norway	1993 general election	76	
"	1994 EU referendum	89	+13
Puerto Rico	1993 political status plebiscite	74	-9
" "	1996 gubernatorial election	83	
" "	1998 political status plebiscite	71	-12
Quebec	1980 sovereignty-association referendum	86	+3
"	1981 provincial election	83	
"	1994 provincial election	82	+12
"	1995 sovereignty referendum	94	

(TABLE 3, cont.)

Russia	1993 economic reforms +	65	+12
"	1993 constitutional referendum	58	+5
"	1993 Duma election	53	
"	1996 presidential election (2nd round)	69	
Scotland	1997 devolution referendum	60	-11
"	1997 UK election (Scotland)	71	
"	1999 Scottish parliament	59	
Spain	1986 NATO referendum	59	-11
"	1986 general election	70	
Sweden	1980 nuclear power referendum	76	-15
"	1982 general election	91	
"	1994 EU referendum	83	-4
"	1994 general election	87	
Uruguay	1992 privatization referendum	77	-12
"	1994 electoral laws	85	-4
"	1994 education/social security	90	1
"	1994 general election	89	
Wales	1997 devolution referendum	50	-23
"	1997 UK election (Wales)	73	
"	1999 assembly	46	
	Mean decline from parliamentary election		-3

referendums in which turnout registered *higher* than that of a comparable election (table 3) are the 1992 Canadian constitutional referendum (+5), the 1994 Norwegian EU membership referendum (+13), the 1993 Danish referendum on the Edinburgh agreement (+3), and the 1993 Russian referendums (+12, +5). But clearly, a referendum held separately on a less salient issue runs the risk of lower voter participation. The 1992 New Zealand referendum on electoral reform (-28), the Puerto Rico statehood plebiscites (-9, -12), the 1980 Swedish nuclear power referendum (-15), and the 1986 Spanish referendum on NATO (-11) are all cases in which turnout fell significantly below that of the most nearly comparable election.⁵

The campaign and the vote decision

One indicator that will be suggestive of the role played by the campaign in the voting decision is the amount of time that voters require in order to reach a decision about how to vote in a referendum. As noted earlier, we would expect that in those instances where the issues of the referendum are entirely new to the voter, the learning process of the campaign will be more critical for deciding how to vote and therefore also more important in determining the outcome. In those cases where voters clearly need the campaign in order to form an opinion on the issue(s) of the referendum, we might expect more actual voting decisions to be made late in the campaign, after a sufficient amount of information has become available about the issue on which voters are being asked to render a decision. Where voters are able to make up their minds on the basis of clear partisan or ideological cues, or where there is a high degree of prior familiarity with the issue(s) of the referendum, we might expect voting decisions to be made earlier. The timing of the vote decision therefore may be a useful indicator of the role of the campaign itself in affecting the outcome of a given referendum.

Survey data on reported time of vote decision are available for several of the referendums examined here. Figure 2 presents data for three of these cases, each of which represents a rather different context in terms of the amount of prior knowledge that a voter might have been expected to have regarding the issue being voted upon in the referendum. The 1992 Canadian constitutional referendum provides a fairly extreme example, because the referendum could not have been anticipated and voters could not have been expected to have a high degree of prior knowledge of the content of the constitutional agreement which was being put to a popular vote. Not surprisingly therefore, nearly two-thirds of those voting in that referendum made their decisions over the course of the campaign, a substantial number of these as late as the final week (figure 2). By contrast, voters in the 1995 Quebec sovereignty referendum were able to come to a decision much more quickly on the issue, in part because the subject matter of the referendum was well known, but also because the campaign provided strongly reinforcing partisan cues for many voters. While the campaign was still important to the outcome, in part because of the closeness of the result, fewer voters needed the additional information provided by the campaign in order to reach a decision. Three-quarters of the Quebec electorate had already made up their minds how to vote at the time that the referendum was called.

The 1994 European Union membership referendums in the Nordic countries, of which Sweden is used as an illustration here, provide an example which falls between these two extremes (figure 2). In that instance, more than half of all voters surveyed reported having made their decision how to vote along before the campaign had begun. The balance decided how they would vote over the course of the campaign, with 25% reporting that they made their decision in the final week. It is logical that this case would fall in the middle of the distribution suggested by figure 2, because voters in the EU referendums would have had a high degree of knowledge of the underlying issue, but would still have needed the campaign in order to assess the arguments regarding the accession agreement which were being put forward by the parties.⁶

The fact that parties that are normally opponents in election campaigns were campaigning together in support

FIGURE 2
Reported time of vote decision in three referendums^a

of EU membership would also have served to present voters with Anew information, in which it could be expected that more time might be required for this to be factored into the decision. In Sweden, divisions among the governing Social Democrats spilled over into the campaign, with the government actively supporting the YES side but others campaigning against it under the umbrella group ASocial Democrats Against the EU.⁷ These circumstances present a quite different picture than the Quebec case, in which parties with well known and strongly held positions on the sovereignty issue were putting forward highly familiar arguments right from the beginning.

