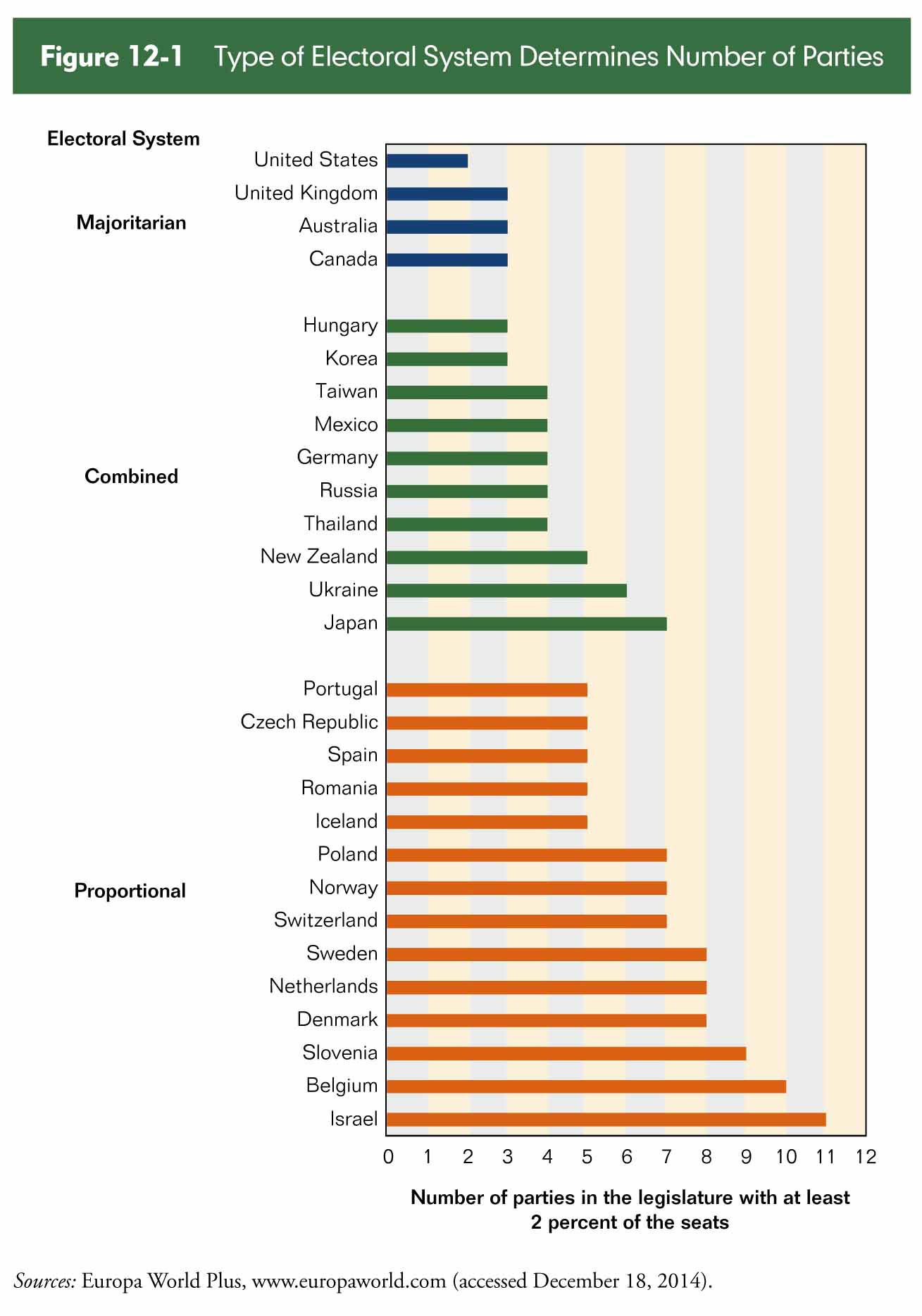
The Logic of American Politics, 7th Edition

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

Data Literacy Exercises: Chapter 12

Figure 12-1:



**Learning objective:** 12.2 Summarize the development and evolution of the party systems.

Generically, the word “party system” refers to the rules that help determine and constrain party competition in any country at any time, including the issues that frame that competition. As the textbook mentions, a very important rule has to do with how votes are aggregated into determining which parties have a chance of winning seats in a national legislature. Single member districting, winner take all systems, especially those that only require a plurality to win, tend to produce the fewest viable parties. The more that party success is based on proportional representation (seats received are roughly proportional to one’s vote), the higher the number of parties. The major reason underlying this trend is the fact that individuals are more likely to consider their vote wasted when only one party can win a seat or seats in any electoral district. The likelihood that other than two parties have any chance of securing a victory is slim (see exceptions in “Third Party Blues”), and, as most citizens realize this, few will vote for candidates of that party. The lack of third party success then becomes a self-fulfilling, perpetual prophecy. Under a pure proportional representation scheme, even a small percentage of votes can translate into winning one or more seats and, as the number of parties that do so increases, even small third parties have a chance of wielding some power as their legislative seats become needed for any major party to form a governing coalition.

The type of system also influences voter turnout. Unless voting is compulsory (individuals can be fined for not voting), as it is in Australia among other countries, turnout will tend to be lower in winner-take-all systems than in proportional ones. To understand this we once again turn to the notion of a wasted vote. In, for example, a pure majoritarian system (50%+1 to win), there is only one threshold of victory. Unless the election is perceived to be close, a potential voter deems her single vote to be of little consequence. It does not matter if one’s preferred party’s candidate is expected to win or lose by 20 percent or more, a single or even a percent or two increase in the vote will not matter. In a purely proportional system, however, once a minimum threshold for entry is obtained, even a percent or less of an increase in a party’s vote will produce at least an extra legislative seat. In essence, there are multiple thresholds for victory.

The following graph displays the mean average turnout for all countries within a given category. As expected, turnout averages highest in proportional representation systems. The highest average turnout can be found in those 17 countries with proportional representation and compulsory voting (71.5%). Turnout in winner-take-all systems is lower, but not as low as in mixed systems where a combination of rules most likely adds to uncertainty over how a vote counts. Over 80 percent of voting age Australians, subject to compulsory voting rules, turned out for their latest parliamentary elections.

Source: Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), “Voter Turnout,” <http://www.idea.int/vt/>. Data are for latest year in which election took place (2010-2014).

