Introduction

Presidential elections in the United States are partly ritual, a reaffirmation of our democratic values. But they are far more than just ritual. The presidency confers a great deal of power, and that power has expanded over time, particularly during most of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. It is precisely because of this immense power that presidential elections have at times played major roles in determining public policy, and in some cases have altered the course of American history.

The 1860 election, which brought Abraham Lincoln and the Republicans to power and ousted a divided Democratic Party, focused on whether slavery should be extended to the western territories. After Lincoln's election, eleven southern states attempted to secede from the Union, the Civil War broke out, and, ultimately, the U.S. government abolished slavery completely. Thus an antislavery plurality—Lincoln received only 40 percent of the popular vote—set in motion a chain of events that freed some four million black Americans.

In the 1896 election, Republican William McKinley defeated the Democrat and Populist William Jennings Bryan, thereby beating back the challenge of western and agricultural interests to the prevailing financial and industrial power of the East. Although Bryan mounted a strong campaign, winning 47 percent of the popular vote to McKinley's 51 percent, the election set a clear course for a policy of high tariffs and the continuation of the gold standard for American money.

Lyndon B. Johnson's 1964 landslide over Republican Barry M. Goldwater provided the clearest set of policy alternatives of any election in the twentieth century.[1] Goldwater offered "a choice, not an echo," advocating far more conservative social and economic policies than Johnson. When Johnson received 61 percent of the popular vote to Goldwater's 38 percent, he saw his victory as a mandate for his Great Society programs, the most far-reaching social legislation since World War II. The election also seemed to offer a clear choice between escalating American involvement in Vietnam and restraint. But America's involvement in Vietnam expanded after Johnson's election, leading to growing opposition to Johnson within the Democratic Party, and four years later he did not seek reelection.

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Only the future can determine the ultimate importance of the 2012 election. Some scholars argue that American elections have become less important with time, and there is some truth to their arguments.[2] Yet elections do offer important choices on public policy, choices that may affect the course of governance—even if only in the short term.

Despite the continued, decade-long presence of American combat forces in Afghanistan, the 2012 presidential election focused mainly on domestic policy issues. Incumbent President Barack Obama was elected four years earlier in the midst of the most serious economic crisis since the Great Depression. Within a month of his inauguration, Obama signed a $787 billion economic stimulus bill aimed at offsetting the deepening worldwide recession. His administration also chose to use government funds to purchase a 60 percent equity stake in the automobile giant General Motors, allowing the company to reorganize under Chapter 11 bankruptcy while keeping it operational (and its more than 123,000 North American employees working).[3] The Obama administration also provided an additional $6 billion loan to Chrysler so the company could be removed from bankruptcy and sold to the Italian automaker Fiat. For his part, the Republican nominee for president in 2012, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, argued that Obama's economic programs had done more to stifle economic growth than to stimulate it. Growth had been exceedingly slow during Obama's first term, and unemployment, which had reached 10 percent in the fall of 2009, remained above 8 percent for most the campaign season. Romney espoused cuts in government spending, reduced taxes for all income levels, and cuts in the corporate tax rate—traditional Republican economic positions—to spur the economy and stimulate job growth.

Health care reform was another domestic issue that divided the candidates. The central legislative achievement of Obama's first term was the passage of the Affordable Care Act of 2010, commonly known as Obamacare. The legislation marks the most significant change to the nation's health care system since the creation of Medicare and Medicaid during the 1960s. It mandates that every individual who is not currently insured or already covered under a government insurance program buy a private health insurance policy or pay a penalty (a "tax," according the U.S. Supreme Court). To lower the costs of policies, Obamacare promotes the creation of state-level health insurance exchanges to foster competition between insurance providers and grants subsidies to low-income individuals and families to offset costs. Romney labeled Obama's health care reforms a federal takeover of health insurance and pledged to repeal most of the law if elected. Romney's opposition to Obamacare struck some as a bit contrived, however, since the Affordable Care Act was modeled on a 2006 Massachusetts health insurance reform that Governor Romney had signed into law. In fact, the Massachusetts reform was informally known as Romneycare. Yet Romney argued that the president's plan overstepped federal authority and imposed a one-size-fits-all approach on the states. Romney sought to give states

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latitude in crafting their own health care reform plans while encouraging both a shift to high-deductible private policies and more widespread adoption of individual health savings accounts. Romney's plan would have provided taxpayers with deductions on their federal taxes for most of their out-of-pocket health care expenses.

