The Lavender Vote

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Appendix: Methods

Because this study is the first of its kind on this group of voters, the source material comprises polling data from 1990 and 1992, the first years for which comparable polls are available. As noted previously, the number of probability-sample data bases available to researchers and usable for this study is extremely small, and I have employed most of them here.

The 1990 national data bases serve as the basis of my initial analysis, found in chapter 3, and a similar analysis of the 1992 data is reported in chapter 6. I also look at five additional data sets. Of the state-level exit polls from 1990, three are from states in which the number of self-identified lesbian and gay respondents exceeded thirty; these are California, Texas, and Massachusetts. (Because only one state met this criterion in 1992—the LGB self-identifier item was included that year in only two state-level polls—no comparative analysis is possible, and I leave it aside.) In chapter 4 I examine these three state polls in detail, and also look briefly for comparative purposes at the pooled results from all twenty-one state exit polls from 1990 in which the gay/lesbian self-identifier question was asked, to determine whether they tend to reflect the national poll results. Finally, to examine the effects of various organizational influences on gay voting, I look in chapter 5 at what I have called the "Glick poll," an exit poll taken in a New York State Assembly primary in a lower Manhattan district in September 1990.

All the data bases examined here employed the same essential methodology. Within each sampling frame (be it nation, state, or assembly district), precincts were selected at random. Every Nth voter leaving the polling place at the
selected precinct was handed a form by an employee or volunteer for the polling organization; the voter was asked to complete the form at an adjoining table, then to fold the completed form and place it in a designated box. Respondents were instructed both orally and in writing not to put their names or other identifying information on the forms.

Each form consisted of a single letter-size sheet of paper printed on two sides, in two columns on each side. Answers to questions were indicated by checking a box beneath each question. No open-ended answers were sought, and volunteered answers falling outside the categories in the check-off boxes were not tabulated.

In each instance the gay/lesbian or LGB self-identifier question was asked in a so-called grab bag section in the second column on the back page of the survey. In all the VRS polls, this was the last batch of questions asked. The “grab bag” section opened with the words “Which Of The Following Describe You? (Check All That Apply).” Beneath this heading appeared several demographic or attitudinal self-categorizations not asked about in other parts of the survey; examples include “First-time voter,” “Strong feminist,” “Married,” “Live in rent-controlled/rent-subsidized housing,” “Veteran,” and “Fundamentalist or evangelical Christian.” The actual items in the “grab bag” varied from survey to survey.

In the 1990 VRS surveys the last such item listed (and therefore the last item on the form) read “Gay or lesbian.” In 1992 the self-identifier read “Gay, lesbian or bisexual.” The Glick poll included the “Gay or lesbian” item toward the middle of its grab bag.

In addition, the Glick poll alone asked a second, separate question at the end of the form: “Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?” Responses permitted were, in order, “Exclusively heterosexual,” “Mostly heterosexual,” “Bisexual,” “Mostly homosexual,” and “Exclusively homosexual.”

The Data Sets

With the exception of the Glick poll, all data were collected, tabulated, and analyzed initially by Voter Research and Surveys, Inc. (VRS) of New York City, a polling consortium of the four major broadcast news organizations in the United States (ABC, CBS, CNN, and NBC). (VRS merged in 1993 into the new Voter News Service.) The 1990 VRS data bases were obtained from the Roper Center (Storrs, Connecticut), and the 1992 data bases from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (Ann Arbor, Michi-
In addition to the usual demographic weighting, all VRS-connected data sets at the state level were weighted to reflect the actual official outcome of the elections for governor and U.S. senator in each state; no such weighting based on election returns was done to the national surveys.

The Glick poll was provided to me in July 1992 by the joint courtesy of its principal creators: Dr. Robert W. Bailey, then of Columbia University (now with Rutgers University, Camden Campus); Dr. Kenneth S. Sherrill of Hunter College, City University of New York; and Dr. Murray S. Edelman, then director of surveys for VRS (now editorial director of Voter News Service).

*The 1990 national exit polls.* Two versions of a national exit survey were conducted on the date of the general election, 2 November 1990. The four networks belonging to VRS originally formulated a single set of national and state-level surveys. CBS chose in addition to formulate its own national questionnaire, which included far fewer demographic variables than did the joint four-network (ABC-CBS-CNN-NBC) poll but a far larger number of questions about the voters’ attitudes on issues. The gay/lesbian self-identifier question, fortunately, was included in both versions.