Campaign effects

The measurement of campaign effects is not an easy task, either in the study of elections or in the case of referendums. Sometimes, studies which have employed rolling cross-section survey designs over the length of a campaign have been successful in isolating the effects of a particular campaign event, television program, debate, speech, or advertisement on public attitudes and behaviour. In the case of the 1992 Canadian constitutional referendum for example, the very public intervention of a former prime minister into the debate in the third week of the campaign produced a shift of as much as 20% in support for the agreement (Johnston et al, 1996). While different interpretations of this event are possible, and part of the shift soon reversed, there is no doubt that the intervention represented a critical campaign event which had a significant impact on the outcome of the referendum. Such occurrences are undoubtedly commonplace in referendum campaigns, but are difficult to track because of the relative rarity of these types of survey data. Public opinion polls however can sometimes provide circumstantial evidence of similar shifts over the course of a campaign.

Polls on the issue of the referendum taken either at the beginning of or in advance of a campaign can provide a benchmark against which outcomes can be compared in attempting to estimate campaign effects. Of course, such a comparison measures only *unidirectional* shifts in public sentiment. Movement of voters in equal and opposite directions over the course of a campaign would not be captured by such an indicator. Nevertheless, such a measure is appealing, in spite of its limitations, because it is readily available for many of the cases considered here and because it can be applied in a broadly comparative manner. Computed as an absolute value, the net shift from the poll percentage to the final result is conceptually similar to a Pedersen index which might be computed to measure electoral change.⁸ It is thus an approximation of the level of volatility generated by the campaign.

Table 4 compares the estimate of vote share based on a poll taken early in the campaign, or in advance thereof, on the issue of the referendum for a number of the cases in the Comparative Referendums Project for which such a poll can be found. Comparing this indicator with the actual outcome of the referendum provides a surrogate for campaign effects moving in a single direction. To simplify the comparison, the poll figure shown in table 4 excludes undecided respondents. These however are shown in a separate column in the table (DK).⁹ The percentage

TABLE 4
Net change from pre-campaign/early campaign poll to referendum outcome

		<u>R%</u>	<u>P%</u>	<u>+/-</u>	<u>%DK</u>	<u>Ref. date</u>	<u>Poll date</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Source</u>
Australia	1988 rights & freedoms	31	71	-40	*	1988 09 03	1989 08	Morgan Gallup	Hughes (1994: 163)
"	1999 republic	45	63	-18	14	1999 11 06	1999 08	AC Nielsen	Sydney Morning Herald
Austria	1994 European Union	67	61	+6	25	1994 06 12	1994 03	Fessel	Gallagher (1996: 27)
Canada	1992 Charlottetown agreement	45	67	-22	24	1992 10 26	1992 09	Environics	Johnston et al (1996: 148)
Denmark	1992 Maastricht treaty	49	60	-11	32	1992 06 02	1992 04	Eurobarometer #37	Franklin et al (1994: 113)
"	1993 Edinburgh agreement	57	67	-10	22	1993 05 18	1993 02	Gallup	Siune & Svensson (1993: 74)
Finland	1994 European Union	57	52	+5	23	1994 10 16	1994 08	Taloustukimus Oy	Jenssen et al (1998: 19)
France	1992 Maastricht treaty	51	78	-27	39	1992 09 20	1992 04	Eurobarometer #37	Franklin et al (1994: 113)
Ireland	1983 abortion amendment	67				1983 09 07			
"	1986 divorce amendment	37	61	-24	7	1986 06 26	1986 04	MRBI	D'Arcy & Laver (1990: 3)
"	1992 Maastricht treaty	69	91	-22	32	1992 06 18	1992 04	Eurobarometer #37	Franklin et al (1994: 113)
"	1992 abortion (restrict)	35	67	-32	*	1992 11 25	1992 11	MRBI	Gallagher (1996: 97)
"	1995 divorce amendment	50	69	-19	*	1995 11 24	1992 05	MRBI	Gallagher (1996: 93)
New Zealand	1992 electoral system (change)	85	69	+16	15	1992 09 19	1992 07	Heylen	One Network News
"	" 1993 electoral system change	54	63	-9	18	1993 11 06	1993 09	Heylen	One Network News

(TABLE 4, cont.)