Although third parties are generally disadvantaged in winner-take-all systems (“Third-Party Blues”), third parties that are regionally concentrated can do fairly well, as their strength is packed into certain districts allowing for them to capture seats, especially in plurality systems. In a three-way race, even a 40% vote can turn into a seat if the two major parties split the remaining vote 30/30. For an example of how regional concentration can increase the chance of victory, see redistricting graphs in this web section’s discussion of Chapter 6.

Regional concentration also means that third party votes are not wasted much in districts where that party has limited or no chance of victory. Our most successful third party was the Republicans, whose concentration in many Northeast and Midwestern districts allowed them to supplant both the existing Whig and Democratic parties. Even Abraham Lincoln, after the GOP displaced the Whig Party as one of the two major parties, was able to win a majority of the mainly winner-take-all based Electoral Votes by securing only 39.7% of the vote nationally, but wasting no votes in the South where he was not even on the ballot. In only two states with only 7 electoral votes was his victory secured because the three otherwise regional Democratic candidates split their party’s vote. Similarly, in the first part of the 20th century, candidates of various Socialist Parties performed fairly well in local and even congressional elections in areas with high concentrations of eastern Europeans for whom “Socialism” was not a politically unacceptable choice.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. According to Figure 12-1 and the chart on turnout in this section, which statement is the most true?

a. Winner-take-all systems tend to produce fewer operative parties but higher turnout than systems based on proportional representation.

b. Winner-take-all systems tend to produce more operative parties but lower turnout than systems based on proportional representation.

\*c. Winner-take-all systems tend to produce fewer operative parties and lower turnout than systems based on proportional representation.

d. Winner-take-all systems tend to produce more operative parties and higher turnout than systems based on proportional representation.

@ Feedback: Electoral system type influences both the number of parties and turnout in the direction listed in C. The number of parties may have a separate effect on turnout as voters will be faced with fewer choices in predominantly two-party systems, thus making it more difficult to find a party whose views are proximate to their own.

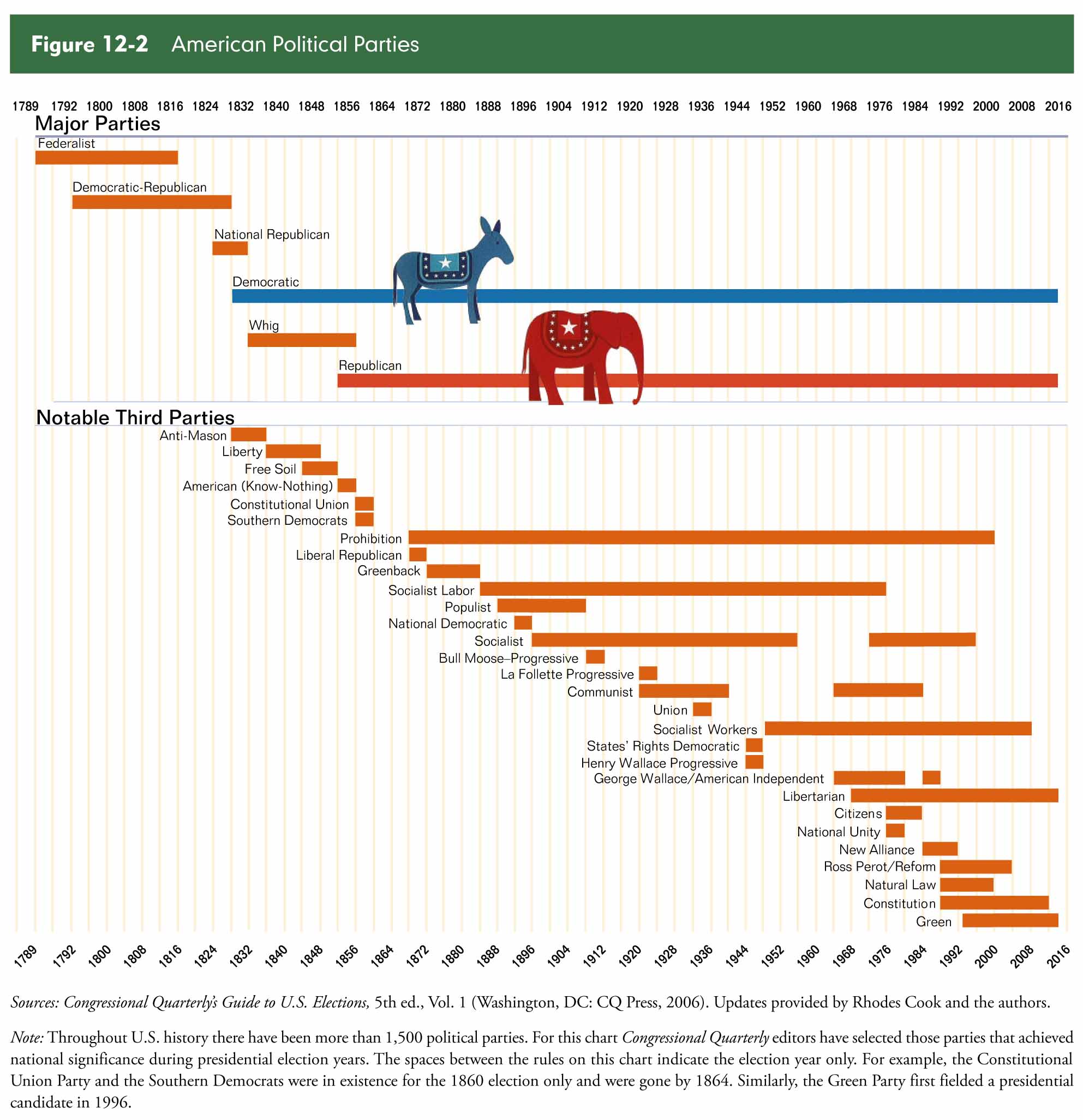
2. Third parties area always disadvantaged by the dynamics of “winner-take-all” politics.