As discussed in chapter 3, the four-network national survey in 1990 has been referred to as the VRS form, and the additional CBS national questionnaire as the CBS form. A number of questions, however, were identical, both in wording and in placement, on the VRS and CBS forms. The pooled responses to such questions have been referred to as the U.S.A. data. The number of respondents (N) to the VRS form was 10,565; to the CBS form, 9,323; and to the combined U.S.A. questions, 19,888.

The CBS and VRS versions of the poll were administered to different voters in the same sample precincts. There were not, therefore, two separate samples drawn; this is simply two different versions of the same poll, not two separate, simultaneous polls.

Every respondent to the national surveys was asked how she or he voted in the election for the House of Representatives in her or his congressional district; rather than listing the specific candidates, the voter simply was asked whether she had voted for the Democrat, the Republican, someone else, or whether she had not voted in the House race. Using the same format, the voter was asked about her vote in the contest for U.S. senator and/or governor in the states in which such contests were being held. Common demographic questions asked in both forms included race, gender, party affiliation, and a few of the grab bag questions, including the gay/lesbian self-identifier. Additional questions, broken
out by the specific survey in which they were asked, will be set forth later in this appendix.

The 1990 state exit polls. The four networks also agreed on a format for the exit polls taken on specific contests in each of the forty-two states in which a governor or U.S. senator, or both, was being elected; the questions largely resembled the national VRS (four-network) form. VRS used a "short form" of a single page in half of these states, which did not include the "grab bag" and, therefore, excluded the gay/lesbian self-identifier.

Initially I examined the surveys from all twenty-one states in which the gay/lesbian self-identifier was asked. In many of these states, the small numbers of respondents made the data useless. In the manner of Edelman (1991), I then pooled the responses; these are reported in tables 4.1 and 4.2 in chapter 4 for descriptive purposes only.

As noted above, California (eighty-six gay/lesbian respondents), Texas (fifty respondents), and Massachusetts (thirty-three respondents) had a sufficient number of gay/lesbian self-identifiers to make rudimentary comparative analysis possible. As it happens, these three states also hosted close gubernatorial contests in which issues of concern to lesbians and gay men were on the candidates' agendas, as discussed in chapter 4.

The state-level polls did not ask respondents about their votes for the House of Representatives, in that none of the networks thought it useful to survey the number of respondents necessary to attempt to call individual House contests with exit poll results.

Additional specific questions asked on each state's poll are addressed in chapter 4.

The 1992 national data sets. The 1992 presidential exit polls were conducted jointly for the four participating networks by VRS. However, in order to ask a larger number of questions without making the poll form overly lengthy, VRS developed three different versions of the poll, labeled Version W, Version Y, and Version P, which were administered to different respondents at the same sample precincts. The dependent variables, party affiliation, and a few essential demographic variables were included in all versions; other dependent and attitudinal variables were found in one or (sometimes) two versions. The sample sizes for each version, interestingly, were very different. The total sample N for all three versions was 15,300. But Version W included more than half the respondents, 8,277; Version Y had an N of 4,089; and Version P had an N of 2,934.
The Glick poll. The Glick poll is discussed in detail in chapter 5. Total sample N was 516, of whom 339 voted in the contest studied.

Data Analysis

All data analyses were carried out using SPSS-X (for the national and state-level exit polls) or SPSS-PC (for the Glick poll). Both crosstabulations and logistic regressions were employed. All figures reported (with two exceptions) employ weighted data, and in all instances statistical significance was measured using weighted data. Significance was established at the level of .05 using two-tailed tests. Because of the small gay/lesbian sample sizes in some cases, I also report some relationships significant at the level of less than .10, which approach but do not reach statistical significance according to the .05 standard above.

In the case of the crosstabulations, Pearson's chi-square was used to measure significance.

In the case of the logistic regressions, I report the B (odds ratio) statistic, standard error (SE), and the Wald statistic, which equals \((B - SE)^2\) and which measures the relative strength of relationship among each of the independent variables on the dependent—that is, the higher the Wald, the stronger the variable is in the mix. Statistical significance was determined using a two-tailed Student's t-test of the Wald statistic. When models were respecified, total percentage improvement in predictive power was used to assess the corrections to each model.

