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From "Lavender" People to
"Lavender" Voters

The case of lesbians, bisexuals, and gay men bears particular interest in a number of ways for those of us interested in why, and for whom, Americans vote. Like African Americans and indigenous Americans, homosexual and bisexual Americans have been subject not merely to widespread social rejection and disapproval, but also to mandatory legal disabilities, and unlike African Americans and indigenous Americans, they remain subject to such legal disabilities throughout the country today. The "mark of oppression" remains upon them in numerous ways discussed below, and alienation (see Almond and Verba 1963; Easton 1965) from both the system of government and its policies might be taken to be the norm. But sexuality, unlike race or sex, never has been used in a formal or informal way to disqualify any person from voting. Unlike litigation, lobbying, or various forms of protest, which often require more openness about their sexuality than many desire or feel safe enough to show, the secret ballot always has been open to LGB Americans as a potential means of effecting both substantive and symbolic social change.

Regrettably, we cannot examine the voting behavior of homosexuals and bisexuals who will not identify themselves as such on survey forms. As discussed below, there is considerable evidence from sex research that the proportion of the population who will identify themselves as LGB is a rather small fraction of those with romantic and sexual feelings and actions directed toward persons of the same sex. This is the result of a combination of negative legal and social consequences, which the LGB movement describes as oppression, and the ability to "pass" for heterosexual. The discreet, self-aware bisexual or homosexual can avoid most, perhaps all, legal and social difficulties if she or he pretends to be
heterosexual, at least so far as the family, the people at work, and heterosexual friends are concerned (Sherrill et al. 1990; Sherrill 1991).

In this study I consider whether LGB self-identification has a significant independent effect, be it direct or indirect, on the decision to vote and on vote choice. In doing so, I consider whether we can hypothesize that self-identified LGBs constitute a social group with distinctive voting behavior as defined by Campbell et al. (1960). Some additional questions of interest, therefore, are why certain LGB Americans “come out of the closet” and identify as bisexual, gay, or lesbian, why such a group identity should carry over from the sphere of personal relations into that of politics, and why distinctive group voting might be expected of self-identified LGBs.

Group Affiliation and Voting Behavior

The framework of social group affiliation and its effects on voting behavior laid out in The American Voter (Campbell et al. 1960, chap. 11) provides us with a model against which we can examine openly LGB American voters and with a set of questions, the answers to which will allow us to hypothesize about what sort of fit with the model we can expect.

According to Campbell and his colleagues, social groups, encompassing racial and ethnic, religious, and class affiliations, are “secondary groups” with respect to their influence on an individual’s political behavior; “primary groups,” those with the greatest direct influence, are made up of the personal circles of family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. Objective membership in a “secondary group,” therefore, is not sufficient for that group to exercise significant influence over those who belong to it. One must have a psychological identification with the secondary group, and the degree of the group’s influence correlates directly with the strength of identification on the part of the individual member. Both the fact of identification and the strength thereof develop through an acculturation process, by which a member becomes aware of the group’s history, values, norms, and political agenda. The greater the share of objective group members who identify themselves as group members, and the stronger their degree of identification, the more cohesive the group is—that is, the more likely it is that members will act in the voting booth in a way consistent with the group’s collective perception of its interests.

Group effects on voting behavior may be measured by the distinctiveness of the total vote by group members compared with that of their neighbors of similar background and status who do not belong to the group. Several factors will increase or decrease group distinctiveness. Strength of identification among
group members increases distinctiveness; that is, those who identify strongly with the group will vote differently from nongroup members more often than will those who identify with the group weakly. A second factor affecting distinctiveness is what Campbell and his colleagues call the "transmission of group political standards" to its members, which is a direct function of the relative unity of or division among group leaders: the more the group's acknowledged leaders disagree, the less likely it is that the group's aggregate vote will differ much from that of the rest of the voters. Finally, distinctiveness is affected by the "political salience" of group membership, the degree to which the group and its issues are important or "hot" in an election; this can be manifested either in a group member's candidacy for office against a nonmember or in an election fought in part on issues of special concern to the group's members.

It is in the interest of practical politicians to bring groups into and cement them in permanent coalitions, usually through political parties. It is not necessarily in the interest of any particular group, however, to so limit its room for maneuver. Once partisan habits become ingrained among the mass of members they are difficult to shift, even in situations in which the group's interests would objectively be better served by such a shift.

Campbell et al. (1960) make clear that factors affecting the degree and strength of self-identification are those most likely to promote group cohesion and/or distinctive voting between members of any social group and the rest of the population. Because of the degree to which self-identification is an issue for LGB people in their daily lives, let alone for the purpose of assessing their degree of group identity and distinctiveness in the voting booth, the next section of this chapter concentrates largely on the connection between self-identification and oppression. I first define oppression and assess the LGB movement's claim that it represents an oppressed group. I then examine psychological and sociological studies relating to the development of group identity and positive self-assessment among individuals belonging to oppressed groups.

The third section looks at why members of any oppressed group should wish to participate in the political system, and why voting would be seen as a fruitful means of achieving relief from their conditions. This section concentrates on the work of Easton (1965) in differentiating among types of political system support, Almond and Verba (1963) in defining America as a "participatory political culture" and comparing it to others, and Edelman (1964) in setting forth "symbolic" purposes for political participation.

The fourth section defines and discusses "group consciousness" (Verba and
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Nie 1972; Miller et al. 1981; Shingles 1981), a concept that marries group identification to a set of conceptions of the group's place in the political world that, together, make participation in the political process seem desirable and likely to be effective. Because Cass's seminal study (1984) appears to find a direct connection in time between the willingness to "come out" to persons whose expected reactions are unknown or likely to be negative and the development of what, among blacks and feminists, would be described as group consciousness, I then take up the question of whether, among LGBs, group identification for political purposes is necessarily equivalent to the existence of group consciousness.

The fifth section will examine the development of the postwar LGB movement. This section will suggest the strength of particular issue concerns or ideological orientations, and any differences that may be expected among subgroups within the community in attitudes and voting behavior, particularly between LGB women and men. From this we can assess the likely success of transmission of shared group political norms by LGB political leaders, which directly affect group distinctiveness in voting.

The complete thesis will be summarized at the end of the chapter in the form of nine specific hypotheses to be tested in the rest of the book.

Group Identification and the Claim of Oppression

It is the central claim of the LGB movement today that its members constitute an oppressed cultural minority (Marotta 1981; Adam 1987). It will be helpful to first define the concepts of group identification and oppression, and their applicability to the situation of LGBs.

Miller et al. (1981) define group identification as "a perceived self-location within a particular social stratum, along with a psychological feeling of belonging to that particular stratum." Group identification is essentially the outward expression of a psychological feeling of belonging to a particular subset of a population, a sense that one's essential identity is bound up with that of other people who share some common attribute, characteristic, or belief. It differs from objective group membership in that, unlike objective membership, it is a matter of choice that occurs *a posteriori* — or, in rare instances, group identification may occur among those with a psychological desire to belong, but who lack the characteristics that would give them objective membership in the group.

A particularly clear example of the separation between objective group membership and group identification is found in the attitudes of persons who,
by their income levels and job status, clearly belong objectively to the working class. A sizable percentage, ranging from a quarter to half of those in this classification, prefer to identify themselves with the middle class (Bailey 1992). As individuals identify psychologically with the middle class rather than their own, their political attitudes and voting behavior come to reflect those of the middle class far more than those of their working-class neighbors who identify with their objective class. The increasing trend toward working-class members identifying as middle class, therefore, spells trouble for those on the left seeking to build a coalition of feminists, social minorities, and working-class whites.

With regard to oppression, several working definitions are available to us, going back to the Pentateuch and, in the nineteenth century, Marx. The numerous definitions of oppression in use have in common the notion of the exercise of authority or power in an “unjust,” “cruel,” and/or “burdensome” manner, or in a manner that “pushes others down” or “holds them down.” The numerous and various definitions may be summarized as the deliberate stratification of society by one or more dominant groups for the purpose of accumulating an undue share of economic, political, social, and/or psychological benefits by placing an undue share of economic, political, social, and/or psychological burdens on the subordinated classes.2

The first American to define gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals as “an oppressed cultural minority” was Harry Hay, founder of the Mattachine Society, the first gay organization in postwar America, in 1950 (D’Emilio 1983; Timmons 1990; Marcus 1992). Earlier gay movements, centered in pre-Hitler Germany, had called merely for tolerance and compassion (Adam 1987), so Hay’s assertion was something quite new.