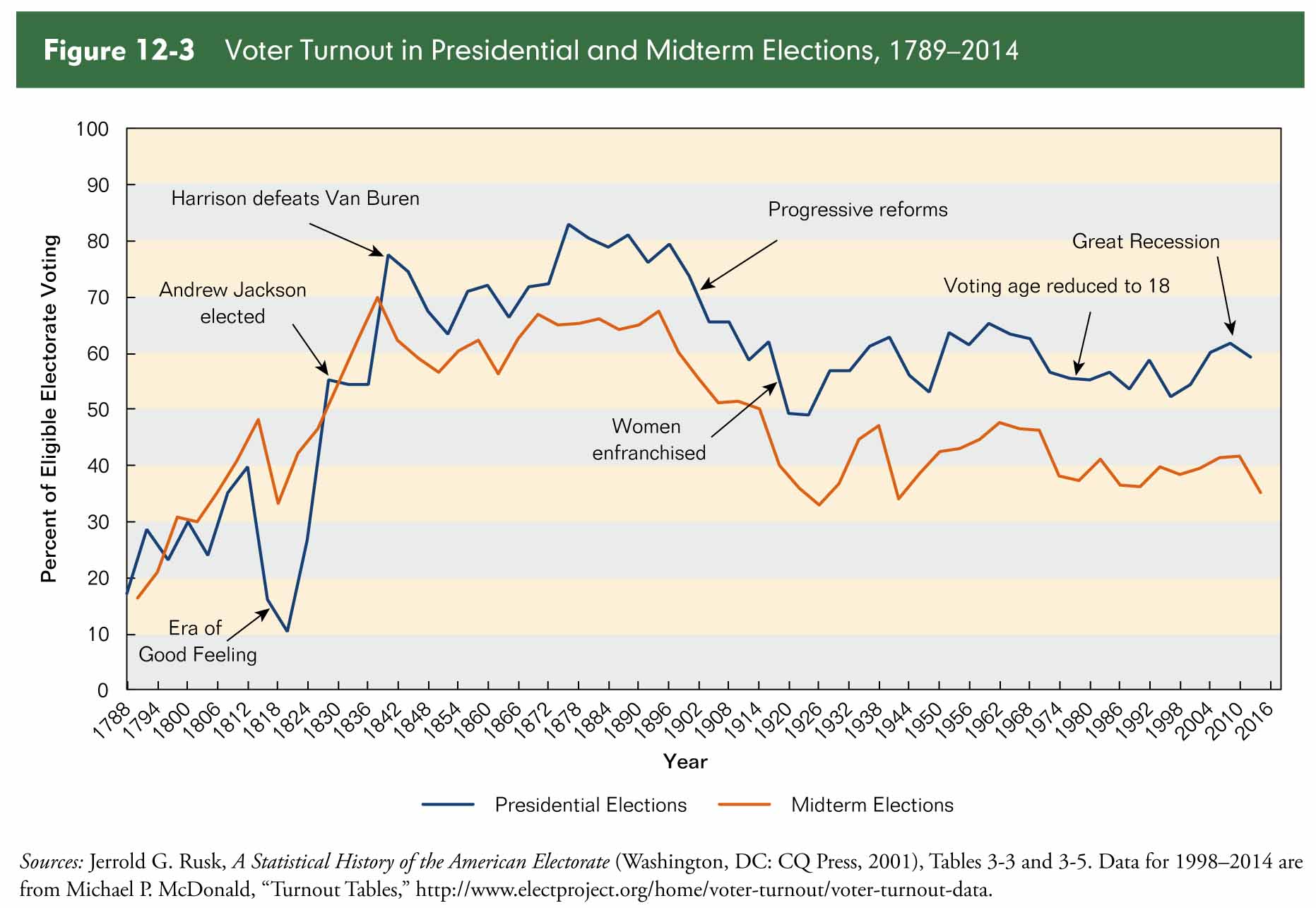
a. True

\*b. False

@ Feedback: Third parties that are regionally concentrated can do fairly well, as their strength is packed into certain districts allowing for them to capture seats, especially in plurality systems.

Figure 12-2 and 12-3:

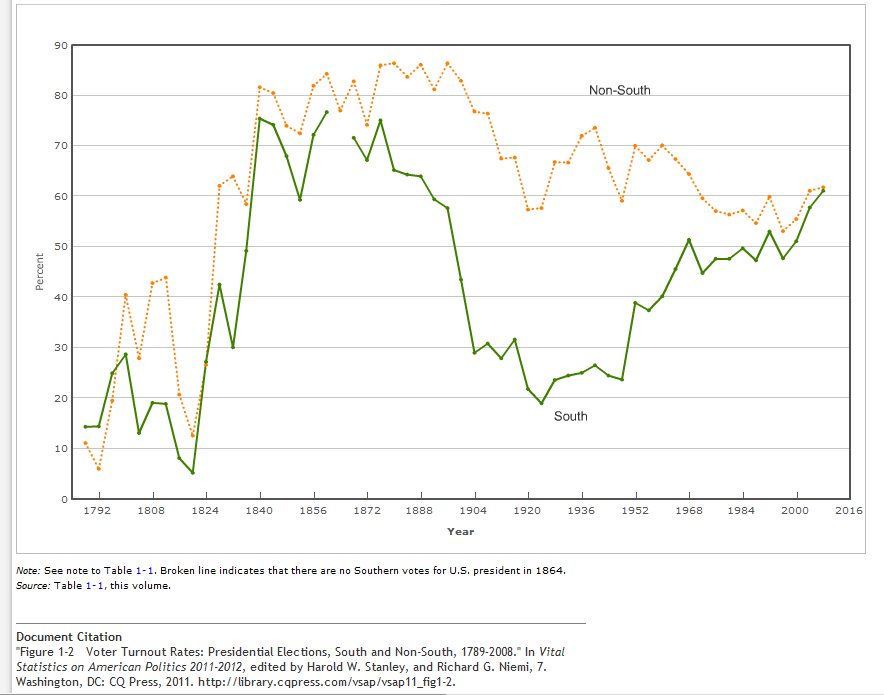




**Learning objective:** 12.2 Summarize the development and evolution of the party systems.

The mainly two-party system has gone through several changes, not only in terms of which party wins, but also the issues and agenda over which the parties debate. This is highlighted well in the text. One additional important change in the electoral structure of the party systems has to do with the level of competition and turnout. As Figure 12-3 demonstrates, turnout in national elections was rather low before the second party system was well underway. National politics was not originally viewed as all that important and, unlike the current era, turnout trended higher in races for state and local office. The mobilizing abilities of party organizations was also only at its seminal state of development. As party organizations developed into the entrepreneurial style of the third party system, turnout increased to a level that we would now envy. From 1840 to 1896, turnout during presidential election years averaged over 74 percent, 63 percent in midterms. Since 1900, turnout has averaged only 58 and 42 percent, respectively. The rapid decline in turnout after the election of 1896 was somewhat due to the decrease in the power of party organizations to mobilize voters, but it was even more affected by the decline in the level of competition. Throughout most of the post 1840 nineteenth century, elections were competitive at almost every level and in most states. Even during the Civil War, the Democratic Party was able to reclaim many northern state legislative and gubernatorial seats and capture a very respectable 45 percent of the presidential vote (remember, the states that constituted the Confederacy could no longer vote in presidential elections), including 45.6 percent in Lincoln’s home state of Illinois.