The Empirical Tests

The next pages discuss the measures employed to test each of the nine hypotheses set out at the end of chapter 2. Following the description of the testing procedure is a section setting out and discussing each of the indicators employed.

Hypothesis 1: Rate of identification. An initial frequency distribution was run of each data set to determine the number of gay/lesbian or LGB self-identifiers and their proportion of the total sample. In each case a breakdown by sex was done as well. In the case of the 1990 national surveys, the VRS and CBS data sets were compared to determine consistency of results. The results from the twenty-
one state-level data sets from 1990 were added together, with breakdown by sex
and by region of the country.

**Hypotheses 2 and 3: Comparisons with non-LGB voters.** A crosstabulation by
sexual self-identification of all demographic, attitudinal, and voting behavior
variables employed in the surveys then was undertaken, and most of these results
are reported, along with statistically significant results at the levels of .05, .01,
and .001. These specific variables are set forth and discussed in the “Indicators”
section later in this appendix.

**Hypotheses 4 and 5: Intragroup divisions.** Next, the same method was used to
crosstabulate gay and lesbian or LGB self-identifiers alone by sex, party affilia-
tion, and, in 1990, identification as a “strong feminist.” In addition, because of
unexpected differences found based on age categories when the data were exam-
ined, I created three age cohorts and tested these for significant differences as
well; this is explained further in chapter 3. Only significant and near-significant
(less than .10) differences based on sex, age, party, and feminism are reported.

Independents and the small number of third party identifiers were grouped
together for analysis. Also, as discussed in chapter 3, because of the unusually
large share of the lesbian and gay subsample that voted for third candidates for
the House of Representatives in 1990, these voters were tested as well for their
demographics, attitudes, and voting behavior in the Senate and governor’s races.

In the case of feminism, which was measured only in the 1990 battery of
polls, because of the minimal number of gay men who identified themselves as
strong feminists \((N = 6)\), the independent variable was coded into three
responses: gay men, nonfeminist lesbians, and feminist lesbians. At the national
level, only respondents to the VRS form could be included in the feminism tests,
because the “strong feminist” indicator was not included in the CBS form; at the
state level, all respondents were included.

In the three state-level polls, an additional set of crosstabulations of the entire
polling sample was run, showing any differences in voting behavior in individual
contests between the gay and nongay populations broken down by race and by
feminist identification, in order to test whether vote choice among self-identified
lesbians and gay men was consistent with that of nongay feminists, Latinos, and
African Americans. This was done to assess the Adam (1987) hypothesis that
lesbians and gay men form part of a neoleftist coalition with feminists and
members of racial minorities, noted in chapters 1 and 2, and additionally as a
means of assessing the effect of state “political culture” in Elazar’s reckoning
(1965) on self-identified lesbians and gay men in each state (see chapter 4).

In the case of the Glick poll, all respondents were registered Democrats,
almost all gay and lesbian respondents were white, and no feminism indicator was included; therefore, the only intrasample breakdown of this kind was done by sex.

**Hypothesis 6: The “sexuality gap.”** The next tests employed logistic regression analysis of all respondents. The first logit test sought to determine the demographic indicators that correlated with sexual self-identification and the extent to which they had any power to predict whether a respondent would self-identify as gay or lesbian (1990) or as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (1992). I included in this analysis any demographic indicators that were found to be statistically significant in the crosstabular analysis and that had any sound theoretical basis for inclusion. Indicators with nominal values were recoded into bivariate “dummies.”

Once the demographic correlates were determined, I sought to create a model incorporating theoretically sound demographic and political orientation variables that would wipe out any independent effect of sexual self-identification on issue stands and vote choice. In other words, I sought to determine whether, once one had controlled for the right factors, self-identifications as gay men, bisexuals, and lesbians still had an independent effect on American elections.

A four-step test of the effect of gay/lesbian or LGB self-identification on vote choice was undertaken. First, the independent effect of gay/lesbian or LGB self-identification, without more, on vote choice was assessed. The demographic correlates were added to determine whether the independent effect of sexual self-identification remained significant. Because party identification (Campbell et al. 1960) and incumbency (Jacobson 1983) are considered the most important factors in determining the vote for Congress, I then in like manner added these variables to the model. Finally, because of the augmented levels of liberalism and feminism found in the gay and lesbian sample (chapter 3), these two additional variables were included in the 1990 analyses as well. No feminism indicator was included in the 1992 data, so only ideology was controlled for in this last step in the 1992 contests.