The concept of oppression in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries often has been laid over with Marxian notions of historical materialism, and Hay, a lifelong Marxist, based his application of oppression to homosexuals on the notion that insuring sexual control—limiting the release of sexual energies to procreation—was in the strong interest of capitalists seeking to insure that labor’s energies were focused on production, and thereby on maximizing surplus value. Thus was an alliance formed between Christian moralists (who sought sexual continence for other reasons) and the capitalist class, which in his view has continued to the present (Adam 1987; Timmons 1990).3

However, as Mattachine cofounder Chuck Rowland (in Marcus 1992) notes, the majority of the members they brought into Mattachine were simply men tired of police entrapment and harassment, men who wanted to meet, socialize with, and discuss issues of common interest with other gay men in peace.
"They didn't want to be part of an oppressed cultural minority," Rowland recalled, and they argued that gay people were "just like everybody else except for what we do in bed." This rejection of Hay's analysis and its implications, along with the former Communist Party ties of Hay, Rowland, and some other founders, led to the founders' resignation from the group in 1953 (D'Emilio 1983; Timmons 1990). The claim of oppression also likely would have been dismissed at the time by virtually all nongays, as homosexuality was deemed to be either a grave sin or a psychological disorder or (interestingly) both, and consensual homosexual acts in private were criminal offenses in every state of the Union.5

However, a few influential activists in the vanguard of the early "homophile" movement discussed later in this chapter, including Frank Kameny of the Mattachine Society of Washington, D.C. and Barbara Gittings of the Daughters of Bilitis, did accept the notion of oppression, if not Hay's Marxist basis for it; the basis for oppression more commonly accepted in the movement was that LGB people were simply the subject of unjust and mindless intolerance because of misunderstanding, ignorance, and fear, as were blacks (Marotta 1981; D'Emilio 1983; Marcus 1992).

The oppression argument was explicitly adopted by the Gay Liberation movement and by lesbian feminism following the Stonewall riots of June 1969 (Marotta 1981). The explanations offered for this oppression are numerous and remain the subject of debate; I shall not attempt a comprehensive survey here. But acceptance and explication of the fact of oppression—the undue denial of social benefits and placement of undue social burdens on those romantically attracted to persons of the same sex—has become universal among LGB activists (Adam 1987; Marcus 1992). Hay's "oppressed cultural minority" idea, with or without (usually without) its Marxian underpinnings, has become the standard of the movement.

It is, of course, the contention of the proponents of legal restrictions on homosexuals and bisexuals, including on their private, consensual sexual activity, that such measures are not oppressive at all, but are necessary to "protect" families from the possibility that any one of their members, particularly their pubescent and teenage children, may become homosexual. Levels of public disapproval have not been altered in the last ten years; now as then, opinion polls find that less than 45 percent of Americans consider homosexuality "an acceptable alternative lifestyle,"6 and that consistently for twenty years now, roughly 70 percent have said that homosexual activity is "always wrong" (Bowman and Ladd 1993).
Who/What Is “Gay”? The Measurement Problem

There is considerable ambiguity in the term “homosexuality.” First, we must distinguish among three disparate, but often confounded, measures of sexuality: sexual attraction, sexual behavior, and sexual identity. In particular, the extent to which a person is attracted to men, to women, or to both has been confounded with LGB self-identification.

The first published random-sample study of any national population to distinguish among a population’s location on these elements was Laumann et al. (1994), most commonly called the NORC or Chicago sex survey. The researchers’ face-to-face interviews with 3,432 respondents found that 10.1 percent of U.S. men and 8.6 percent of U.S. women showed either same-sex attraction, behavior, or self-identification, or some combination thereof. Of these, however, only a quarter of the men (2.7 percent of all men surveyed) and one-sixth of the women (1.4 percent of all women surveyed) self-identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. The remainder reported either same-sex desires or behavior, or both, but self-identified as heterosexual.

This mirrors the results of an interesting study (Miller and Bukolt 1990) of undergraduate students at Notre Dame University at the behest of its governing board. A survey on general issues of sexuality on campus was mailed to every fourth undergraduate, about two thousand total. Seven hundred surveys were mailed back. The survey asked about both same-sex sexual behavior and self-identification. On the first of these questions, 6.5 percent of the students responding who said they were sexually active at Notre Dame reported having had relations solely with members of the same sex, whereas 2.4 percent had had relations with both sexes. This adds up to 8.9 percent, not too far from Kinsey’s much-used number of 10 percent, Janus and Janus’s estimate (1993) of 7 percent, and the 9.3 percent found by Laumann et al. (1994). (We must remember that each study used a different definition of homosexuality and a different sampling method.) But when asked how they identified themselves, only 1 percent said they considered themselves homosexual, and 2.5 percent bisexual. In other words, a majority of those who reported they were homosexual or bisexual behaviorally still identified themselves as heterosexual.

A fourth term, used increasingly commonly in discrimination law, is “sexual orientation,” sometimes iterated as “affectional preference,” “affectional orientation,” or “sexual preference” (Editors of the Harvard Law Review 1990). “Sexual orientation”—or any of these substitute terms—is used in discussions of those who are either attracted to or have sex with persons of the same sex, or
both, or those who identify themselves as homosexual or bisexual. For purposes of the law, the three aspects of homosexuality have been piled into one.

Social Impediments to Self-Identification

The results of the NORC and Notre Dame surveys make considerably more sense when one considers the strong forces arrayed against a person identifying as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. In this section I list principally extralegal forces; in the next section I turn to legal forces, with which we are principally concerned. In the upshot, it may surprise the reader that anyone at all would choose to self-identify.

Lack of family socialization. Although recent evidence points to a physiological connection with homosexuality or bisexuality (LeVay 1991; Allen and Gorski 1992; Bailey and Pillard 1991; Bailey et al. 1993; but see Barinaga 1991; King and McDonald 1992; Byne and Parsons 1993), there is at the same time no evidence that LGB parents are more likely to have LGB children than are the rest of the population (Polikoff 1990; Patterson 1992). An extremely small number of lesbians, bisexuals, and gay men grew up in families in which one or both of the parents was openly, or even implicitly, the same way, or even in which a close family member could serve as a “role model.” A second element usually is present: strong parental and familial disapproval of homosexuality, reflected in the survey results across time noted above (Bowman and Ladd 1993).

The information gap. The absence of role learning appropriate to LGB youth, and the likelihood of family hostility to the child’s developing interest in persons of the same sex should that interest become known, translate as well into the classroom. Outside the central cities of major metropolitan areas, little or no information about homosexuality is taught even in high school classrooms. Where proposals are made to teach the subject in a more than cursory way, severe objections often are raised, principally that the very discussion of the subject in the classroom will promote homosexuality (Editors of the Harvard Law Review 1990). Most students’ education about homosexuality is confined to rumor, misinformation, and abusive epithets directed at suspected homosexuals and bisexuals. It is therefore almost uniformly true that lesbian, gay, or bisexual young people grow up without any exposure to other LGB people or LGB culture, save for occasional appearances in the popular media (Sherrill 1991; Alyson 1991).

A report commissioned by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 1989 estimated that as many as 30 percent of teenage suicides and
suicide attempts were related to an inability to accept one's sexual orientation, that half of gay and lesbian teenagers had attempted suicide at least once, and that suicide was the leading cause of death among homosexual youth. The report was rejected by the Secretary, Dr. Louis Sullivan, because of objections to its findings by Republican Representative William Dannemyer of California, a notable figure in the Religious Right wing of the president's party (Maguen 1991).

*Fear of personal rejection.* For those who do develop an understanding of their sexuality, three great fears cloud the horizon (discussed in Challandes 1992; Sherrill 1991). The most powerful, apparently, is the fear of personal rejection by family and friends, especially parents. Negative reactions are far from the uniform response, but these fears are not unfounded. Studies of teenage runaways estimate that as many as half have left home because of physical or emotional abuse related to their sexual orientation; a considerable number were thrown out of the house by the parents (Galst 1992). Among adults, the instances of parents cutting off their children, emotionally or financially, because the children have “come out” to them are legion (Sherrill et al. 1990).

*Fear of material or personal loss.* Even if the family and friends are accepting and/or supportive, a second set of substantial fears looms: fears of material or personal loss. Two predominate: loss of a job or career opportunities and loss of child custody (see Stoddard et al. 1983; Editors of the Harvard Law Review 1990). Again, neither is uncommon, and, as discussed below, the law often mandates or strongly encourages the termination of employment or custody rights based on sexual orientation.