Like most presidential elections featuring the sitting president on the ballot, the 2012 election was cast as a referendum on the policies and performance of the incumbent. This should have advantaged Romney. No incumbent president in the post–World War II period had been reelected with unemployment as high as Obama experienced in his fourth year in office. And the president's health care reform law has never met with public approval; since its passage, surveys have shown that a clear plurality of Americans oppose the law.[4] Nevertheless, on November 6, 2012, Barack Obama was reelected president of the United States, defeating Mitt Romney 51.1 percent to 47.2 percent.

The 2012 election results would seem to be the product of electoral continuity. Not only was the incumbent president reelected, but also the House of Representatives remained under the control of the Republicans and the Senate stayed in the hands of the Democrats. The divided partisan control of government—a norm in modern politics—limits the prospects for significant policy changes during President Obama's second term. Indeed, at the time of our writing, interparty conflict (and a small degree of intraparty conflict among Republicans) and gridlock best characterize politics since the 2012 election. House Republicans voted more than forty times to repeal or delay all or part of Obamacare between 2012 and 2014—a purely symbolic effort, given that the Democrats held control of the Senate and White House.[5] And in September 2013, House Republicans forced a sixteen-day government shutdown and threatened default on U.S. debt in an effort to defund Obamacare, an effort that proved fruitless.[6] The prospects for major policy changes during the remainder of Obama's second term if anything seem even bleaker, given that the 2014 elections gave Republicans majority control in the Senate and strengthened their hand in the House.

Some argue, however, that the 2012 election was emblematic of a new political era, one in which demographic trends—specifically, a growing professional class and an increase in America's nonwhite population—are creating an "emerging Democratic majority."[7] The Democrats now routinely lose among white voters from nearly every demographic subgroup, yet the party has won the popular vote in five of the last six presidential elections, beginning with Bill Clinton's victory in 1992.

Is America in the midst of an electoral transformation? What were the sources of Obama's victory in 2012, and how do they differ from Democratic coalitions of the past? Does his victory signal a long-term negative trajectory for Republicans' chances in presidential elections? And are these electoral forces similar to those that structure congressional elections? These are the sorts of questions that we seek to answer here.

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This book continues a series of seventeen books that we began with a study of the 1980 elections. Our focus has always been both contemporary and historical. Thus, we offer an extensive examination of the 2012 presidential and 2012 and 2014 congressional campaigns and present a detailed analysis of individual-level voting behavior, examining those factors that lead citizens to vote as well as those that affect how they vote. We also aim to place the 2012 and 2014 elections in proper historical and analytical contexts.

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

Elections are at once both judgments on the issues of the day and the products of long-term changes in the relationship between the political parties and voters. Democrats' aspirations for an emerging electoral majority following their 2012 presidential victory are not unfounded. If one is to believe the projections of the U.S. Census Bureau, many of the social groups that have supported Democrats in recent elections, particularly Latinos, are growing as a percentage of the overall U.S. population. And turnout among these groups is also increasing. In fact, the 2012 election marked the first time in U.S. history that the turnout rate among African American voters exceeded that for white voters. Yet any talk of a long-term electoral advantage for the Democrats presupposes that current voters will maintain their allegiances to the two political parties and that group loyalties will be stable over time. This is a tenuous assumption.

The leaders of winning parties often make hyperbolic claims about the "historic" nature of their victories or assert that their win sare signs of impending electoral dominance. Indeed, in 2008, Democrats were exuberant over Obama's sizeable victory over John McCain and were even more pronounced in their claims of a bright Democratic future. Some observers saw the election as restoring Democrats to their status as the majority party, which they had enjoyed between 1932 and 1968. Lanny J. Davis, a former special counsel to President Clinton, wrote following the 2008 election: "Tuesday's substantial victory by Barack Obama, together with Democratic gains in the Senate and House, appear to have accomplished a fundamental political realignment. The election is likely to create a new governing majority coalition that could dominate American politics for a generation or more."[8] Two years later, the Democrats lost sixty-three seats and their majority status in the House of Representatives—the largest seat change since 1946—and six seats in the Senate, where they maintained a slim majority.[9]

In 2004, following incumbent President George W. Bush's victory over Democratic nominee John Kerry, scholars speculated about a pro-Republican realignment. Indeed, speculation about Republican dominance can be traced back to the late 1960s, when Kevin P. Phillips, in his widely read book *The Emerging Republican Majority,* argued that the Republicans could become the majority party, mainly by winning support in the South.[10] Between 1969, when

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his book was published, and 1984, the Republicans won three of the four presidential elections, winning by massive landslides in 1972, when Richard M. Nixon triumphed over George S. McGovern, and in 1984, when Ronald Reagan defeated Walter F. Mondale. In 1985, Reagan himself proclaimed that a Republican realignment was at hand. "The other side would like to believe that our victory last November was due to something other than our philosophy," he asserted. "I just hope that they keep believing that. Realignment is real."[11] Democratic victories in the 1992 and 1996 presidential elections called into question the claims of a pro-Republican realignment.