The final set of tests of the 1990 data examined the independent effect, if any, of sexual self-identification on congressional or gubernatorial voting when a standard retrospective voting model, originally applied to presidential elections (Campbell et al. 1960; Fiorina 1981), is employed; this model is discussed in chapter 3. As discussed in chapter 6, owing to a lack of valid indicators, no retrospective analysis of the 1992 presidential election could be performed.

**Hypotheses 7, 8, and 9: Voting in individual contests and the role of leaders.** The same logistic regression tests were performed on seven individual contests included in the three state-level exit polls from 1990 that were examined. These
were designed specifically to confirm or refute the results found in the aggregated national polls on individual contests. The state results were compared with each other to determine consistency with the national result, and to attempt to explain any state-by-state variations.

The Glick poll also assisted in evaluating Hypothesis 8, on the weight of symbolic versus substantive factors in the way lesbians and gays cast their votes. Initial crosstabulations determined the share of voters who cited gay/lesbian rights, AIDS, and abortion as top substantive issue concerns, and asked respondents about the ("symbolic") importance of having a gay/lesbian representative. These factors were included in the logistic regression analysis discussed next.

The only direct test of Hypothesis 9, on the role of LGB political leaders, could be made using the data in the Glick poll; respondents were asked whether each campaign had contacted them within the "past few days," and which of thirteen local periodical and political club endorsements, if any, had been important in their voting decision. The latter list included clubs and publications with both "gay" and "mainstream" orientations. An initial crosstabulation determined significant differences between the gay and non-gay samples and, as discussed above, within the sample between the gay men and the lesbians. Another crosstabulation determined significant differences, among the sample as a whole and among the gay/lesbian subsample, using a vote for or against Deborah Glick as the dependent variable.

Then, incorporating the indicators upon which significant differences were found, an initial model to explain voting for Glick was created. This model was tested first using the entire sample of voters, then tested again using the gay/lesbian self-identifiers only. A revised model, excluding indicators that were clearly insignificant, then was run, again first with the entire sample, then with the gay/lesbian subsample only; thus the different effects of group leadership and symbolic and substantive factors on the gay/lesbian subsample could be assessed.

**Indicators**

The unique indicators in the Glick poll are detailed in chapter 5. This section discusses the indicators in the national and state-level exit polls reported in chapters 3, 4, and 6.

**Demographics.** All national and state exit polls asked respondents about each of the following demographic factors: age, sex, race, sexual self-identification, frequency of religious attendance (phrased "Attend religious services at least once a month"), and whether the respondent was a first-time voter. The state exit polls
and the 1990 VRS national poll form additionally asked about the respondent's education and household income levels, in which religion she was raised, and whether she was married, belonged to a labor union, or had a family member in the armed forces or reserves. The CBS form asked the respondent's type of employment and whether she was a government employee, her religious affiliation today, whether she was a "fundamentalist or evangelical Christian," had children under age eighteen, was a military veteran, a gun owner, or the victim of a crime within the last year. In addition, based on the location of the sample precinct, each case was coded for region of residence (East, Midwest, South, or West) and the size of the locality. The 1992 national survey versions contained an identical question asking one's "religious affiliation" which folded together the two questions from 1990.

Once demographic relationships were established, those found in the cross-tabulation to have a significant relationship (at .05) with sexual self-identification were placed in a logistic regression model with sexual self-identification as the dependent variable to determine whether, and to what extent, they had the power to predict gay/lesbian self-identification. (In the case of the 1990 national data, three such equations were run, using the VRS, CBS, and U.S.A. indicators, respectively.)

**Attitudes.** The 1990 VRS form and state polls asked two questions important for our purposes that were not included in the 1990 CBS form: the respondent's self-stated ideology on a three-point scale (liberal, moderate, or conservative), and whether the respondent was a strong feminist. The ideology scale was carried over into the 1992 Version W; no feminism question was asked in any form of the 1992 poll. The VRS national demographic indicators were used to construct logistic regression models that attempted to determine likelihood to identify as a liberal and as a strong feminist; sexual self-identification first was tested alone, then with the other hypothesized indicators.