*Fear of physical violence.* Finally, even those with completely supportive families, friends, and employers, living in states or cities in which antigay bias is unlawful, are subject to random, unprovoked physical attack at a significant rate (Comstock 1991). Although such attacks occur in all areas, they are predominately directed against gay and bisexual men in major cities, and are committed predominately by younger men (Shapiro 1990; Comstock 1991).

**Legal Barriers to Self-Identification**

Our principal concern, of course, is with conscious use of the law to repress homosexual and bisexual behavior and/or self-identification. This is not the place for a thorough recapitulation of antigay laws and policies on the books. Clearly, however, the law reinforces the fears noted above (see Editors of the Harvard Law Review 1990).
“Sodomy” laws. As noted earlier, in twenty-two states, sex between consenting adults of the same gender in private remains a criminal offense, often a felony (Murdoch 1993). The U.S. Supreme Court, in *Bowers v. Hardwick* (1986), which challenged Georgia’s felony law, ruled five to four that such private sexual acts are not protected under the right to privacy enunciated in *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965) with respect to use of contraceptives, and in *Roe v. Wade* (1973) with respect to obtaining an abortion.9

*Mandatory exclusion from employment.* Public school teachers and counselors in many jurisdictions (Stoddard et al. 1983) and members of the U.S. armed forces (Humphrey 1990; Steffan 1992; Shilts 1993) are subject to mandatory, summary dismissal if found to be homosexual or bisexual. As noted earlier, President Clinton failed early in his administration to convince Congress to support his plan to permit gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals to serve openly in the military.

*Family law.* As of this writing, in no state, as in none but three foreign countries (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden), are same-sex couples permitted legally to marry.10 Open LGBs are forbidden, by law or (more often) by regulation or informal policy, from adopting children. Further, in the majority of states there is a rebuttable presumption in custody law that a gay father or lesbian mother is an unfit parent for his or her own children (Gibson and Risher 1977; Bagnall et al. 1984; Suseoff 1985; Gottsfield 1985).11

*Permissible discrimination.* Where discriminatory practices are not written into law, such practices nonetheless are permitted in most of the country. One may be fired from one’s job, evicted from one’s home or denied a lease or contract, denied credit or insurance, refused service in a place of business, or otherwise affected in numerous aspects of one’s daily life, solely because of one’s actual or perceived sexual orientation. The cases of such discrimination are legion and do not warrant repeating here (see Stoddard et al. 1983; Editors of the Harvard Law Review 1990; Sherrill 1991).

In only nine states and the District of Columbia, and in scattered localities in other states, is any legal redress available for discrimination based on sexual orientation. The voters of Colorado in November 1992 amended their state constitution positively to *forbid* any such protection; the vote repeals antidiscrimination ordinances in Denver, Boulder, and Aspen and an executive order of the governor banning discrimination in state employment.12 No state, and only a scattering of cities, provide any legal protection to persons in long-term same-sex relationships with regard to property rights, insurance, health care, and inheritance.
Even where laws exist protecting the jobs and homes of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals, large numbers of offenses go unreported, for three reasons: lack of confidence that the enforcement authority will do anything to redress the situation; inability or lack of willingness to devote the time, psychological energy, and (sometimes) money needed to pursue redress; and, in many cases, the unwillingness to be identified as homosexual or bisexual for fear of other repercussions such as discovery by unknowing family members or friends, verbal or physical abuse, and the like (Sherrill 1991; Powell and Mitrovich 1992).

Are Homosexuals and Bisexuals Oppressed?

Oppression was defined earlier as the deliberate stratification of society in which one set of persons obtains or holds undue benefits by placing undue burdens on another set of persons. The LGB movement has submitted to the nation a claim that it constitutes an oppressed group. We have before us a synopsis of laws and practices grounded in sexual orientation that are cited frequently by LGB leaders in support of this claim. One may test the “oppressiveness” of the same by asking whether heterosexuals would find such laws and practices acceptable, or even tolerable, if applied to them by bisexuals and homosexuals, rather than the other way around. If they would be deemed unacceptable or intolerable—and there is every indication that they would be—then the argument that bisexual and homosexual Americans are an oppressed group has, at the very least, too much weight to be dismissed out of hand.

Clearly the conditions faced by LGB Americans differ substantially from the challenges faced by women, persons with disabilities, and members of racial, ethnic, and religious minorities. We see that conditions within and without the individual militate strongly in most cases against self-identification as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. It is no surprise, therefore, that the very few random-sample studies of bisexual, gay, and lesbian self-identification prior to the Chicago study, all conducted within the past few years (Harry 1990; Miller and Bukolt 1990; Rensberger 1993), found that 1.0 to 1.5 percent of a given population will self-identify as gay or lesbian, and an additional 2 to 3 percent will self-identify as bisexual—substantially lower than Kinsey’s figure of 10 percent, and Janus and Janus’s figure of 7 percent, who in practice are exclusively or predominately homosexual.

We then add to this matrix the option of “passing.” Whereas nearly all women, most African Americans and Asian Americans, and many indigenous Americans and Latinos are readily identifiable by their external appearance, most LGBs are not, and in the context of the disabilities discussed here, the
optimal pragmatic solution might appear to the casual observer to be to "pass" for heterosexual in contexts in which disclosure of one's sexual orientation could provoke conflict. "Passing," in addition, can be justified to oneself on a ground often used early on by gay rights supporters, and still used when politically convenient today (Samar 1991): what one does in private, they argued, is one's own business and does not need to be the concern of anyone else (D'Emilio 1983; Marcus 1992). Sexuality being one's own business, many persons who are open with LGB friends and have reached the stage of "identity acceptance" (Cass 1984) may refuse to identify generally as LGBs or to involve themselves with the organized LGB community.

What is of interest, then, is to discover why, given all these barriers and the opportunity to escape them by "passing," anyone would choose to identify as a member of a sexual minority.

In this context, a brief look is warranted at the response to oppression among African Americans, a group most of whose members are unable to "pass." Although the forms of oppression faced by blacks differ in many ways from those faced by LGBs, blacks are the most similar to LGBs in having endured wide-ranging discrimination mandated, until the 1960s, by law. Taken together, these studies suggest a broad menu of potential responses, leaving much up to the individual and her or his circumstances.

Kardiner and Ovesey (1962), in their ground-breaking psychodynamic study of twenty-five black Americans (a number of whom had sought treatment for psychiatric disorders or difficulties), laid out evidence of a tremendous beating down of self-esteem and indeed of active self-hatred and self-destructiveness among blacks, with a variety of neurotic and pathological consequences. This is the result, the authors reported, not of inferior morals or values or an inability to adjust to stress on the part of blacks, but of the breadth and intensity of racial animosity of white society toward them and the internalization of that animosity.

This internalization did not appear to be confined, as in the Kardiner-Ovesey study, to black people who had active psychological problems. Clark and Clark (1947) found evidence of such effects in young black children in early studies in which a child was given a black doll and a white doll and asked to choose one to play with; most black children, like nearly all white children, chose to play with the white doll.

However, later black researchers have criticized these findings. Jenkins (1982), in particular, classifies these findings as one-dimensional and mechanistic, and notes that they fail to account for the effect of "humanistic" factors—actions taken based on a conscious direction adopted by the individual (to
become a good baseball player or to go to law school, for instance)—on subsequent adjustment and behavior. Summarizing research from the 1970s, Jenkins finds that, although relatively negative racial images still could be found among African Americans, these often did not carry over into other aspects of self-assessment and self-esteem.

White (1984) looks to cultural bias in interpretation of black responses. He delineates what he calls an "Afro-American psychological perspective," which differs in significant respects from the European-based perspective of American psychology and which is essential to understanding the way black Americans respond to an oppressive dominant culture.

Both Jenkins and White also note the central role of the civil rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s in bringing to the fore a more positive self-image among many African Americans and reestablishing conscious connections with black African history and culture. As discussed later in this chapter, this led to a rise in levels of "black consciousness" in politics during the same period.

Thus evidence exists that internalization of a negative self-image because of membership in a despised group need not carry over into all aspects of the personality. Those centers of positive self-esteem within the individual, coupled with the presentation (however meager) of positive attitudes toward her group membership, can help her reorient her feelings about belonging to that group.

The Development of Group Self-Identification among Members of Sexual Minorities

We have examined the elements of self-identification and why gay men, bisexuals, and lesbians might not self-identify, but have yet to answer why or how certain people acquire the psychological attributes of self-identification while others do not. The question of why and how—the question of identity formation—is essential with respect to LGBs.