Norway	1994 European Union	48	41	+7	22	1994 11 28	1994 10	MMI	Jenssen et al (1998: 19)
Puerto Rico	1993 political status (statehood)	46				1993 11 14			
" "	1998 political status (statehood)	47				1998 12 13			
Quebec	1980 sovereignty-association	40	62	-22	18	1980 05 20	1979 09	CROP	Cloutier (1979: B44)
"	1995 sovereignty	49	46	+3	16	1995 10 30	1995 06	Léger & Léger	Clarke & Kornberg (1996: 678)
Russia	1993 Q2 (support policy)	53	24	+29	*	1993 04 25	1993 03	New Russia Barometer	White et al (1997: 85)
"	1993 constitution	58				1993 12 12			
Scotland	1997 Scottish parliament	74	78	-4	4	1997 09 11	1996 11	System 3	Mitchell et al (1998: 173)
Spain	1986 NATO	53				1986 03 12			
Sweden	1980 nuclear power (line 3)	39	40	-1	5	1980 03 23	1980 03	Central Statistical Bureau	Granberg & Holmberg (1988: 383)
"	1994 European Union	52	51	+1	22	1994 11 13	1994 09	SIPO	Jenssen et al (1998: 19)
Uruguay	1992 privatization	30				1992 12 13			
"	1994 electoral reform	31	80	-49	65	1994 08 28			Qvortrup (1997: 551)
"	1994 social security	69				1994 11 27			
"	1996 electoral reform	50	64	-14	44	1996 12 08	1996 10	Cifra	Qvortrup (1997: 552)
Wales	1997 devolution	50	65	-15	26	1997 09 18	1997 08	Western Mail	Broughton (1998: 205)
	Mean absolute change				17				

of A undecided voters is often quite high, a pattern not unexpected in a poll taken in the early stages of a campaign.

The average absolute shift of 17 percentage points found for these cases taken together is impressively high, but by itself understates the degree of movement found in some of the referendum campaigns. In the 1988 Australian campaign for example, all four constitutional proposals enjoyed the support of a majority of the electorate according to polls taken about a month in advance of the referendum (Hughes, 1994). The campaign waged by the opposition Liberals in that referendum was very effective in raising doubts among voters about the measures, in the end causing the defeat of all four proposals by wide margins.¹⁰ Similarly large shifts are found in other cases such as the 1992 Canadian constitutional referendum, the 1992 French referendum on the Maastricht treaty, or the 1994 Uruguayan referendum on electoral reform. In all of these cases, the effectiveness of campaign actors in raising doubts about what was actually being proposed may have accounted for a substantial share in the decline in support (Johnston et al, 1996; Appleton, 1992; Qvortrup, 1997). This pattern is similar to that found by DeArcy & Laver (1990) in their study of the 1986 Irish divorce referendum campaign. In that case, the ability of fringe groups who became involved in the campaign to effectively change the subject of the debate in the minds of voters produced a new campaign dynamic. As voters begin to have doubts about what is actually being proposed, support for a proposal which once seemed solid begins to evaporate.

Another important element of the dynamic in these cases is the perception developed over the course of the campaign that the referendum is really a battle of the people against the establishment, a perception encouraged by the active entry into the campaign of groups that do not normally play an active role in election campaigns. In the case of the 1992 Canadian constitutional referendum, the constitutional proposal was supported by all three major national parties and by all ten provincial premiers. Yet this seemingly broad phalanx of cross-party support was unable to save the agreement, and may in fact have actually contributed to its defeat (LeDuc & Pammett, 1995). A similar pattern is seen in the case of the French Maastricht referendum, in which the treaty enjoyed the support not only of President Mitterrand, but also of his predecessor (Giscard), of Mitterrand's 1988 presidential opponent (Chirac), the leaders of all of the mainstream political parties, most of the business establishment, many trade unions, and a wide variety of prominent figures in French society. The NO side, consisting mainly of the political fringes (Communists, National Front) and a handful of party dissidents, had little in common politically except for their opposition to Maastricht. But the opponents' ability to portray themselves as political "outsiders" captured the mood of disenchantment with the political class which was widespread in France at the time. Mitterrand's own unpopularity and the perceived deficiencies of his government were also weaknesses that could be readily exploited by the treaty's opponents (Franklin et al, 1995). An intense campaign in the final week by the YES side, including an unprecedented television appearance by German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, barely saved the treaty from defeat, as the polls shifted from forecasting a narrow NO victory to a narrow YES in the last few days.

