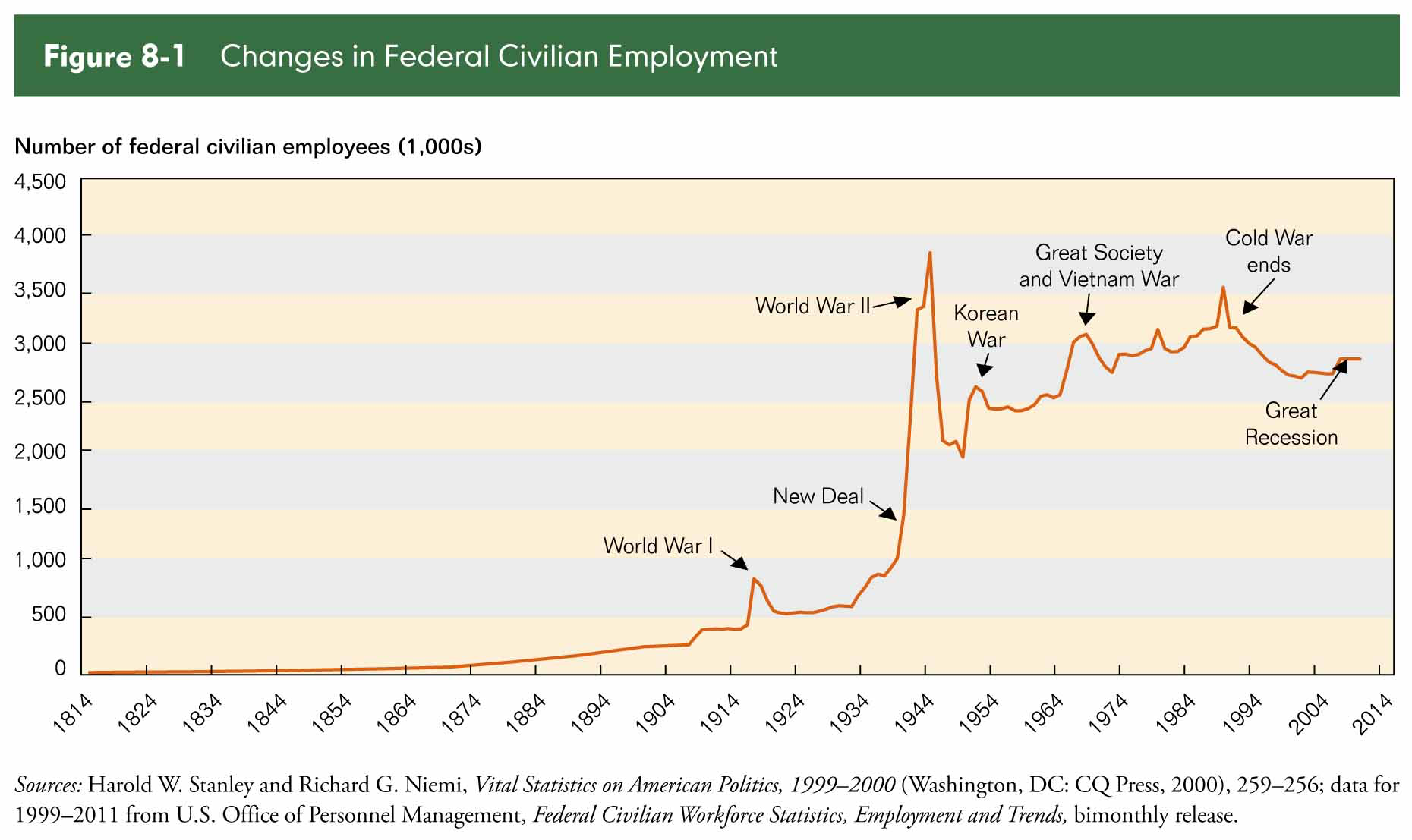
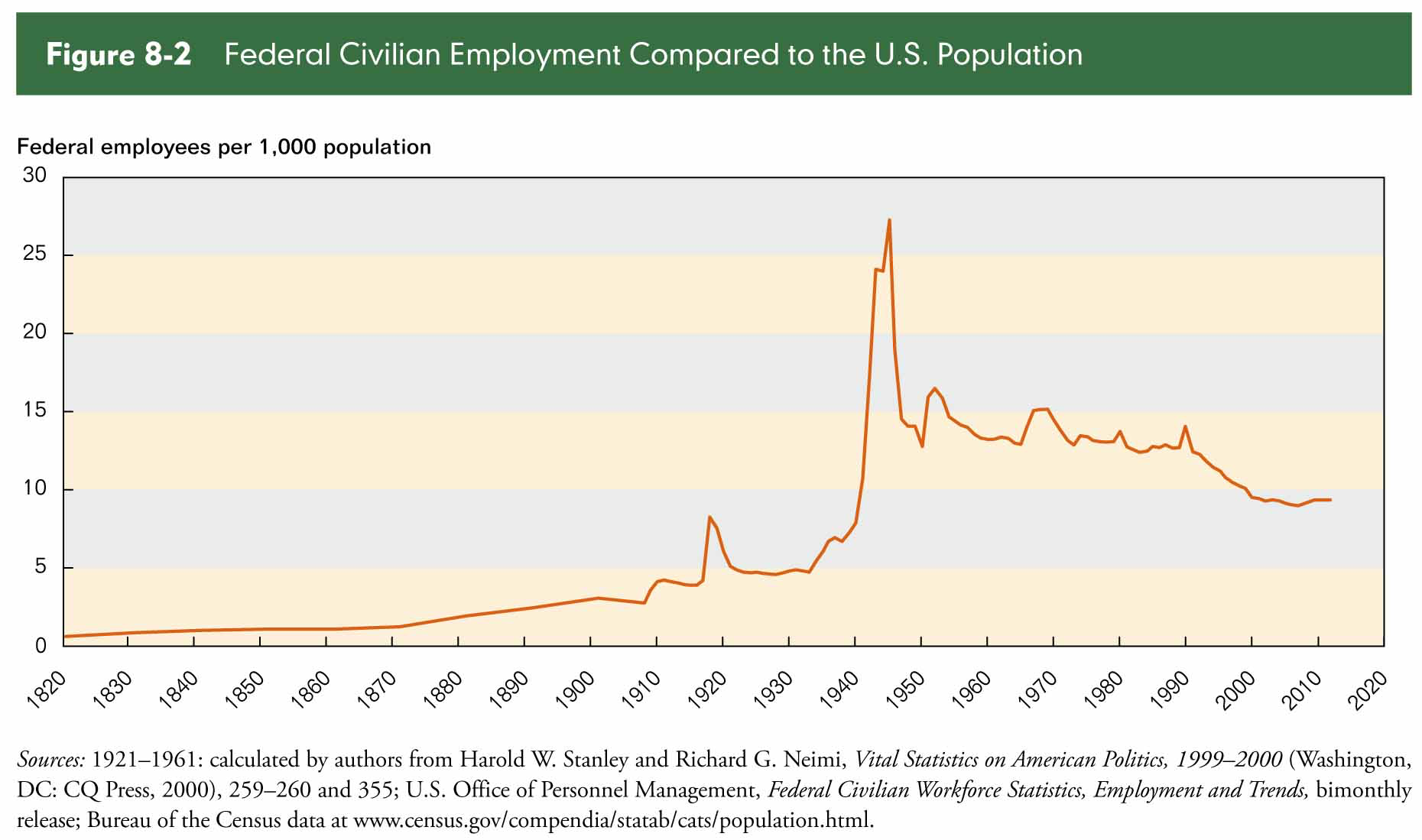