The dynamics of the election of 1896 ushered in a period of low competition in most of the country. The southern states became increasingly one party Democratic, while much of the north became a safe Republican haven. Turnout dropped quickly, more so than the fabled post 1960s drop discussed in Chapter 11, especially in the south, where, in addition to a lack of competition, blacks and many poor whites had their voting rights restricted.



**Questions to Consider:**

1. Although we tend to concentrate on the decline in turnout in the 1960s and 1970s, more dramatic changes occurred at the beginning of the 19th and 20th centuries.

\*a. True

b. False

@ Feedback: Both because of increased competition and party organization, turnout increased dramatically during the first half of the 19th century, but, as competition and the abilities of party organizations to mobilize voters decreased after 1896, turnout declined.

2. Which of the following is most true?

a. After the election of 1896, voter turnout decreased throughout the country equally

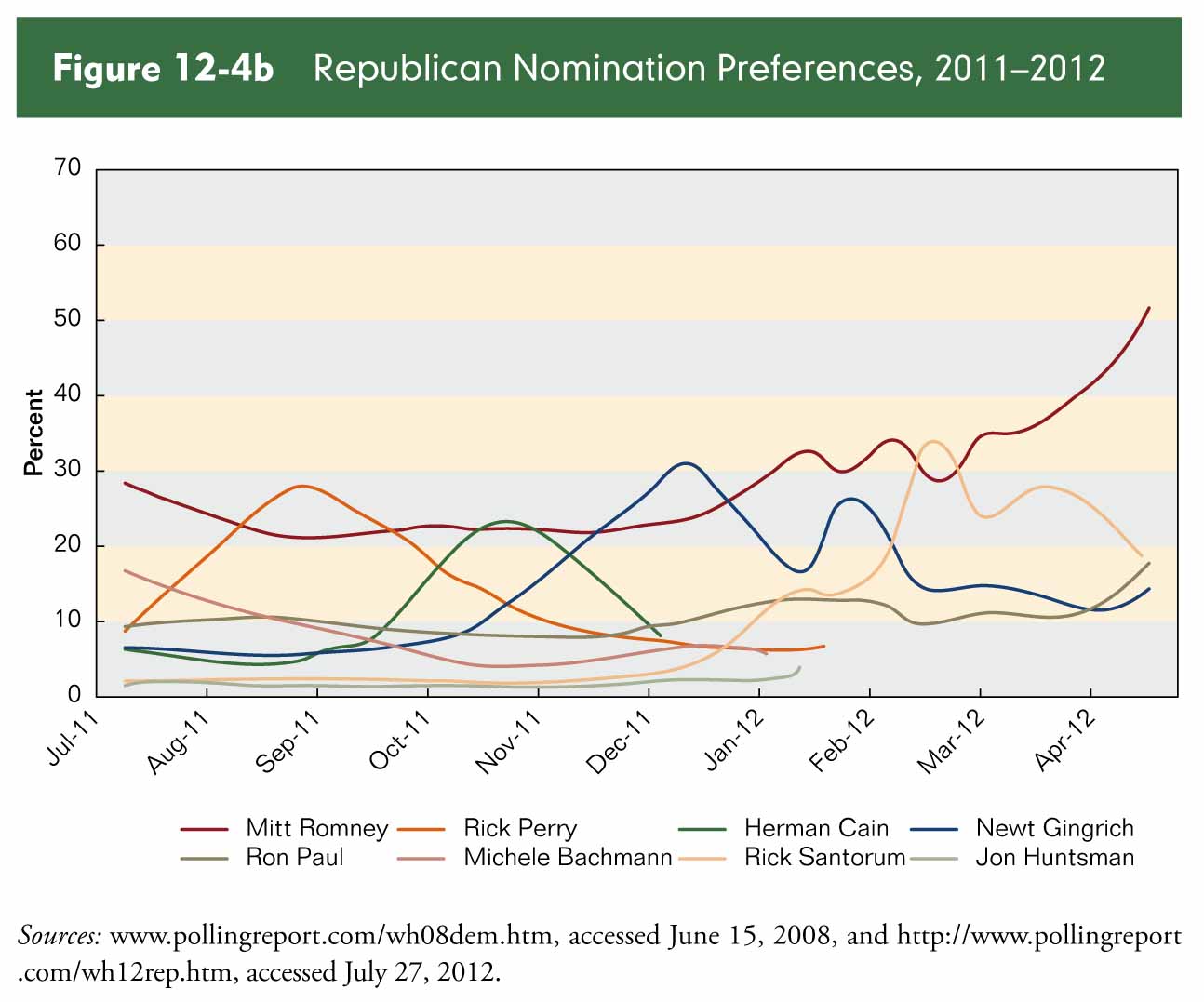
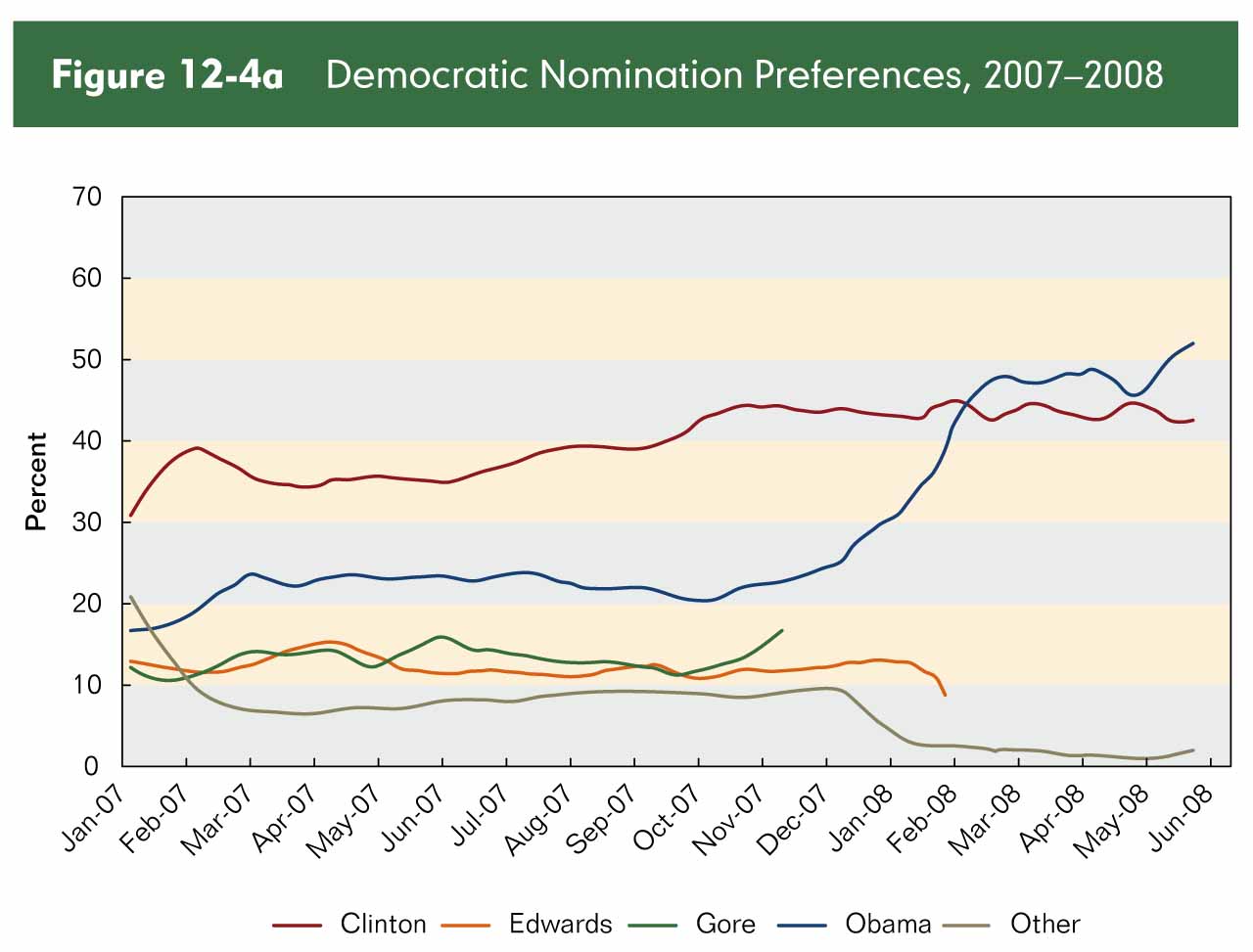
b. after the election of 1896, turnout decreased in the northern states, less so in the south