Of course, while the average degree of movement in referendum campaigns as shown in table 4 is substantial, not all of the cases considered here conform to a similar pattern. Particularly in the case of the 1994 European Union membership referendums (Austria, Finland, Norway, Sweden), the amount of movement in the campaign appears to be much smaller, and is found to be in a positive rather than a negative direction (table 4). Here, the issue of EU membership was well known, and had been actively debated in the political arena for some time. Norway had voted narrowly against membership in a previous (1972) referendum. These were not cases where changing the subject or raising doubts about what was actually being proposed was as likely to prove an effective campaign tactic. In all four cases also, the governments involved had initiated the referendums, and were actively campaigning for a YES vote. In the case of the Nordic countries in particular, the Euroskepticism of the electorates was well known, and it had been important to lay the political groundwork for proposing EU membership carefully. But while the vote was particularly close in both Norway and Sweden, the evidence in table 4 does not suggest that the campaign itself accounts for the outcome in either case. The vote in Norway was in fact considerably closer than was predicted by most of the pre-referendum polls, but this may have been due as much to the domino effect of the Swedish vote two weeks earlier as to the overall effectiveness of the government's campaign in support of the YES (Jahn & Storsved, 1995). The two effects are virtually inseparable here, since the likelihood of a Swedish YES vote was in fact an important part of the Norwegian government's own campaign strategy.

The two Quebec sovereignty referendums provide a particularly good test of the hypothesis regarding the potential of campaigns to sway public opinion on different types of referendum issues. As is seen in table 4, the two Quebec referendums display a very different dynamic, even though the issue was essentially the same in both instances. This is because the context in which they occurred was quite different, given the fifteen years of debate over Quebec sovereignty which had taken place in the interim between the two votes. In the first (1980) referendum, the sovereignty issue in Quebec was still a new political phenomenon, and the campaign represented an important part of the learning process for many voters. The product of extensive public opinion polling, the question put to the electorate in the 1980 referendum was widely thought to be a winning question.¹¹ It provided the reassurance of a continued economic association with Canada and a common currency and asked only for a "mandate to negotiate" an agreement with the rest of Canada, not for sovereignty itself. Further, it specified that any agreement that might be achieved through such negotiations would have to be approved in another referendum. Polls commissioned by the Quebec government suggested that this strategy was capable of attracting the support of well over 50 percent of the electorate. Yet the proposal ultimately went down to a rather decisive 60-40 defeat. In part, this was because the federalist side was able to effectively shift the terms of the debate over the course of the campaign, arguing instead for "renewed federalism" as an alternative to the Quebec government's sovereignty-association proposal. The message of renewed federalism was delivered to a relatively receptive electorate by a respected and credible federal prime minister, Pierre Trudeau -- still at that time highly popular in Quebec. While renewed federalism as

such was not on the ballot, the NO campaign ultimately persuaded voters to view the choice in these terms rather than as the status quo vs. sovereignty-association.

Opinion shifted steadily away from the YES side over the course of the 1980 campaign, reflecting in part the struggle between the two sides to redefine the referendum question in their own competing terms (Pammett et al, 1983). The relative newness of these issues at that time, the complexity of the ballot question (see footnote 11), and the nature of the discourse itself meant that the decision was not a clear cut or easy one for many Quebec voters. By 1995 however, the position of both the federal and provincial political parties and their leaders was very different. Lucien Bouchard, then the leader of the Bloc Québécois in the federal parliament, played a role in the 1995 referendum campaign comparable to that of Pierre Trudeau in 1980.¹² His personal popularity among francophone voters was nearly as high as Trudeau's had been at the time of the 1980 referendum. The federal prime minister, Jean Chrétien, was highly unpopular among Quebec francophones and widely mistrusted. But more importantly, the context in which the vote took place in 1995 was very different than in 1980. Positions on the sovereignty issue by that time were well known and well entrenched. An electorate frustrated with the record of failed constitutional initiatives of the past fifteen years was much more prepared to listen to the arguments put forward by Bouchard during the course of the campaign. But, as table 4 shows, the total amount of movement over the course of the campaign was much less than had been the case in 1980, and it was in a different direction. It was important to the outcome nevertheless because of the closeness of the 1995 vote. But there were simply fewer voters in 1995 who had not already made up their minds on an issue that had by that time become *the* defining cleavage of Quebec politics. The potential for movement over the course of the campaign, important though it proved to be, was far less in 1995 than had been the case in 1980.