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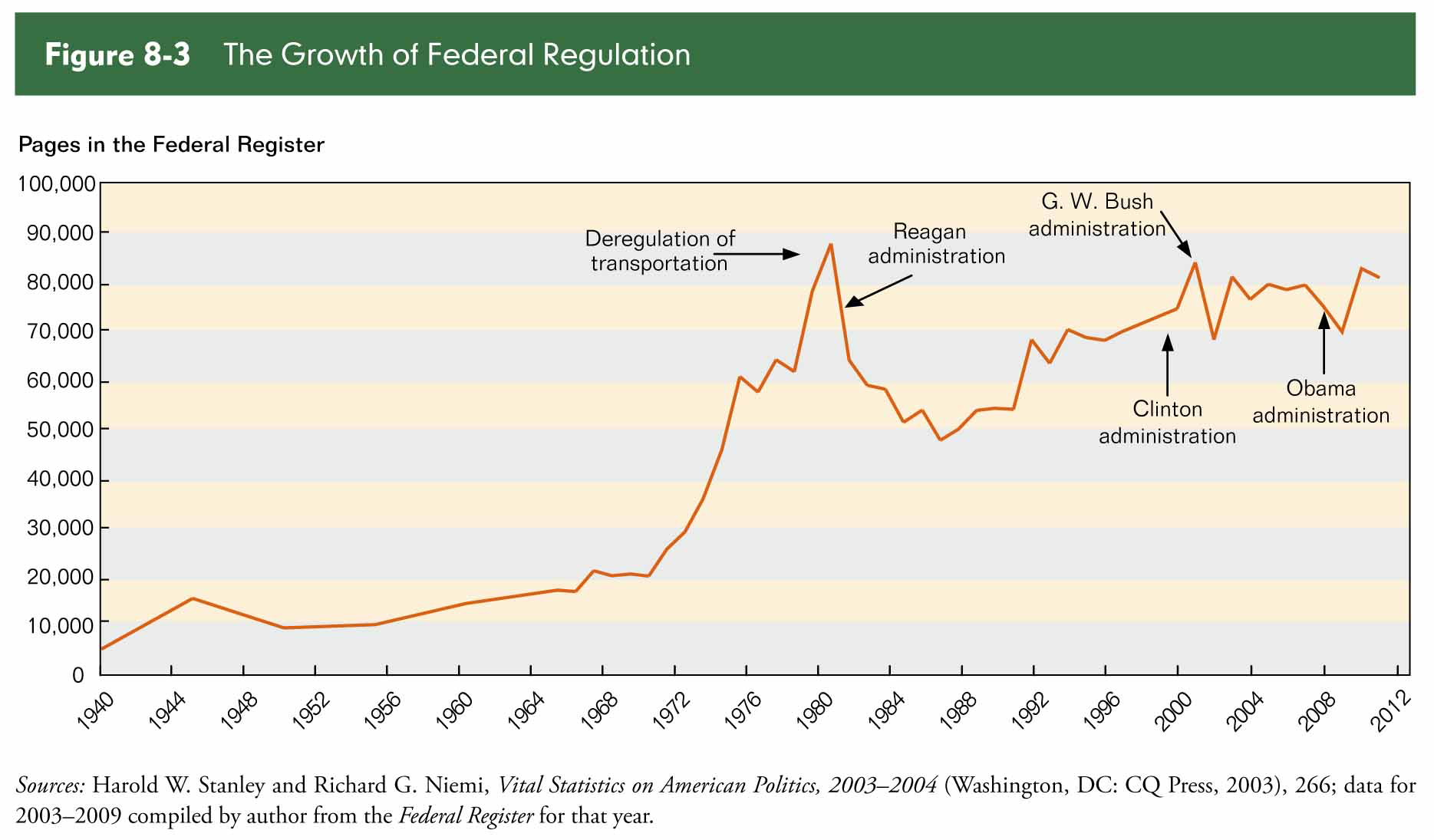
Samuel Kernell, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck

Data Literacy Exercises: Chapter 8

Figures 8-1, 8-2, 8-3







**Learning Objectives:** 8.1 Describe the development of the federal bureaucracy over time. 8.2 Relate when the federal government grows most quickly, and why.

As the Figures in Chapter 8 indicate, we can gain different assessments of the growth of the federal bureaucracy depending on how that growth is measured. By any measure, federal civilian employment grew in the 20th century, reaching historic highs during WWII (defense employment obviously also reached its peak then). After the downturn following the war, the number of civilian employees grew through the next several decades before declining in the 1990s, although not back down to post war levels (8-1). The U.S. population also grew during this period and, as a proportion of the population (indicated by employees per 1,000 population), federal civilian employment actually dropped or, to be more precise, did not keep up with population growth (8-2).

Government regulation has not decreased. One indicator, the number of pages of regulations in the Federal Register, has grown dramatically since the 1960s. Many of these regulations are carried out by nonfederal employees—states, localities and private contractors (8-3). One other way to measure the size of the federal government is by chronicling how much is spent. As with Figures 8-1 and 8-2, determining how much the budget has grown is again premised on how we measure budgets. The following figure depicts the growth in the federal budget (all categories including defense), but does so in different ways.

By most measures, federal expenditures have gone up in the postwar period, but how much is different based upon whether or not we make some form of adjustment to the figures. After WWII, actual federal outlays increased almost yearly (blue line), steeply advancing after 1970 until leveling off after 2010. The costs of goods and services, of course, also went up during this time period. Adjusting for inflation (orange line), we still notice an increase, but not as dramatic as without that adjustment.

The nation’s gross domestic product (the aggregate of all goods and services produced) increased dramatically during this period. As a percentage of GDP, the growth in federal spending has basically been level (green line), although even a difference of one or two percentage points can influence other economic factors. But basically, federal spending has just kept up with the nation’s overall, economic growth. In 2014, federal outlays constituted 20.3 per cent of GDP, not far above the post war mean average of 19.3%. One measure, however, does demonstrate growth. The outlays per capita, even adjusted for inflation, have grown fairly consistently between 1947 ($2,746) and 2011 ($12,111).

Moral of the story? Different organizations may use different growth measures to suit their ideological agenda.

Sources: Total outlays and outlays as a percent of GDP were derived from data from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), “Historical tables,” Table 1.3, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals>.

Outlays per capita were developed by George Mason University: Mercatus Center

<http://mercatus.org/publication/rise-capita-federal-spending>. Figures are for 1945-2014 only.

Incidentally, although there has been growth in federal non-defense civilian employment since the end of World War II, civilian growth within the Department of Defense has actually been negative. Combined, the positive and negative growth has pretty much canceled each other out, indicating a much more consistent federal civilian employment force over time.

Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management: <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/data-analysis-documentation/federal-employment-reports/historical-tables/executive-branch-civilian-employment-since-1940/>.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Based on Figures 8-1 and 8-2, which of the following statements is most true?

a. After WWII, both the number of federal civilian employees and the number per 1000 population have increased.

\*b. After WWII, the number of federal civilian employees often increased but the number per 1000 population usually decreased.

c. After WWII, both the number of federal civilian employees and the number per 1000 population have decreased.

d. After WWII, the number of federal civilian employees has generally decreased but the number per 1000 population has increased.

@ Feedback: Federal civilian employment generally increased between 1946 and the late 1980s, but not in relation to U.S. population growth.

2. Based on Figures 8-1 and 8-2, most of the growth in federal civilian employment occurred in the 20th century.

\*a. True

b. False

@ Feedback: By any measure, employment figures for the 20th century, even discounting the rapid increase caused by WWII, is much higher in the 20th century than in the 19th.

3. Measured by the number of pages in the Federal register (8-3), the steepest increase in the growth of federal regulation occurred during the 1990s.

a. True

\*b. False

@ Feedback: Although growth is evident in the 1990s, it pales in comparison to the 1970s.

**Based on two figures in the analytics write-up:**

4. Which figure offers the poorest evidence for the growth of federal spending post WWII?

a. Total Outlays

b. Spending Per Capita

c. Total Outlays

\*d. %GDP

@ Feedback: Although even small increases in %GDP can represent billions of dollars, federal spending as a %GDP has been the most stable over this time period. All other measures have increased, especially ‘Per Capita’ expenditures. If that measure had not been adjusted for inflation, the rise would be even more dramatic.

5. Both defense and non-defense civilian federal employment has increased since the end of WWII.

a. True

\*b. False

@ Feedback: With the exception of a few critical periods, defense civilian employment has declined, especially since the 1990s. Non-defense civilian employment has generally increased. Of course, civilian employment at the state and local level have increased at a faster rate (see Figure 3-4), much of it do to federal mandates given to the states and localities for administration.