Cass (1984), in her study pulling together the work of several other researchers, points out the fundamental fact that homosexual children grow up not only unaware that they are homosexual, not only often unaware until late in childhood of what homosexuality actually is, but grow up believing that they are heterosexual. Children are socialized into strictly bifurcated sex roles, with the expectation that when the time comes a boy will fall in love with a girl (and vice versa), they will marry, and they will have and raise children together.

This differs from the situation of black or female children. It is the case that there is no preexisting race or sex consciousness in very young children; this awareness is inculcated, directly and indirectly, by adults and by older children.
The studies above show that young children, after becoming conscious of these differences, then often look to whites, or men, as the "reference" for what is best and tend to negate their own race or sex as a result. But once this consciousness of difference is established, black children grow up knowing that they are "black," and female children grow up knowing that they are "girls," with each over time learning the attitudes and behavior expected of them by society in these roles. Further, the development of Afrocentrism and feminism has offered a countervailing, positive black or female "reference." Homosexual and bisexual children do become conscious of differences in sexual identity, and develop affects (usually negative) toward homosexuality, but all the while they believe, and are constantly reinforced in the belief, that they are heterosexual.

The discovery that one is attracted to others of the same sex, therefore, is a most profound shock to the psyche. It is just such a shock to the psyche, caused by some potent external event, that Cross (1971) and Downing and Roush (1985) cite as the keystone to the identity development of African Americans and feminists, respectively. In the absence of such an event, it is unlikely that the existing social order will be questioned or that the process of personal transformation will begin.

After the development of several different theories of identity formation, Cass (1984) devised a six-stage hypothesis, tested it, and found support, rather, for a four-stage process of development in gay people:

1. **Identity confusion.** The homosexual person, having expected to be heterosexual, faces the critical realization of not being what one has been trained to be all one's life. Here one asks oneself repeatedly whether one really is homosexual. At the point at which the answer seems to be affirmative, several options are open: denial and suppression of homosexual feelings, leading to other psychological difficulties; attempts to change to heterosexuality, at least on the surface; or suicide. Provided that none of these options are taken, or that none are deemed workable, an individual may proceed to the next stage.

2. **Identity tolerance.** In order to meet one's social, sexual, and emotional needs, one begins seeking out the company of other homosexuals. However, one has not at this point accepted oneself as homosexual, and what happens next depends on the extent to which one comes to view one's homosexuality in a negative or positive light, often depending largely on one's gay contacts and the reactions of the few trusted straight friends to whom one's secret is revealed. All during this stage, in most of one's life one continues to "pass" for heterosexual, and consciously so. If the assessment is negative, the individual is likely to keep to
limited encounters with the gay world when necessary and to maintain the heterosexual facade.

3. Identity acceptance. If, however, one's assessment of gay life is positive, and particularly if straight confidants are supportive, one is likely to accept one's sexuality and immerse oneself more into gay life, developing a network of gay friends and the firm sense that one "belongs" in the gay community. One further discloses one's sexuality selectively to friends and family members. However, at this stage, one still feels it prudent to "pass" and fit in with the heterosexual majority, and to avoid confrontation over the issue of homosexuality; there remains the notion that being gay is less good than being straight, but that one might as well be happy with what one is. As will be seen later in this chapter, this is roughly the degree of development that characterized the early "homophile" movement, and that characterizes certain assimilationist gays today (for example, see Bauman 1986).

4. Identity pride and synthesis. There may, however, develop a fierce loyalty to one's gay friends and community that outweighs and nullifies these ideas. At this point, negative feelings develop toward antigay heterosexuals (if not all heterosexuals), along with a sense that "straight" society—not one's sexuality and not the LGB community—is the problem. These changes are consonant with and essential to the development of "group consciousness," as will be discussed later in this chapter. The gay person comes out to virtually everyone, often at first in a confrontational way to force others to face and deal with their negative feelings. As time goes on, if reactions are not overwhelmingly negative, disclosure and its ramifications become a nonissue and hard feelings toward straight society soften, as one becomes fully comfortable with one's identity regardless of the reaction of others. The identity so jarred by the discovery of youth becomes fully, happily integrated again.

Cross (1971) and Downing and Roush (1985) present somewhat different patterns for blacks and feminists, but they bear some small resemblance to the four stages Cass presents for lesbians and gay men. At baseline, absent parental guidance to the contrary, blacks and women grow up accepting the existing social order, the authors hypothesize, placing these people at the level equivalent to Cass's "identity acceptance" stage, with the obvious exception of having neither the need nor the ability to hide their sex or race.

Development proceeds from this baseline condition. In the first stage, one is catalyzed by some event or events that anger one, making one question the social order, and resulting in "polar affect," negative feelings toward the "oppressor" group. In the second, one withdraws from contact with members of the "oppres-
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 sor" group and immerses oneself with other women or blacks, developing a sense of pride and affirmation, which leads eventually to more flexible perceptions and lessens the blanket condemnation of men or whites. In the third, one's new, positive self-image is internalized, and one finds oneself transcending traditional ideas of race and sex roles, adopting a pluralistic perspective. Finally, one makes a commitment to meaningful action on behalf of the nonexist/nonracist view of the world one has adopted.

These studies inform each other. Cass's "identity acceptance" stage is very similar to the situation in which blacks and women find themselves in the two studies cited above just before the catalyzing event that causes the questioning of society and results in group consciousness. In other words, it may be that, having gone through the process of establishing gay identity, one must then go through a second process, similar to that described in the studies above, before the flowering of gay consciousness (compressed by Cass into her "identity pride and synthesis" stage) can occur.

The catalyzing event will vary from person to person. In the case of an LGB person, it may be the positive affirmation of attending a Gay Pride Day for the first time, or it may be the negative of the queer-bashing of a friend, the slow death of another from AIDS, or the loss of one's own job.

At the outset I suggested that it did not appear to be in the interest of homosexuals and bisexuals to identify themselves as such in public and on survey forms, other than sex surveys completed in absolute privacy. This was because of the legal and social disabilities imposed on them—prima facie evidence for the movement's claim that homosexuals are an oppressed minority—and their ability to avoid these disabilities by "passing" for heterosexual. However, it appears that environmental effects can catalyze "closeted" people into reorienting their personal attitudes toward their own sexuality and toward society's treatment of their kindred spirits, in a way that, as will be seen later in this chapter, is equal or equivalent to the development of group consciousness in the political context. If this is the case, we can expect that self-identified LGBs, though small in number, will have the strongest sense of identification with the group.

Oppressed Groups and Electoral Politics

The question that then arises is why groups long excluded from positions of power, such as African Americans, Latinos, and, in our case, open LGBs, should accept the mores of the dominant political culture and play by its rules rather than becoming alienated from it. Why should previously excluded groups look to participation in the "mainstream" political process, rather than separatism
or rebellion—be it violent or not—as a means of achieving relief from their isolation and suffering?

This question is especially pertinent in the American electoral system, with its single-member districts, plurality voting, and the duopoly of the Democratic and Republican parties; American general elections (though not always the party nominating processes) emphasize the need to compromise and reach toward the center, wherever it may lie. In this context, what is the allure of voting to a member of a marginalized and oppressed group? What makes voting worthwhile, as opposed to recusin g oneself from the electoral process or confronting it by other means?

The literature offers three answers. First is the divorcement of "diffuse" support for the nation and its form of government, which is high and relatively stable, from "specific" support for policies and politicians (Easton 1965; Abramowitz in Almond and Verba 1980). Second is the "participatory" nature of American political culture and the value that culture places on voting as an affirmation of the form of government and democratic ideals (Almond and Verba 1963; Elazar 1965; Abramowitz in Almond and Verba 1980). Third is the usefulness of voting to achieve symbolic goals even when the connection between voting and substantive policy change is tenuous (Edelman 1964; Browning et al. 1990).

One answer is supplied by Easton's model (1965) separating "diffuse" support for the nation and its forms and institutions of government from "specific" support for policies and public officials. At the time he wrote, both "diffuse" and "specific" support for the United States government were quite high. In the succeeding years of Vietnam, Watergate, economic troubles, and social unrest, "specific" support for government plummeted (Abramowitz in Almond and Verba 1980), although, as Abramowitz points out, general questions on "specific" support appear to elicit responses based on evaluations of the president and executive branch. In the 1980s, "specific" support climbed again during the height of the Reagan administration, though not to anywhere near its levels in the early 1960s, then fell again as the 1980s came to a close. In the meantime, levels of support for both the nation and the basic system of government remained remarkably high; the pessimism about politics, politicians, and policies did not translate into an erosion of confidence in our constitutional framework.