We have thus seen that referendum campaigns represent a wide range of possibilities in terms of potential campaign effects. Because their circumstances range more widely than do those of elections, the potential for variation is greater. Table 5 compares the average absolute amount of change over the course of some of the referendum campaigns discussed here with a Pedersen volatility index, which measures the absolute change in party shares of the vote between pairs of elections. The election pairs have here been chosen to represent time periods reasonably close to those of the referendums. By this measure, the amount of volatility found in referendum campaigns is, on average, nearly twice as much as that observed for the election pairs. It also varies considerably between countries and cases. In Australia, Canada, and Ireland, for example, the amount of volatility found in referendum campaigns appears to be substantially greater than that occurring in elections, while in Norway and Sweden, it is less.¹³ In Denmark, Finland, and Austria, on the other hand, the statistics for referendums and elections appear roughly comparable.

TABLE 5
Comparison of net change in campaign with Pedersen index

		<u>R%</u>	<u>P%</u>	<u>+/-</u>	<u>PED</u>	<u>Elections</u>
Australia	1988 rights & freedoms	31	71	-40	10	1987-90
"	1999 republic	45	63	-18	10	1996-98
Austria	1994 European Union	67	61	+6	8	1995-99
Canada	1992 Charlottetown agreement	45	67	-22	8	1993-97
Denmark	1992 Maastricht treaty	49	60	-11	9	1990-94
"	1993 Edinburgh agreement	57	67	-10	12	1994-98
Finland	1994 European Union	57	52	+5	7	1995-99
France	1992 Maastricht treaty	51	78	-27	14	1993-97
Ireland	1983 abortion amendment	67			7	1987-89
"	1986 divorce amendment	37	61	-24		
"	1992 Maastricht treaty	69	91	-22	15	1989-92
"	1992 abortion (restrict)	35	67	-32		
"	1995 divorce amendment	50	69	-19	9	1992-97
New Zealand	1992 electoral system (change)	85	69	+16	15	1993-96
" "	1993 electoral system change	54	63	-9	16	1996-99
Norway	1994 European Union	48	41	+7	17	1993-97
Puerto Rico	1993 political status (statehood)	46			4	1988-92
" "	1998 political status (statehood)	47			1	1992-96
Quebec	1980 sovereignty-association	40	62	-22	14	1981-85
"	1995 sovereignty	49	46	+3	6	1989-94
Russia	1993 Q2 (support policy)	53	24	+29		
"	1993 constitution	58			*	1993-95
Scotland	1997 Scottish parliament	74	78	-4	8	1992-97
Spain	1986 NATO	53			7	1982-86

(TABLE 5, cont.)

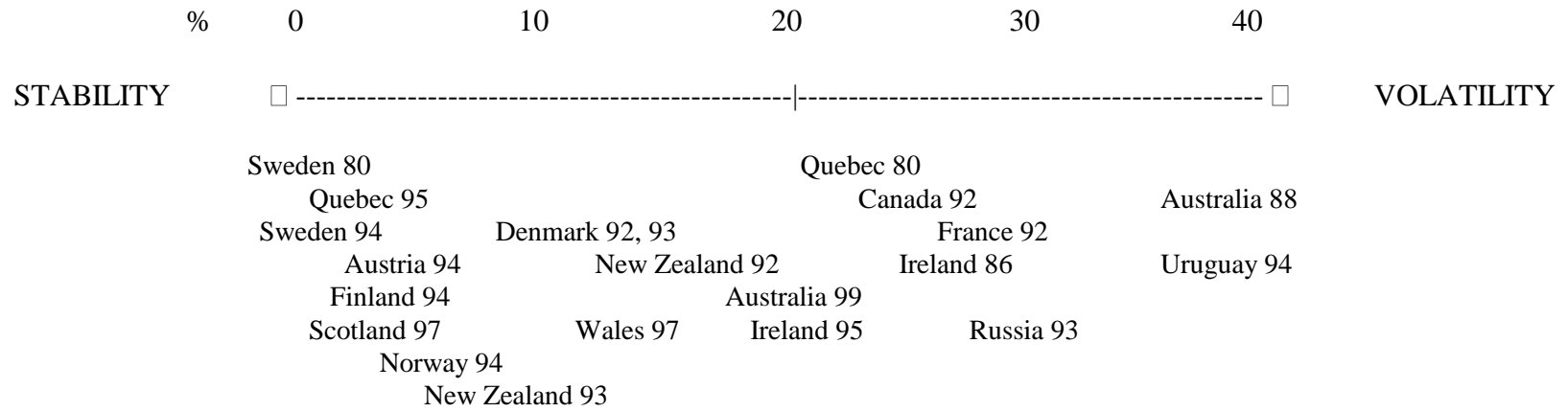
Sweden	1980 nuclear power (line 3)	39	40	-1	9	1982-85
"	1994 European Union	52	51	+1	15	1994-98
Uruguay	1992 privatization	30				
"	1994 electoral reform	31	80	-49	13	1989-94
"	1994 social security	69				
"	1996 electoral reform	50	64	-14	10	1994-99
Wales	1997 devolution	50	65	-15	9	1992-97
Mean absolute change					17	10