\*c. after the election of 1896, turnout decreased in the southern states, less so in the north

d. turnout increased after 1896

@ Feedback: Declining competition in both regions depressed the motivation to turnout in both regions, but more so in the south which became a virtual one-party area. Additionally (see Chapter 4), southern states passed a series of laws meant to disfranchise blacks and even some poor whites.

Figure 12-4a and 12-4b:

****

**Learning objective:** 12.2 Summarize the development and evolution of the party systems.

Presidential politics changed dramatically after 1968, as the Democratic and then Republican parties moved transformed their nomination process from one based upon the waning influence of party bosses to one determined by the votes of millions in direct primaries and popular caucuses. In 1968, only about 40 percent of convention delegates were chosen in primary states, and a number of them were not committed to vote as their state’s citizens had determined. By 1980, that figure had increased to more than 75 percent. In 1968, Vive-President Hubert Humphrey was able to secure the Democratic presidential nomination without entering a single primary, the last candidate to do so in either major party. Primaries, part of a litany of Progressive reforms, institutionally changed the dynamics of the more broadly defined party system by not only changing how competition would play out within each party but also, if indirectly, in further limiting what was already a fairly dismal third party effort in elections. Before the era of the direct primary (that actually dates back to the beginning of the 20th century for congressional and other offices with a brief experiment at the presidential level), insurgent candidates were more likely to run in or help create third parties, arguing that the party bosses were not allowing them a chance to capture a major party candidacy. With primaries becoming increasingly the norm, that moral justification diminished (a loss would be decided by voters, not party chieftains) and the opportunity to capture a major party nomination, albeit remote, created a tremendous incentive to compete within the primary structure. Southern Democrat George Wallace ran a third party campaign in 1968, but, at least until the assassination attempt on his life, ran within the Democratic primary contests of 1972. One could only surmise that, in an earlier era, “Tea Party” advocates would try to influence politics by engaging in third party politics, much as their Populist predecessors had done in the late 19th century—not work within the GOP primary structure. If nothing else, running for a major party nomination allows an otherwise insurgent candidate to become better known and advance his platform better than would be the case in a poorly financed and covered third party campaign. Texas congressman Ron Paul received little attention when he ran for president as a Libertarian candidate in 1988. After one debate performance in 2012, he raised more money for his Republican primary campaign than he had for his entire Libertarian bid.

The dynamics of presidential primaries can have significant impacts on who captures the nomination and how long it takes to do so. In the 2012 primaries, Republicans, much as Democrats did elsewhere, moved towards a type of proportional allocation of seats in most states. Up until 2008, GOP primary contests were more likely to operate on a winner-take-all basis. Senator John McCain’s candidacy was viewed as all but dead at the beginning of the primary season, especially after coming in a distant fourth in the Iowa Caucus balloting. But, as a moderate candidate competing against a number of candidates who split the more conservative vote, he was able to quickly move up in the delegate count even though he did not win majority of any state’s votes until February 5, Super Tuesday, and then only in 3 of the 21 states that held contests that day. By the end of Super Tuesday, however, he had captured almost 60% of the delegates he would need to win at the convention. In contrast, 2012 nominee W. Mitt Romney did not secure his nomination until May.