Similar results, interestingly, were obtained across racial groups. This may not be difficult to understand. Even members of disinherit ed groups are raised on the promises of the Declaration of Independence, and are taught American history filled with examples of groups overcoming poverty, hardship, oppres-
sion, and degradation, if only by degrees and only after a long, hard struggle against entrenched power, through appeals to underlying fairness and the creative use of a flexible Constitution. The successful transmission of participatory and egalitarian ideals to members of minority groups who had access to the ballot is attested to empirically as far back as *The American Voter* and *The Civic Culture*, a landmark five-nation study by Almond and Verba (1963).

In *The Civic Culture*, Almond and Verba enunciated the concept of a civic or political "culture," a set of attitudes toward the political system and its component parts, and toward one's own personal participation in the system. This set of attitudes is generally shared by and characteristic of a particular political community or subdivision. The notion of a shared civic culture goes back at least to Plato; Almond and Verba rework and operationalize that notion for the present day.

The authors characterize the United States as having predominantly a "participatory" political culture as opposed to a "subject" culture. In the latter, the citizen is aware of the basic political structures and functions of her society, and has opinions about its legitimacy, but is concerned with watching and evaluating only what it does and not *how* it does so, and is not concerned to participate herself. In the former, the citizen has a direct interest in the doings of the various players—elected officials, interest groups, parties, and the like—and feels that she should be a participant in the process herself. Voting, therefore, is seen as especially important as one effective means, and for many in their American sample the only effective means, of influencing the actions of government "elites."

Elazar (1965) expands on this and lays out a (largely impressionistic) schema of intranational political cultures, which are discussed, and applied to an analysis of gay and lesbian voting in three states, in chapter 4. It is notable, however, that in the Southern states, which Elazar classified as having "traditional" political cultures in which governing was expected to be left to elites (see chapter 4), black citizens were expected to refrain from participation in affairs of state and faced serious extralegal consequences, sometimes inflicted by law enforcement officials, if they violated this unofficial code. As a result, Almond and Verba found among Southern blacks the only significant remnant of a "subject" political culture in the United States. As Elazar's book was in press, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was being passed; it effectively removed this barrier. Within a few years, Southern blacks were voting at rates not too far below those of whites—higher rates, indeed, when one controlled for socioeconomic status (Verba and Nie 1972)—and Southern blacks classifiable as holding "subject" rather than "participatory" political mores nearly vanished.
within a few years (Abramowitz in Almond and Verba 1980). The mere accessibility of the ballot, combined with acceptance of the political mores of the dominant culture with respect to the importance of voting, led to significant levels of voting among citizens who previously were mere "subjects" of the system.

The question arises in this context: Why should any group turn to the ballot box rather than to some other means of effecting its ends, especially when the connection between mass voting and the substantive decisions of elected and appointed officials is attenuated at best? The answer lies less in any substantive nexus between voting and specific public policy than in the symbolic effects of (1) affirming the political system and one's allegiance to it—what Almond and Verba (1963) and Easton (1965) call "allegiant" behavior, (2) helping to gain an audience for one's concerns with those in power, and (3) serving as a political counterweight to the demands of opposing "reference" groups—in other words, showing the official that a political benefit accrues from supporting one's own group and a political cost accrues from supporting the "reference" group.

A long-deprived group appears to act cohesively and mobilize politically for both the redress of specific grievances—that is, to accomplish specific substantive policy goals—and for the symbolic purpose of placing members of the group in positions of authority, as a means of increasing the self-esteem and "internal political efficacy" (Shingles 1981) of individuals in the group, and making the rest of the community take notice of them and deal with them with respect (Edelman 1964). In fact, both "substantive" and "symbolic" goals have been seen to be important to enhancing the social standing and economic condition of racial minorities. Perry writes:

Some observers seem to feel that symbolic benefits are not important. Symbolic benefits that confer an aura of legitimacy, respect, and equal standing to a previously disadvantaged, discriminated against, and subordinate group are very important. (Perry in Browning et al. 1990, 149)

Edelman identifies three kinds of "symbolic" uses of politics. One is the use of politics as a means of "object appraisal," the determination of where one stands with those in power or those seeking power; for example, the use of a political party's platform to appeal to certain groups of voters, rather than as a crystal ball in which the future policies of government may be seen should the party win. Two others relate to more deep-seated psychological causes: the use of politics for the externalization of unresolved inner problems, and, more im-
important to us, the use of politics as a means of social adjustment. In this last context, the mere act of making demands on the system and causing them to be heard makes the system recognize and legitimize the person(s) making the demands, and whether the individual's or group's aims have any substantive chance of being adopted is of relatively small importance, as recognition and legitimation are the principal symbolic goals. The symbolic goal of "object appraisal" also is served when the individual or group, having made the demand, can determine a public official's positive, negative, or neutral orientation toward itself.

Because members of racial minorities have both substantive and symbolic goals, the question is whether voting is a satisfactory means of obtaining either or both kinds of goals. Edelman (1964, 27–28) notes that public officials themselves anecdotally see little relation between the public's votes and their own. Fenno (1978) and Kingdon (1989), studying members of Congress, modify this understanding by distinguishing issues based on their salience within a member's district and their relative complexity, and noting the degree to which members tailor their voting behavior to avoid controversy. They find, then, that some nexus exists between the electorate's votes and the member's, although these cases appear largely to be restricted to high-salience, "easy" issues used by voters for the purpose of "object appraisal."

The Problem of Developing Group Consciousness

Having established that previously disinherited groups with access to the ballot can see its use as advantageous to achieving symbolic and substantive political goals, we now turn our attention to whether self-identified LGBs specifically are likely to do so in any numbers, and whether they are likely to base their votes at least in part on a perception of oppression or disadvantage because of their sexual identity.

This raises again issues related to the studies of identity formation discussed earlier (Cross 1971; Cass 1984; Downing and Roush 1985). These teach us that a woman, an African American, or an LGB person must go through a process of shedding society's predominant ideas about herself and her place in society before becoming fully committed to her identity and asserting political demands based on that identity. A lesbian or gay man, Cass tells us, in the stage of "identity pride and synthesis," develops the willingness to identify him- or herself as LGB even in situations in which the revelation is likely to provoke confrontation. It appears then that in the case of LGBs, acceptance of one's
identity is insufficient to prompt one to behave politically as an open LGB. Public self-identification likely occurs only once one has developed the psychological qualities constituting group consciousness.

Browning et al. (1990), studying political incorporation of racial minorities in American cities, examined the composition of cross-group coalitions, be they two sets of minorities (black-Latino coalitions, for example) or coalitions between a minority group and some segment of the dominant majority (usually white). Their model posits that political mobilization of a group was essential to its success in building electoral coalitions with other groups, winning office, and enacting favorable policies.

Previous research (Verba and Nie 1972; Miller et al. 1981; Shingles 1981) suggests that among these groups, the force that mobilizes them is group consciousness, as distinct from group identification. Miller et al. (1981) define group consciousness as "identification with a group and a political awareness or ideology regarding the group's relative position in society along with a commitment to collective action aimed at realizing the group's interests."

Group consciousness has not been shown to exercise an independent effect on group members' attitudes or their consistency with one another, or on members' cohesion in voting or other political behavior. However, group consciousness appears to be a central element in motivating individuals to act politically, and to do so through certain specific channels they deem effective. In the case at hand, then, group consciousness, though it would have no discernible effect on how they voted, may induce LGBs to vote.

The empirical study of group consciousness as an essential element in group political mobilization goes back to Verba and Nie's seminal discussion (1972, 149–73). These researchers operationalized black consciousness rather simply, using as their indicator whether, and how many times, a black respondent mentioned race or racial issues as a problem in the country in an open-ended question. They found that the 64 percent of African Americans who did so—those conscious "of race as a problem or a basis of conflict" (158)—were slightly more likely to vote or otherwise participate politically than were whites, and that after controlling for socioeconomic status, the "group-conscious" blacks were very considerably more likely to participate than similarly situated whites (159–63).

Since the Verba-Nie study, the meaning of the term and the indicators used to measure the concept have been sharpened considerably. Group consciousness research in this country principally has focused on African Americans, but a few studies also have been done on the factors leading to group consciousness
among women, the poor, different age groups, and even within dominant
groups such as whites and businesspeople.

Miller et al. (1981) identify four elements constituting group consciousness.
The first is group identification, as they have defined it above.