Using these measures of overall campaign volatility, the referendum cases considered here might be arranged along a continuum in a manner suggested in figure 3. Referendums with relatively little movement in public opinion over the duration of the campaign are grouped towards the left side of the continuum; those with greater volatility towards the right.¹⁴ Some patterns quickly suggest themselves. Referendums involving well known issues, on which voters might be expected to have already formed opinions, tend to be found on the left side of the continuum. Those involving Anew issues, or areas of political debate in which the mass public is not highly engaged, tend to display more volatility. Principal among these are constitutional referendums (Australia, Canada, Russia, Uruguay), in which elite driven projects for constitutional reform were suddenly thrust upon the public for approval. In several of these cases, public support for the proposal(s) deteriorated rapidly once the campaign had begun.

Conclusion: three types of referendum campaigns

As we begin to pull together the theoretical threads of this discussion, we can see that the types of referendum campaigns that are *least* like those of elections are the ones in which there is little partisan, issue, or ideological basis on which voters might tend to form an opinion. Lacking such information, they take more time to come to a decision, and that decision becomes highly unpredictable. Where an issue is familiar, or where parties take clear competing positions, the voting decision is easier and tends to be made earlier in the campaign. We might here distinguish between three distinctly different types of referendum campaigns, all of which are amply represented among the cases examined earlier. In the first of these, which I term *opinion formation*, voters cannot be expected to have fully formed opinions on an issue that has not

FIGURE 3
 Categorizing the referendum campaigns by degree of volatility

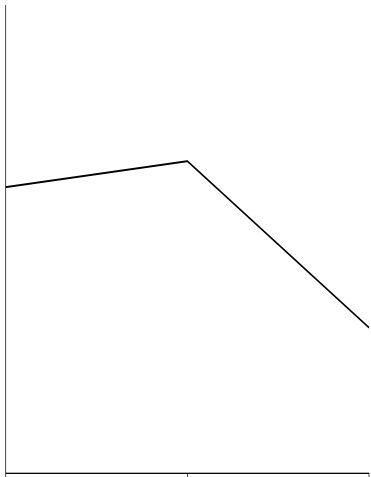


previously been a subject of political debate in arenas such as those of elections. As the campaign progresses, opinions gradually begin to form. Many of these cases also involve elites taking strong positions at the beginning of the campaign, to which the voters gradually begin to react. In many such instances, the reaction is negative, as voters instinctively recoil against being told what opinions to hold. As noted earlier, the Australian, Canadian, and Uruguayan constitutional referendums seem to conform to this pattern, in which elite driven projects were decisively rejected once the voters had learned enough about them. However, the movement need not always be in a negative direction. Discontented Russian voters would almost certainly have rejected the proposal supporting government social and economic policies in the April 1993 referendum until they began to perceive it in terms of the overall struggle for reform. As White et al (1997: 86) note, the referendum outcome was less a vote in favour of the Russian president and his policies than it was a vote against the communist past.

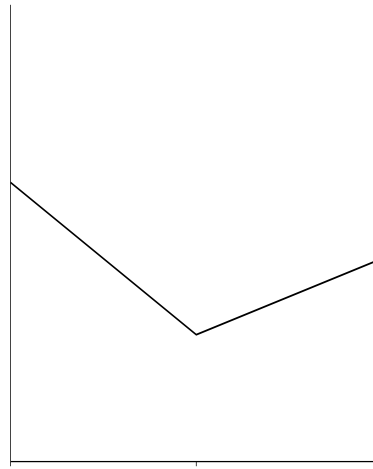
A second type of dynamic occurs when a referendum on a reasonably well known issue begins to take on a new direction over the course of the campaign. Often this takes place when opposition groups are successful in changing the subject of a referendum, or raising doubts about the issue that is really being discussed. Darcy & Laver (1990) documented this type of campaign in their study of the 1986 Irish divorce referendum, coining the term *opinion reversal* to describe the dynamic. Prior to that campaign, public opinion polls had shown substantial support for a change in the laws governing divorce, and there was initially little organized opposition to the referendum. But the campaign took on an unexpected direction as non-party groups became involved and began to refocus the debate in terms of the rights of women and the integrity of family life. Support for the proposed change in the divorce law declined rapidly. Within a few months after the referendum, however, public opinion polls had returned to a normal reading on the issue of divorce. But the rapid shift in the discourse over a short campaign had been enough to defeat the proposal. Raising doubts about the motives of those proposing the referendum, or changing the subject of the debate in mid course, can often be a highly effective campaign tactic. In the 1999 Australian republic referendum, polls indicated that a majority of Australians favoured ending the monarchy, both before and after the referendum. But opponents of the change were successful during the campaign in shifting the debate onto the terrain of an elected vs. appointed president, thereby dividing potential YES voters. Persuaded that the politician's republic deserved to be defeated, many republicans who would otherwise have supported the YES voted NO.¹⁵