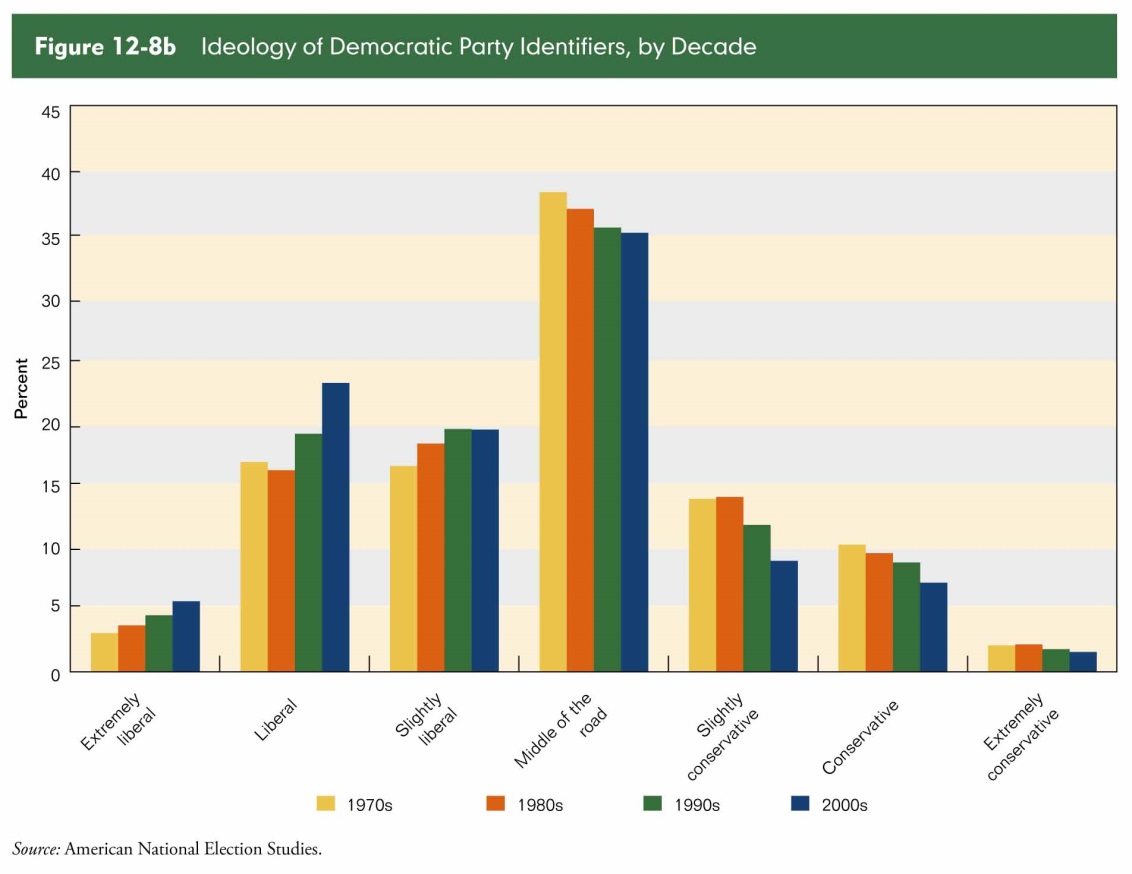
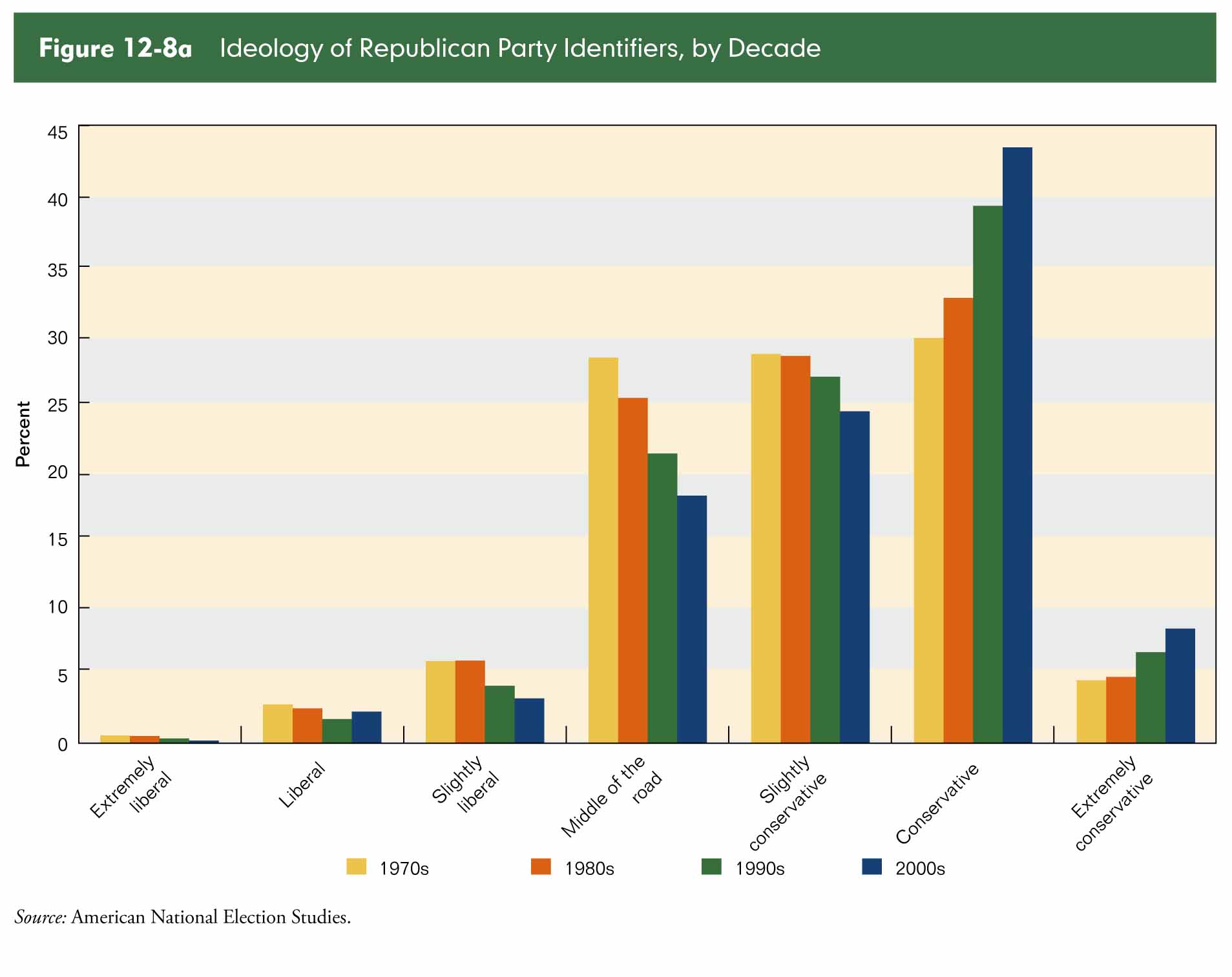
**Questions to Consider:**

1. The 2012 Republican presidential candidate (former Governor Romney) took longer to secure his party’s nomination than did the 2008 candidate (Senator McCain) partially because the Republicans had moved more to a proportional allocation of seats in 2012 from a system more based on winner-take-all.