The second is a strong positive feeling for one’s own group and a similar
negative feeling for an opposing “reference” group, what the authors call polar
affect. This concept usually has been measured with relative placement of these
groups on a “feeling thermometer,” with a rating of 100 representing the
“warmest” possible feeling toward the group, 0 representing the “coolest,” and
50 representing absolute neutrality. In certain instances the “opposing” groups
have been easy to identify: whites and blacks, businessmen and workers, and so
forth. In others, identifying the appropriate “reference group” is difficult;
indeed, it may be argued that the mere existence of relative antipathy between
the identifiers of two groups can be equated with the existence of a “reference
group” relationship.

The third is a sense of discontent with the relative power of one’s own group
compared to the opposing “reference group,” called polar power. This concept
can be measured with questions relating to relative group influence in society,
or questions that require the respondent to place the two groups on a contin-
umum of relative power. A dominant group that feels its position threatened by
a subordinate group would score high on a measure of polar power, just as
would a group with a strong feeling of oppression.

The final element, system blame, we may call a sense of societal fault, a belief
that the power structure, rather than individual behavior, is responsible for the
relative conditions of one’s own group and the reference group. This has been a
particularly important factor studied in the group consciousness literature: the
extent to which African Americans or working-class people come to believe
that, whether they work hard and follow the rules or not, barriers to their
progress remain because of reference group prejudice or perceptions of threat;
the extent to which women come to believe that the home is not the place for
them, or that working women come to perceive “glass ceilings.” The direct
relevance of this concept to LGBs will be assessed later in this chapter.

Shingles (1981) adds to the equation a fifth element, which he calls internal
political efficacy. Gamson (1968) posited that the optimal combination of ele-
ments to induce political participation consisted of high political efficacy (a
strong belief that one’s political participation can make a difference) and low
political trust. Shingles distinguishes between “external efficacy,” the degree to
which environmental or systemic factors impede the individual in achieving
political goals, and "internal efficacy," the degree to which the individual believes in her or his own abilities, given a relatively level playing field, to score points.

An important finding of group consciousness research has been the significant correlation of group consciousness with education level, age (younger people being more "conscious"), partisanship, and degree of political interest. Tate (1991) also found that, among older and less-educated blacks, membership in a politically active black church was an important inducement to group consciousness.

There is no way to measure these additional elements of LGB consciousness in any of the existing political data bases that allow LGB self-identification. However, if in fact LGB self-identification is concomitant with the development of LGB group consciousness, we can expect to find that the self-identified LGBs in these samples will display the same correlates with group consciousness found among African Americans and feminist women. That is, at the minimum we should find that self-identified LGBs are significantly younger, more educated, and more partisan than the rest of the population.

**Electoral Cohesion and the Several LGB Movements**

It appears obvious that, if a group is to have a strong influence as a group on elections, it should be relatively united around a set of candidates, principles, or specific substantive or symbolic goals. We return to the point raised by Campbell et al. (1960) that group distinctiveness in voting is in large part a function of the transmission of group political norms, which in turn is a function of the relative unity of the group's political leaders. How united are self-identified and, we presume, group-conscious LGBs likely to be, and, therefore, how distinctive is a "lavender vote" likely to be?

Having chosen the channel of electoral activity (alone or with other channels of political activity), a political leader within a group usually is obliged to work with others. The extent to which those others, and the leader her- or himself, are willing to put aside personal and philosophical differences to achieve the common end is essential to success. This potentially is very problematic in the LGB community, which has had to be built up from scratch within the last few decades and into which its members are not socialized until adulthood, if at all.

Within the LGB community, there have been a succession of practical and theoretical responses to their social condition in the period since World War II. These are discussed in especially good detail by Marotta (1981) and Adam
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(1987), and also by D’Emilio (1983), Timmons (1990), and Marcus (1992). A brief review of these movements will guide us in determining the likely extent of group cohesion and distinctiveness in voting.

The Homophile Movement

As noted before, the first postwar organization to promote fairer treatment for homosexuals in the United States was the Mattachine Society, founded in Los Angeles in 1950 by longtime Communist Party activist Harry Hay, his then lover, fashion designer Rudi Gernreich, and a small number of others (including Chuck Rowland, mentioned earlier). The name Mattachine came from medieval court entertainers who hid behind masks to speak unpleasant truths, which gives the reader a clue to the basic line taken by the first gay movement, known as the “homophile” movement. As noted earlier, Hay and the early Mattachine founders got too far ahead of their members and resigned under pressure in 1953; it is principally the more conservative LGBs who carried on the movement that I discuss here.

Facing absolute societal hostility toward homosexuality, the homophile movement sought to stress that, except for their sexual orientation, LGB people were “just like everybody else.” The term “homophile” was adopted in preference to “homosexual” in order to counteract the prevailing stereotype that LGB people were obsessed with sex. Much was made of the idea that people did not choose to be gay or bisexual, and therefore should not be punished for it—agreeing implicitly with the notion that heterosexuality was “better” than homosexuality. The argument also was advanced that the sexual acts of consenting adults in private had no bearing on any other facet of their lives, that homosexuality in essence was private behavior and should be beyond the questioning of the state.

The question “Why are we gay?” also received considerable attention in homophile discussion groups and conferences. Considerable controversy arose in 1965 when Washington activist Frank Kameny proposed that a convention of the East Coast Homophile Organizations (ECHO) adopt a formal statement that homosexuality was not a mental illness, as it was then generally considered by medical professionals.17

The principal sociopolitical aims of the homophile movement, then, were (1) to desexualize the issue of homosexuality, (2) to make the issue one of privacy, (3) to convince the public that gays could not help how they were and were simply trying to make the best of their situation, and (4) to further convince the public of their essential sameness. The recipe was, through public education and occasional protest and lobbying, to convince straight society to
remove the barriers to assimilation. There was, at this point, no talk of “gay pride,” much less of “gay power,” and no sense of common cause with other groups facing social oppression. There was merely a desire for an end to the constant threat of police raids and beatings, entrapment, psychiatric commitment, official blackmail, and other uses of the blunt force of the state to persecute those who loved others of the same sex.

The Gay Liberation Movement

The counterculture ethic that arose in the mid- to late 1960s, however, introduced a drastically different point of view, which was crystallized in the Stonewall riots. The new thinking, encouraged by the militancy of the African American civil rights movement and the budding feminist movement, held not only that LGB people were as good and moral as straight people, but that the dominant culture had much to learn from the gay subculture and, indeed, that the dominant culture had become thoroughly corrupted and needed to be altered in radical ways.

The Gay Liberationist vision took much from the Black Power movement of the late sixties. Like Black Power, and the similar Black Consciousness movement then arising in South Africa, Gay Liberation sought to define the good and build up a positive sense of humanity in LGB people in a context independent of the dominant culture's values and mores. Indeed, the ultimate goal of Gay Liberation was subversive of the dominant culture: it sought to break down the dominant mores of sexual monogamy, strict gender roles, and the postwar ideal of the nuclear family with the father at its head (Tobin and Wicker 1975; Jay and Young 1977; Richmond and Noguera 1979).

Marotta (1981) and Adam (1987) divide the early Gay Liberationists into two principal groups, “political” and “cultural” reformers. The political reformers, according to Marotta, sought to achieve LGB freedom through changes in the law and social institutions, particularly the media. They sought redress through litigation, lobbying, electoral politics, and protest demonstrations with specific political aims, and therefore wished to keep the debate focused squarely on equal rights and ending stereotypes without diversion into “side issues.”

The cultural reformers, on the other hand, sought through social activities and public visibility demonstrations without (necessarily) specific political purposes to help skittish LGB people become comfortable with, and proud of, what they were. They viewed personal liberation as the fundamental goal, eschewed political game playing, and stressed making all LGB people welcome,
accepted, and visible, including drag queens, leatherfolk, prostitutes, and others excluded from the homophile movement.

The basic tension was between what we may call putting institutional change first and putting personal transformation first. This resulted in constant bickering between the factions in the early days of Gay Liberation, but eventually a sort of “cross-fertilization” allowed each side in the dispute to adapt many means of the other for its own ends and to exist in an acceptable _modus vivendi._

**Lesbian Feminism**

However, the women’s movement at first made little impact on the gay and bisexual men active in Gay Liberation. Lesbians and bisexual women complained of having to remind the men that they were there, and that they were not especially concerned with police entrapment (one issue that was stressed by the gay movement) but were concerned about achieving equal opportunities, financial independence, and an end to violence against women (issues that were not then stressed by the movement). They were underrepresented in decision making and, it was claimed, found the men often assuming that they would make the coffee and put out refreshments at meetings (Marotta 1981). The suspicion arose among some women that the men were interested solely in gaining access to the privileges of male heterosexuals and were perfectly willing to ignore their concerns as women.