Finally, we come to a third type of referendum campaign which might seem more familiar to students of elections. Here, opinion is much firmer and less subject to rapid change or sudden reversal. Voters will often have strong cues based on partisanship or ideology, and be receptive to arguments presented by familiar and trusted political leaders. In such a campaign, much of the attention is directed towards wavering or undecided voters, in the knowledge that a swing of only a few percentage points might make the crucial difference in the outcome. The government of Felipe Gonzalez was successful in mobilizing partisan voters to support his NATO position in the 1986 Spanish referendum, and the Swedish government successfully

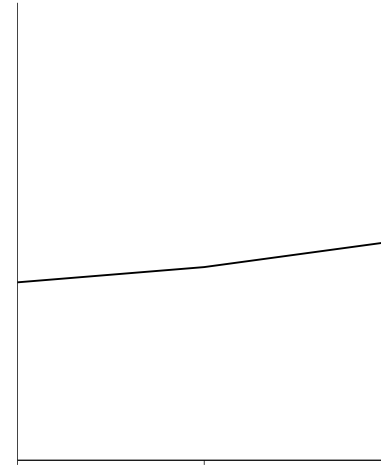
FIGURE 4
Three types of referendum campaign dynamics



Opinion formation
Opinion reversal



Uphill struggle



overcame opposition to EU entry in the 1994 referendum. In both of these cases, the votes were extremely close, and might conceivably have gone either way. The 1995 Quebec sovereignty referendum also stands as a good example of a campaign in which the separatist provincial government knew that it could count on the support of the partisan voters who had brought it to power, but also needed the votes of soft nationalists in order to secure a majority for its sovereignty proposal. The fact that it was nearly successful was due more to effective campaign leadership than to the underlying fundamentals of opinion on the issue (Pammett & LeDuc, 1998). The two most recent Puerto Rican political status plebiscites display a similar pattern. In that instance, a pro-statehood party which has enjoyed success in elections has been unable to obtain the additional four or five percent of the votes which would be needed to carry a referendum on the issue. Its core supporters however have remained unwaveringly loyal in both votes. I term this type of campaign dynamic the *uphill struggle*. The party initiating the referendum knows that it can count on the votes of its core supporters. It knows also where the additional votes may lie that it needs in order to secure a majority, and that it can win these only through a hard fought campaign. But, as the Norwegian and Quebec cases demonstrate, such a strategy is not always successful even when it is well conceived and well executed.

Figure 4 represents a graphic illustration of these three types of referendum campaigns, and of the dynamic of opinion formation or change that might be expected in each of them. Research on elections teaches us that campaigns matter, but the extent to which this is true in any given setting is likely to depend on the overall volatility present in the party system to begin with. In countries which have undergone substantial dealignment, for example, we would expect to find potentially greater campaign effects on individual voting choice. But we know also that levels of such volatility can vary considerably from one system to another, and within a particular system over time. Referendums display the same sort of variation, but across a much wider range. The opinion formation model resembles that of the most highly dealigned polities, in which short term variables become the dominant element in understanding and explaining electoral outcomes. Leaders often play an important role in such circumstances. But even in those instances where alignments are more predictable and the potential for movement over the duration of the campaign is therefore less, effective leadership can make the crucial difference in the outcome. Theories of direct democracy presume that referendum voters are issue voters. But the research to date on referendum voting teaches us that attitudes towards issues are only one of the variables affecting voting choice, and not always the most important one in determining the outcome.

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NOTES

1. This material is a subset drawn from information gathered on 53 democracies as part of the Comparative Referendums Project. Countries included in the study were those with a population greater than three million that also met certain basic tests of functioning electoral democracy (LeDuc, Niemi & Norris, 1996). Of the 53 nations meeting these criteria, 32 have held at least one nationwide referendum since 1980. Although the Comparative Referendums Project concerns principally *national* referendums, for purposes of this analysis I also include referendums in Quebec, Puerto Rico, Scotland and Wales as cases which can contribute significantly to our understanding of the dynamics of referendum campaigns. The support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for this research is gratefully acknowledged. I am also grateful to Michael Harvey, Josh Koziembrocki, and Helder Marcos for their work on the Comparative Referendums Project.