\*a. True

b. False

@ Feedback: Senator McCain was able to quickly mount up delegates in early primaries even though he seldom won a majority of the caucus or primary vote. He did, however, win a plurality and most of the delegates against a field of more conservative challengers. Governor Romney needed to slowly increase his delegate count, even in states that he won handily, as the delegates were more proportionately allocated.

Figure 12-8a and 12-8b:****

**Learning objective:** 12.3 Discuss the revival of partisanship over the last two decades and how modern parties are structured.

Discussions of the support of demographic, ideological and issue groups for each of the parties can often be confusing. One can try to predict the probability that a member of a certain group will support a certain party. In doing so, we are trying to develop a causal link. We already discussed (Chapter 10) the fact that, since the 1960s, women were more likely than men to affiliate with the Democratic Party and support its candidates. In a more dramatic comparison, black Americans were much more likely to affiliate with the Democratic Party in 2012 than were whites, presumably because they felt that the Republican Party was less sensitive to the issue positions they cared about most. The figures presented on p. 512 and Figures 12-8a and 12-8b should not be read in this manner. 48% of liberals did not vote Democratic. Rather, 48% of Democratic voters considered themselves to be ideologically liberal. Figure 12-8a does not indicate that “Extremely Conservative” individuals were unlikely to identify with the Republican Party, just that they have not made up as much of the GOP coalition as have other conservatives who are more numerous in the voting age population. This is what is often called a profile.

We are not stating the probability with which individuals with certain views will align with Democrats or Republicans. Rather, we are stating what proportion of overall support for each party comes from individuals with certain views. The importance of profiles is that it measures the relative importance of each group for each party. That relevance is partially a function of the likelihood that members of each group will affiliate with a certain party, but more so a function of the relative size of each group within the potential electorate. A certain group may support a certain party over 90 percent of the time, but if that group constitutes less than one percent of the electorate, then its significance on the outcome (and the party’s interest in catering to their needs) is at best minimal, unless that group is concentrated in a handful of electoral districts, elections in those districts are exceptionally competitive, or the propensity of that group to engage in electoral activity, including contributing money to campaigns, is well above the norm.

Let’s look at some figures from 2012 to further make this point.

Source: 2012 American National Election Study

Percentage of each group that affiliates with each party:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  | DEM | REP |
| Non-Hispanic Black | |  |  | 76.9 | 14.4 |
| Non-Hispanic-White | |  |  | 28.9 | 62.6 |
| Latino |  |  |  | 54.4 | 15.1 |
| Religion Important | |  |  | 31.1 | 59.8 |
| Allow immigrants to stay without penalty | | | | 50 | 9.9 |
| Support Tea Party | |  |  | 7.5 | 89.7 |

Percentage within each party with group characteristics:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  | DEM | REP |
| Non-Hispanic Black | |  |  | 13.9 | 1.8 |
| Non-Hispanic-White | |  |  | 59.9 | 89.2 |
| Latino |  |  |  | 25.6 | 4.9 |
| Religion Important | |  |  | 56.2 | 73.6 |
| Allow immigrants to stay without penalty | | | | 29.8 | 4.1 |
| Support Tea Party | |  |  | 5.4 | 41 |

Example: 76.9% of all non-Hispanic Blacks identify with the Democratic Party, but they only comprise 13.9% of their identifiers. 59.8% of those who consider religion to be important identify with the Republican Party, but they comprise 73.6% of their identifiers. Of course, as “core constituents,” those most likely to come from their party’s ideological extremes vote in primaries, we can understand why GOP candidates, even more than Democrats, need to discuss religious values in their campaigns.

The following chart shows the percentage of each ideological group that identifies with each party. Note the dramatic difference in appearance from Figures 12-8a and 12-8b. “Extreme Conservatives” overwhelmingly identify with the GOP (94% do) but, as they only constitute 5.3% of the total sampled population, they only comprise 8.7% of all Republican identifiers.

Source: 2012 American National Election Studies

**Questions to Consider:**

1. According to the table on p. 512, delegates are generally more likely to hold liberal (Democrats) and conservative (Republican) positions than are their respective parties voters, and that difference is more consistent on the Republican side.

\*a. True

b. False

@ Feedback: Republican delegates are more likely to hold conservative viewpoints on eleven measures (“Moderate” is not counted). They are less likely to count “illegal immigration” as a serious issue than are Republican voters. Democratic delegates are more liberal on nine. They are less likely to classify themselves as “liberals,” believe in environmental protection, and promote stricter gun control laws than Democratic voters. On some issues, delegates are much more ideologically pure than their respective voters. Democratic delegates are much more liberal on abortion, Republican delegates much more conservative on health care and gun control. Both sets of delegates are more likely to hold ideologically different views on the 2001 Bush tax cuts.

2. According to the tables in this section (Who Supports Which Party?), non-Hispanic blacks overwhelmingly identify with the Democratic Party and constitute a majority of all Democrats.

a. True

\*b. False

@ Feedback: This is a classic example of looking at percentages two different ways (causal link versus profile). 76.9% of all non-Hispanic Blacks identify with the Democratic Party, but they only comprise 13.9% of Democratic identifiers because non-Hispanic blacks make up a small proportion of the entire electorate.

3. According to Figures 12-8a and 12-b, between the 1970s to the 2000s, party identifiers have become more ideological (liberal for Democrats, conservative for Republicans).

\*a. True

b. False

@ Feedback: Republicans are more likely to consider themselves “conservative” or “extremely” conservative, Democrats “liberal” or “extremely liberal.” Both have been losing their middle ground. the change seems more pronounced on the Republican side.

4. From the 1970s to the 2000s, Democrats have been less of a consistent liberal party than Republicans are a conservative party.

\*a. True

b. False

@ Feedback: Although there is variation across decades, Republicans tend to associate much more heavily on their ideological (conservative) side. Democrats have a higher proportion claiming “middle of the road” status, are less heavily weighed on the “liberal” side (than Republicans are on the “conservative”; side), and have a higher proportion claiming conservative leanings (than Republicans do liberal leanings).