At the same time, lesbians who had found shelter in the women’s movement, and who had had a disproportionate role in running it, were beginning to be run out of it. Betty Friedan, whose book _The Feminine Mystique_ made her the founding mother of modern American feminism, decried lesbians as “a lavender menace” who threatened the credibility of the movement, and led a 1970 purge of lesbians from the board of the New York chapter of NOW. Kate Millett’s book _Sexual Politics_, published the same year, was well received until Millett publicly said that she was bisexual, at which time her usefulness to the movement was deemed ended.18

As feminist theory and consciousness-raising developed in the early 1970s, many lesbians deemed it necessary to curtail or break off joint efforts with men and to form separate groups that would address their concerns both as lesbians and more generally as women. Thus was born lesbian feminism as a separate and important development (see especially Phelan 1989).

The influence of lesbian feminist thought and practice often is underestimated. All feminist thinkers sought means to undo the cultural conditioning
that kept women in psychological as well as material subjection. One of the distinctive contributions of lesbian feminism has been its experimentation with new "woman-identified," nonhierarchical forms of social interaction in which an egalitarian process is emphasized. The most prominent example is consensus decision making, ditching Robert's Rules of Order and other formal regulations and making no final decision until firm consensus has been reached after thorough (often very lengthy) discussion. Another experiment, with varying degrees of success, was "leaderless" organization, in which tasks are assigned by lot or rotation and no one person or body of persons speaks for the group on a permanent basis (Marotta 1981).

A rift developed in the early 1970s between the lesbian feminists, who came to predominate in the lesbian movement and identified in particular with feminism, and those lesbians who remained in Gay Liberation and identified principally with the gay rights movement. The latter initially were denounced and ostracized by the former as being "male-identified." This rift, although far less intense as lesbian feminists rejoined common efforts with gay men, seems to remain important in perceptions of differences and in some issue priorities between lesbians identified with the feminist movement as opposed to those identified with the LGB rights movement but not with feminism (Kristiansen 1990).

Lesbian separatism, another strand of feminist thought, developed when certain lesbian feminists came to believe, indeed, that the problem was not with the aggressive, violent, domineering mores of men and the culture they had constructed, but with men themselves: men were biologically incapable of being anything other than aggressive, violent, and domineering, and no amount of feminist consciousness-raising of men was going to do any good. Even were it theoretically possible, men would never give up their privileged position. It was necessary, therefore, for women to completely separate from men and have no interaction with them at all, to build separate all-woman communities where they would be safe and self-sufficient. There remain a small but committed number of lesbian separatists.

**Responses to the New Right and AIDS**

The divisions in the movement resulting from the split between Gay Liberationists and lesbian feminists began to heal as united efforts to achieve national change began to be mounted. The National Gay Task Force was founded in New York in 1973 to try to provide a united front for the "political" arm of the movement; early on its practice was to have two co-executive directors, one a woman, one a man (Marcus 1992). The NGTF—
later renamed the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF)—together with other movement groups helped score an early victory when the American Psychiatric Association voted in 1973 to remove homosexuality from its list of mental and emotional disorders. At the same time, gay and lesbian bookstores and newspapers appeared in major cities and on some college campuses, usually as joint efforts between lesbians and gay men. (Bisexuals, at the time, were given little recognition or acceptance within the movement.)

This trend toward healing and reunion within the movement took on steam in the late 1970s and early 1980s because of two related developments. The first was the rise of the “New Right” movement, much of which became what today is called the Religious Right or Christian conservatism, which included an initial spurt of antigay activity. The second was the onset of the AIDS epidemic and the government’s seemingly feeble response to it, largely related to fear of offending President Reagan’s “New Right” constituency (Pressman 1983).

The first notable antigay electoral campaign, a referendum drive to repeal a recently passed gay rights ordinance in greater Miami, Florida, in the spring of 1977, was led to victory by singer and orange juice spokeswoman Anita Bryant. Copycat measures were passed within months in Wichita, Kansas, and St. Paul, Minnesota. A repeal measure also reached the ballot in Seattle, Washington, but failed there. In each case, the impetus to overturn the gay rights laws came mainly from fundamentalist Christian churches (Adam 1987).

Most notably, California’s statewide ballot in November 1978 included an initiative measure to mandate the firing of homosexual schoolteachers (Zonana 1978). Led by state senator John Briggs, whose base of support again was fundamentalist churches, the measure failed after leading in the polls during most of the year, after LGB organizers won over Ronald Reagan and Gerald Ford, among others. The statewide LGB effort to raise funds to fight the “Briggs Initiative” was cochaired by Sally Gearhart, an openly lesbian college professor and activist, and San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk, the state’s first (and, at the time, only) openly gay elected official (Shilts 1982; Epstein 1986).

The “New Right” gained a national foothold when it aided in the election of Ronald Reagan and the Republican takeover of the Senate in 1980. The following year, the first report of a strange “gay cancer” appeared in the New York Times. The emerging unity among lesbians and gay men in response to the antigay backlash of the late 1970s was redoubled when large numbers of gay and bisexual men began to succumb to acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Initial efforts to educate the public to avoid behavior associated with AIDS
were stymied by strong reluctance among social conservatives to have the
government advertise ways to make gay sex and intravenous drug use “safer”;
they believed such campaigns would signal approval of and encouragement to
engage in what they deemed immoral behavior. In addition, a low priority was
attached to research into the causes and possible cures or treatments for the
syndrome until it started to appear in the “general population”—that is,
beyond the identified “high risk” groups of Haitians, intravenous drug users,
and gay and bisexual men (Shilts 1987). Indeed, some New Right leaders
opined that AIDS was just desserts for immorality; the Reverend Jerry Falwell,
founder of the Moral Majority movement, called AIDS “God’s punishment on
homosexuals.”

Faced with a national administration seemingly unwilling to halt the spread
of the disease within the gay community, numerous local efforts to provide
education, treatment, and counseling sprung up, beginning with Gay Men’s
Health Crisis, founded in playwright Larry Kramer’s living room in New York
(Shilts 1987). In turn, the national LGB organizations born since Stonewall
made government action on AIDS a significant priority.

By the mid-1980s there were several national movement organizations in
place. In addition to the NGLTF, the Human Rights Campaign Fund was
formed in 1979 to raise money for pro gay congressional candidates and, later,
to engage in professional and grassroots lobbying (it absorbed the Gay Rights
National Lobby in 1985). Four other groups centered on litigation: the Lambda
Legal Defense and Education Fund, the National Center for Lesbian Rights,
Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, and the ACLU’s Gay and Lesbian
Rights Project. The AIDS Action Council, to lobby on AIDS issues specifically,
was formed at the national level in 1985. Shortly thereafter came the first
chapter of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), to
concentrate on improving the portrayal of LGBs in the mass media. The Gay
and Lesbian Victory Fund, which raises money for openly LGB candidates for
public office, was formed later, in 1991.

ACT UP and the Rise of the “Queers”

However, by the end of the Reagan administration, after what was seen as
several years of government neglect of AIDS largely on political grounds
(Dejowski 1989), patience with the “insider” methods of the national groups
was wearing out among those whose friends and lovers were dying, or who
were HIV-positive themselves. In 1987 Larry Kramer—who had been expelled
from GMHC, the organization he cofounded, on the ground that his angry,
belligerent style was alienating potential benefactors and damaging the group
From “Lavender” People to “Lavender” Voters

internally—once again organized a group of New Yorkers into the first chapter of the AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power, far better known by its acronym, ACT UP.

A mass action group that quickly spread to other cities, ACT UP used (mostly) nonviolent confrontation tactics, such as “sit-ins” and “die-ins” at the offices of government agencies, pharmaceutical companies, and others, to force expedited testing and approval of AIDS treatments and to lower the often exorbitant cost charged for those treatments by drug companies (Crossten 1989).

ACT UP’s structure was quite loose. Mass meetings were held weekly. Anyone attending could propose a direct action, which the group would discuss and endorse by consensus. A number of committees were set up, but all were deemed responsible to the total membership rather than to officers. There were informal ties with chapters in other cities, but no means were exercised to control the use of the ACT UP name, either externally or internally. This led eventually to controversial episodes and the splintering or dissolution of several ACT UP chapters.19

This coincided with a new wave of antigay activism in Congress and the states. In 1989 Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina succeeded in his effort to place content restrictions on artists subsidized by the National Endowment for the Arts, specifically ruling out government funding for “homoerotic art.” Four performance artists had their NEA funding cut off in 1990 for violating the rules, among them a lesbian and two gay men who treated of their sexuality in their art. Also in 1989, as noted previously, Health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan suppressed an HHS report that one-third of teenage suicides and suicide attempts in the United States were related to an inability to deal with one’s sexual orientation, after Representative William Dannemeyer of California objected that the report would promote acceptance of homosexuality.