2. Switzerland has not been included here, in part because of the sheer number and complexity of its direct votes, nor has Italy, in which the system of *Aabrogative* initiatives and referendums is distinctly different than that found in most of the other countries considered in this paper. For a discussion of these two cases, see Alexander H. Treschel & Hanspeter Kriesi, *ASwitzerland: the Referendum and Initiative as a Centerpiece of the Political System*, and Pier Vincenzo Uleri, *AIItaly: Referendums and Initiatives from the Origins to the Crisis of a Democratic Regime*, both in Gallagher & Uleri (1996). I also exclude for these purposes the various ballot initiatives which take place in many U.S. states, notably California, Oregon, North Dakota, Washington and Arizona. On this subject, see especially Bowler & Donovan (1998) and Bowler, Donovan & Tolbert (1998). The New Zealand entry in table 1 excludes the routine referendums on liquor control which took place at every general election through 1987, and some more recent votes (e.g. November 1999) which have taken place under the new Citizen Initiated Referendum law.

3. The categories shown in table 2 were developed from the Comparative Referendums Project, and differ slightly from those employed by Butler & Ranney (1994). Their categories were: (1) *constitutional* issues, (2) *territorial* issues, (3) *moral* issues, and (4) *other* issues.

4. For example, turnout in the 1992 referendum on Swiss membership in the European Economic Area was 78%, and turnout for a 1969 initiative to abolish the army was 69%. The average turnout for all Swiss referendums since 1960 (43%) is about eleven percent lower than that for all federal parliamentary elections over the same period (Kobach, 1993; Franklin, 1996).

5. The question of appropriate comparability arises here, particularly in the case of the Scottish and Welsh devolution referendums, where comparisons might also be made to the subsequent assembly elections rather than to the 1997 national election. Comparisons with presidential rather than parliamentary elections are also possible in Russia, Austria, Finland, France and Ireland, possibly leading to slightly different conclusions in those cases. Turnout in the 1986 Spanish referendum may have been depressed by the fact that the principal opposition party advocated a boycott of the referendum by its supporters. The lower turnout in that case therefore might be treated as a campaign effect.

6. Data for the other two countries included in the 1994 Comparative Nordic EU Referendums Study are similar. In Finland, 62% of respondents reported having made up their minds before the campaign had begun, while in Norway the percentage reporting a voting decision in advance of the campaign was 59%. (Jenssen et al, 1998: 130).

7. A special SAP party congress held in June 1994 had voted to support EU membership by a vote of 232-103. (Jenssen et al, 1998: 63).

8. The Pedersen index computes the difference in the share of votes received by political parties across any pair of elections as a summed absolute value. It thus has a "base 100" comparability to the measure employed here. See Pedersen (1983).

9. Respondents classified in the poll as "undecided", "no opinion", or "don't know" are all included in this category. (*) designates those cases where such a figure is not available for the poll cited.

10. The percentage of YES votes cast for the four proposals in the 1988 referendum was: "Fair elections" (38%), "Local government" (34%), "Parliamentary terms" (33%), and "Rights and Freedoms" (31%). None of the four proposals carried a majority of the votes in any state.

11. The text of the 1980 Quebec referendum question was as follows: "The Government of Quebec has made public its proposal to negotiate a new agreement with the rest of Canada, based on the equality of nations. This agreement would enable Quebec to acquire the exclusive power to make its laws, levy its taxes, and establish relations abroad -- in other words, sovereignty -- and at the same time, to maintain with Canada an economic association including a common currency. No change in political status resulting from these negotiations will be effected without approval by the people through another referendum. On these terms, do you agree to give the Government of Quebec the mandate to negotiate the proposed agreement between Quebec and Canada?"

12. Bouchard later became Premier of Quebec, and won the 1998 provincial election after succeeding Jacques Parizeau as leader of the Parti Québécois.

13. The variation between election pairs can also sometimes be substantial, and would certainly affect the conclusions that might be drawn from these comparisons. For example, if the extraordinary 1993 election in Canada, in which the then governing Progressive-Conservative party was obliterated, were to be used as the base of comparison (i.e. 1988-93), the amount of inter-election volatility would be much greater (PED=41).

14. The difference between the percentage vote in the referendum and a pre-campaign poll is used as the metric here. See tables 4 & 5.

15. The proposal put to Australian voters in the 1999 referendum was: "To alter the constitution to establish the Commonwealth of Australia as a republic, with the Queen and Governor General being replaced by a President appointed by a two-thirds majority of the members of the Commonwealth Parliament".