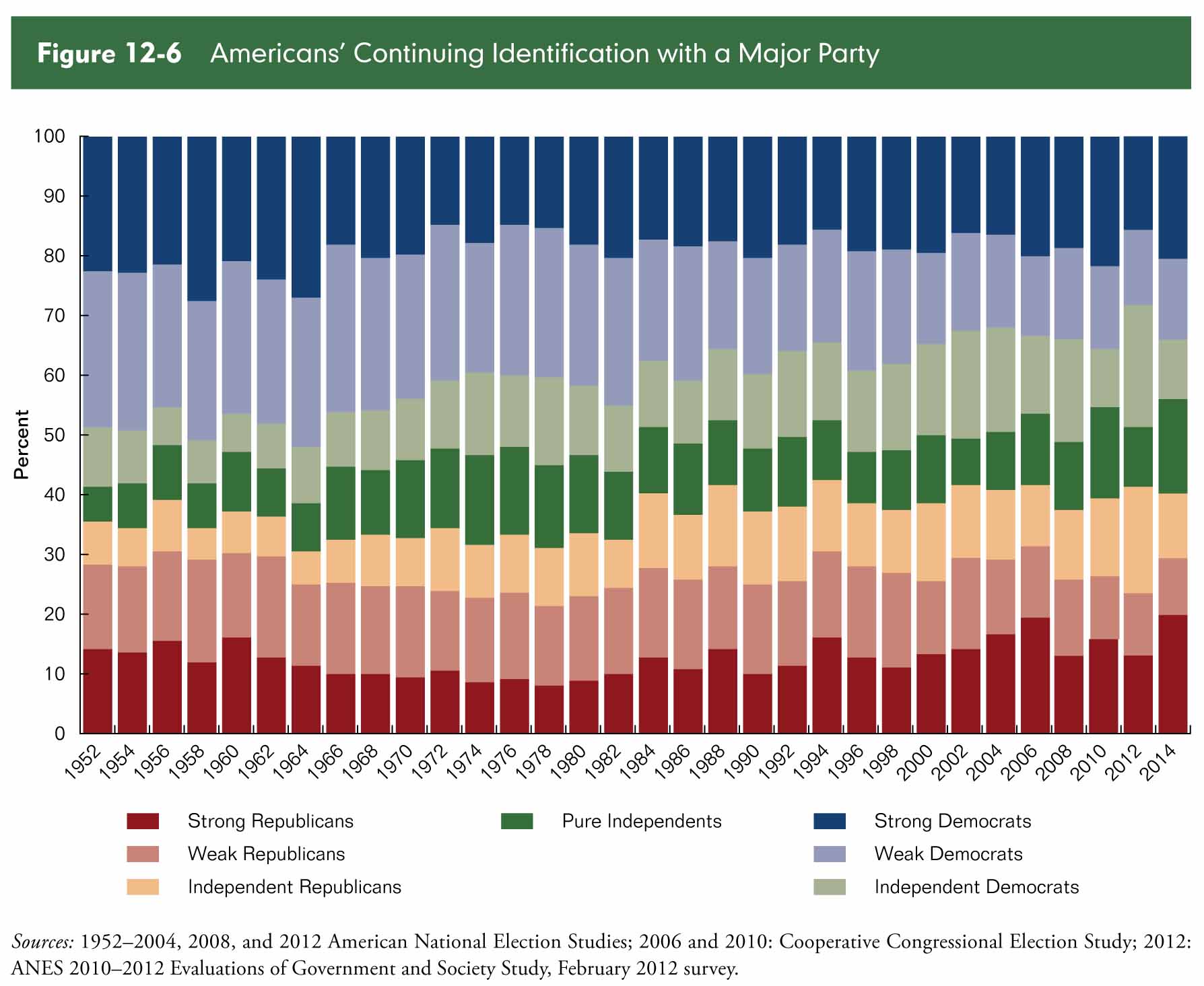
5. Comparing Figure 12-8a with the figure in this section (Partisan Affiliation by Ideology), those who classify themselves as “extremely conservative” are the most and overwhelmingly likely to classify themselves as Republicans, but only a small percentage of Republicans classify themselves as “extremely conservative.”

\*a. True

b. False

@ Feedback: Again, as only a small proportion of survey respondents classify themselves as “extremely conservative,” they don’t make up a large part of the coalition of either party.

Figure 12-6:

****

**Learning objective:** 12.3 Discuss the revival of partisanship over the last two decades and how modern parties are structured.

There was a time when many political analysts bemoaned or celebrated the decline of party. Certainly, the ability of the old, local party machines to control politics had diminished. Part of the appraisal, however, came from an investigation of the decline of the electorates’ move to a more “independent” stance. One’s view of whether or not “independence” had grown was dependent on how one categorized data.

The data normally used for assessing the electorates’ partisanship comes from the American national election Studies that have continuously run election surveys since 1952. Every survey asks two sets of questions. The first requires respondents to choose from among three valid responses for their partisan affiliation: Democratic, Independent, Republican. If a party is chosen, respondents are then asked if they are strong or weak partisans. If independents, they are asked if they tend to lean more towards the Democratic or Republican Parties. The combination of the two questions creates what every student of U.S. politics will recognize as the partisan 7-point scale:

Strong Democrat

Weak Democrat

Independent-Leaning Democrat

Pure Independent

Independent-Leaning Republican

Weak Republican

Strong Republican

Whether or not the country has become more independent and less partisan depends on how one classifies “Independent Leaners.” If, adhering to the original question, leaners are considered independents, then overall partisanship has indeed declined. But there is much literature that argues that these independent leaners are merely rhetorical independents and that their behavior uncovers their partisan inclinations (see Figure 11-1).\* The following two graphs replicate the ANES time series data, first including leaners as independents, the second including them as partisans. The first shows a dramatic rise in independence since the 1950s, with independents sometimes surpassing both Democratic and Republican identifiers separately. But with leaners treated as partisans, the level of independence has not grown much at all. Not that, with competitive elections, a 10 percent level of independence is inconsequential (although remember that independents are least likely to vote), but the more important change has been with the changing balance between Democratic and Republican identifiers. The party isn’t over after all.

Source: American National Election Studies, 1952-2012. Only presidential election years are displayed.

\*See Bruce Keith et al. (1992) *The Myth of the Independent Voter,* University of California Press and John R. Petrocik (1974) “An analysis of intransitivities in the index of party identification,” *Political Methodology* 1, 31–47.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Which of the following is most true?

a. From 1952 to 2102 the proportion of those claiming to be independents has gone up to sometimes plurality status regardless of how we classify “independent leaners.”

b. From 1952 to 2102 the proportion of those claiming to be independents has gone up to sometimes plurality status only if we consider “independent leaners” to be partisans.

\*c. From 1952 to 2102 the proportion of those claiming to be independents has gone up to sometimes plurality status only if we consider “independent leaners” to be independents.

@ Feedback: If we treat “independent leaners” as partisans (which their voting patterns would suggest), the level of independence has been fairly stable and low during this period. The major change has been in the closing of the gap between the more numerous Democrats and Republicans during the 1980s and 1990s.