However, the initial successes of ACT UP in some of its battles with the government and business (most notably the “fast tracking” of AIDS treatment approval by the Food and Drug Administration) and in channeling the energies of many LGBs sparked a new LGB militancy at the end of the 1980s. Again in New York, a new direct action group arose, organized along the lines of ACT UP but this time to promote “queer visibility,” and called itself Queer Nation. Again, Queer Nation chapters—connected to the mother group in spirit only—popped up in major urban areas around the country. Chanting their trademark slogan, “We’re here! We’re queer! Get used to it!” members conducted “queer-ins” in shopping malls, government offices, and public gathering
places, as well as outside meetings of antigay organizations and the offices of antigay businesses and officials (Browning 1993).

Like ACT UP, the "queer movement" was distinguished by a rejection of the "insider" or "mainstream" tactics of the national lobbying and litigation groups. It was felt that efforts to integrate LGBs into mainstream American life and to convince their fellow citizens of their essential sameness had been ineffective, especially with respect to people with AIDS, and also served to deny the right of less conventional LGBs to look, dress, speak, act, and be different from the heterosexual norm. Thus, like the lesbian feminist movement, the queer movement eschewed hierarchy and structure. It also encouraged visible action to shock heterosexual society into "getting used to it."

The adoption of the word "queer" by the movement was deliberate. In prior years the LGB movement had converted the pink triangle, the Nazis' symbol for homosexuals in the concentration camps, into a symbol of pride. The queer activists appropriated one of the most provocative insults hurled at LGBs of both sexes to neutralize painful memories of rejection and abuse and imbue the term with a positive connotation for LGB people. At the same time, the happy adoption of the insulting and abusive term for themselves would shock heterosexuals into paying attention. Connected to this was the all-inclusive nature of "queer." Used by heterosexuals to encompass nonviolent sexual outcasts of all kinds, including transvestites and transsexuals, "queer" was thought to embrace all such persons as the word "gay" once did but could no longer. Finally, given the sense of "queer" meaning anything odd or different, its use was meant to embrace and promote the acceptance of oddities and differences (Signorile 1993; Browning 1993).

The New Assimilationists

At the same time as the queer movement took off, so did a reaction against its "in-your-face" confrontationalism, its celebration of sexual freedom and glaring difference, and its embrace of liberal or left-wing politics. A small but increasingly vocal group of LGB conservatives and libertarians argued that LGBs must live in the "real world," that the dominant culture had much to recommend it in preference to the "gay subculture," and that LGBs had to accept much of the dominant culture against which many of their leaders had been rebelling if the dominant culture was to accept them as equals. These voices ranged from Camille Paglia, a lesbian scholar who critiqued feminism from a libertarian perspective in provocative language and held much LGB scholarship to be second-rate, to Marvin Liebman, a longtime "movement conservative" ally of William F. Buckley who came out as gay in 1990.
Expositions of this "new assimilationist" viewpoint are found in the work of Kirk and Madsen (1989) and Bawer (1993). Kirk and Madsen argued that gay "misbehavior," as they viewed it, was largely responsible for the failure of the LGB movement to reach the hearts of middle America. They advocated both a national advertising campaign to stress the similarities between LGBs and the rest of society, and changes in the personal lifestyles of LGBs (especially men) immersed in the urban subculture to better fit in with the societal norm.

Bawer later argued that LGB people living next door in the suburbs who looked, sounded, and acted just like their straight neighbors were far more psychologically threatening to heterosexual society than are flamboyant folk in feathers or leathers living in distant big cities who are seen by heterosexuals only on television in Gay Pride parades. Therefore, Bawer asserted, it was assimilated LGBs living and working and playing among their neighbors who would do the most difficult, and at length the most successful, work in breaking down ancient hatreds and fears and bringing about real equality.

There was a dramatic shift in philosophy and strategy following Stonewall from the essential assimilationism of the early homophile movement to the flamboyant radicalism of Gay Liberation, which asked for nobody's permission to be whatever one was and demanded equality. In like manner, the assumptions of Gay Liberation were flipped on their head by the withdrawal of the lesbian feminists, who demanded a more fundamental challenge to what they saw as a fundamentally oppressive culture, not merely with respect to sexuality.

The community eventually grew back together in response to the AIDS crisis and political challenges from the right. Yet some of the old conflicts reemerged in new guises, especially that between the militant street activists of the late 1980s and early 1990s and the new assimilationists whose response it engendered. Between these poles were numerous national, state, and local LGB political organizations seeking to hold the movement (and, sometimes, themselves) together and change the country's mind and heart at the same time.

Nine Hypotheses

At this point we can draw this long discussion together in the form of nine hypotheses, the questions to be answered to the extent possible with the empirical exit poll data in the succeeding chapters.

In doing this, I must note again the inherent disadvantages of the absence
of empirical data on LGBs up to now. First, there is no group of nonvoters who self-identify as LGBs against whom one can compare those self-identifiers who do choose to vote. Second, as noted throughout, there is no way to compare “closeted” homosexuals and bisexuals with self-identified LGBs with respect to their political attitudes or voting behavior, and our demographic information about people in the closet is sketchy at best.

With these caveats in mind, here are the hypotheses upon which I shall base the empirical tests:

**Hypothesis 1: Rate of Identification**

Lesbians and gay men will self-identify in political surveys at rates equivalent to those found in previous random-sample research, about 1.0 to 1.5 percent of the population. When bisexuals are included, the share of self-identifiers will increase by an additional 2 to 3 percent.

**Hypothesis 2: Demographic Characteristics**

LGBs who do self-identify will be possessed of the equivalent of “group consciousness.” Therefore, the demographic correlates of group consciousness found among women and African Americans—youth, high education levels, and strong partisanship—should be disproportionately great among self-identified LGBs. Also, given the results of prior sex surveys, men may significantly outnumber women among self-identifiers.

**Hypothesis 3: Political Attitudes**

The general political orientation of LGB voters will be liberal or leftist and Democratic, in keeping with the pattern found among African Americans, feminists, and non-Cuban Latinos, and will be highly distinctive from that of non-LGB identifiers.

**Hypothesis 4: Gender and Feminism**

Lesbians and bisexual women, whether feminists or not, will be more opposed to the use of force in politics, and therefore will be more likely to vote for Democrats than are gay and bisexual men. In addition, lesbian
feminists will hold different issue priorities from LGB men and women who do not identify with feminism, and thus are far more likely to hold liberal positions on abortion and other feminist issues; they will be more inclined to vote for Democrats than will other women.

**Hypothesis 5: Voting Blocs within the Community**

Given the divergent concepts of group identity among LGBs, and their differing notions of what the goals of the LGB movement should be and the best means for achieving them, LGB voters will not be monolithic; although the large majority will vote for Democrats, significant minorities will support Republicans or leftist third candidates.

**Hypothesis 6: The “Sexuality Gap”**

LGB voting will be sufficiently distinctive as to have an independent effect on vote choice after controlling for attitudes, partisanship, incumbency, and demographic factors significantly correlated with LGB self-identification. Thus, there will be an authentic “sexuality gap,” meaning that self-identified LGBs will be more liberal and Democratic in their voting than will their liberal, Democratic cohorts who do not identify as lesbian, bisexual, or gay.

**Hypothesis 7: Results in Specific Contests**

LGB voting will remain highly distinctive in particular individual contests, not merely in aggregated national partisan results for governorships and seats in Congress, and will be particularly distinctive in high-salience contests.

**Hypothesis 8: Symbolic versus Substantive Voting**

LGB voters will seek both substantive and symbolic gains. Therefore, in a high-salience contest between a “progay” and an “antigay” candidate, they will vote for the “progay” candidate; and in a contest in which there is little difference between the candidates on LGB issues, substantive issue differences will be of greater concern.
Hypothesis 9: Role of Political Leadership

The extent of LGB voting cohesion in any given contest will depend on the unity of LGB political leaders, who, if united, should be able to mobilize LGB voters independently of any outside political force.

Having thus laid out a theory of LGB self-identification and its manifestation in the voting booth, I proceed to test that theory in the succeeding chapters.