Two attitudinal questions were asked of all 1990 respondents to both of the national polls and all state exit polls studied: their party affiliation and whether they approved of President Bush's performance in office.

Another set of questions may be classed as "the same thing asked in different ways." In 1990, the CBS form asked respondents to name the single most important issue in their vote for Congress, whereas the VRS form asked them to name up to two. The four-network form asked whether abortion should be legal always, sometimes, or never; the CBS form broke the middle category into two: "in most cases" and "in cases of rape, incest, or to save the life of the mother." VRS asked whether the country was "right" to be in the Persian Gulf at present,
whereas CBS asked whether we should stay there even at the risk of U.S. lives. CBS asked whether “most” members of Congress deserve reelection; VRS asked voters, in separate questions, whether they approved of Congress’s performance and whether they supported congressional term limits.

The 1992 poll asked three not-quite-identical questions regarding the role of family and traditional values and how the neglect of these might relate to the country’s social problems.

The questions in the 1990 VRS form were better suited to testing retrospective models of voting behavior (Fiorina 1981). The respondents were asked to assess the current condition of the national economy, predict its condition next year, and give a personal retrospective assessment of whether they were better off, worse off, or “about the same” as they were two years before; they also were asked whether they thought the country was seriously off track.

The CBS questions, in contrast, sought more to tie vote choice to issue attitudes. In addition to the issue questions noted above, CBS asked its respondents their attitudes on the death penalty, defense spending, and the relative merit of law enforcement as against education and treatment in controlling drug abuse. Its economic-related questions asked whether unemployment or inflation was more in need of control, whether the president or Congress was better able to handle the deficit, and whether saving the environment was more important than saving jobs. CBS also did ask a general institutional trust question regarding the federal government.

As noted previously, the 1992 battery included no question on general presidential performance, which precluded any retrospective analysis.

The state-level attitudinal questions were tailored to the circumstances of each state and are discussed individually in chapter 4. However, the VRS questions on ideology, feminism, abortion attitude, and whether the country was seriously off track were carried over into each state survey. (No CBS-specific questions appear in any of the state polls.) As in the VRS national form, each state survey contained a list of seven to nine issues, from which the respondent could choose up to two that were the most important in her vote for governor, as opposed to her vote for Congress as in the national polls. An additional list of seven to nine questions was asked in each state relating to personal impressions or qualities of the candidates or campaign factors such as televised debates, from which the respondent could choose, again, up to two that had an important effect on her vote choice for governor.

Voting behavior. The 1990 and 1992 national forms asked respondents their vote choice, by party (not by name), for U.S. representative and, in the appro-
priate states, for U.S. senator and/or state governor. The 1992 vote choice for president was asked by name of candidate and party. The state polls asked the vote choice, by name and party, for Senate and governor, but not for the House (because VRS was not attempting to call individual House races on election night on the basis of exit polls). In most state polls in which statehouses were contested, respondents were asked when they had made up their minds in the gubernatorial contest: within the past three days, the past week, the past month, or before then.

In addition, the state polls, the 1990 VRS national form, and all three 1992 national forms asked respondents to report their vote (if any) in the 1988 presidential election. In all cases this resulted in an apparent overreporting of support for George Bush. The VRS national form asked voters to look ahead to 1992 and indicate their likely presidential vote choice (Bush, "the Democrat," or "not sure"), and their preference among seven listed candidates for the Democratic nomination.9 The 1992 version asked whether each respondent had voted for Ronald Reagan in 1984.

CBS asked respondents to its 1990 national form three specific questions about their congressional vote choice: whether their vote was pro- or anti-Bush (or whether Bush was not a factor in their decision), whether effectiveness, stand on issues, or party affiliation was most important in the vote choice, and whether campaigns "this year" (1990) were more positive, more negative, or about the same as campaigns in the past.

For purposes of testing predictive models using logistic regressions, several multivariate indicators were broken out into a number of bivariate "dummies," most significantly vote choice in each contest (dependent variable) and party affiliation (both dependent and independent). Several independent nominal variables also were broken into "dummies," including region, size of locality, the religion variables, and partisan incumbency—whether a Democratic incumbent, a Republican incumbent, or no incumbent was seeking reelection to the office in question.