Obviously, not all elections are transformative. So how is electoral change—not simply the ebbs and flows from election to election, but changes in the fundamental factors that link parties and voters—to be understood?

For generations of political scientists, theories of electoral change have centered on the concept of political realignment.[12] Political scientists define *realignment* in different ways, but they are all influenced by V. O. Key Jr., who developed a theory of "critical elections" in which "new and durable electoral groupings are formed."[13] Obvious candidates for such a label are elections like those in 1860, in which Lincoln's victory brought the Republicans to power; in 1896, in which McKinley's victory solidified Republican dominance; and in 1932, in which the Democrats came to power under Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Later, however, Key argued that partisan shifts could also take place over a series of elections—a pattern he called "secular realignment." During these periods, "shifts in the partisan balance of power" occur.[14] In this view, the realignment that first brought the Republicans to power might have begun in 1856, when the Republicans displaced the Whigs as the major competitor to the Democrats, and might have been consolidated by Lincoln's reelection in 1864 and Ulysses S. Grant's election in 1868. The realignment that consolidated Republican dominance in the late nineteenth century may well have begun in 1892, when Democrat Grover Cleveland won the election but the Populist Party, headed by James D. Weaver, attracted 8.5 percent of the popular vote, winning four states and electoral votes in two others. In 1896, the Populists supported William Jennings Bryan and were co-opted by the Democrats, but the electorate shifted to the Republican Party. The pro-Republican realignment might have been consolidated by McKinley's win over Bryan in 1900 and by Theodore Roosevelt's victory in 1904.

Though the term *New Deal* was not coined until Franklin Roosevelt's campaign of 1932, the New Deal realignment may have begun with Herbert C. Hoover's triumph over Democrat Al Smith, the first Roman Catholic to be nominated by a major political party. Although badly defeated, Smith carried two New England states, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, which later became the most Democratic states in the nation.[15] As Key points out, the beginnings of a shift toward the Democrats were detectable in Smith's defeat.[16] However, the "New Deal coalition" was not created by the 1932 election but after it, and it was consolidated by Roosevelt's 1936 landslide over Alfred M. Landon and his 1940 defeat of Wendell

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Willkie. The New Deal coalition structured the distribution of party support within the electorate during the earliest decades of the post–World War II period, and its decline and eventual replacement are important to our understanding of the changes and continuities of modern electoral politics.

Past partisan realignments in the United States have had five basic characteristics. First, realignments have traditionally involved changes in the regional bases of party support. Consider, for instance, the decline of the Whig Party and the rise of the Republicans. Between 1836 and 1852, the Whigs drew at least some of their electoral support from the South.[17] The last Whig candidate to be elected, Zachary Taylor in 1848, won sixty-six of his electoral votes from the fifteen slave states. In his 1860 victory, Lincoln did not win a single electoral vote from the fifteen slave states. Regionalism may be less important to future electoral changes, however. Today, television and other media have weakened regionalism in the United States, and politics is much more nationalized. Two-party competition has diffused throughout the country, and the issues on which the parties compete tend to be more national in scope.[18]

Second, past party realignments have involved changes in the social bases of party support. Even during a period when one party is becoming dominant, some social groups may be moving to the losing party. During the 1930s, for example, Roosevelt gained the support of industrial workers, but at the same time he lost support among business owners and professionals.

Third, past realignments have been characterized by the mobilization of new groups into the electorate. Indeed, the mobilization of new voters into the electorate can result in significant electoral volatility.[19] Between Calvin Coolidge's Republican landslide in 1924 and Roosevelt's third-term victory in 1940, turnout among the voting-age population rose from 44 percent to 59 percent. Although some long-term forces were pushing turnout upward, the sharp increase between 1924 and 1928 and again between 1932 and 1936 resulted at least in part from the mobilization of new social groups into the electorate. Ethnic groups that were predominantly Catholic were mobilized to support Al Smith in 1928, and industrial workers were mobilized to support Franklin Roosevelt in 1936.

Fourth, past realignments have occurred when new issues have divided the electorate. In the 1850s, the Republican Party reformulated the controversy over slavery to form a winning coalition. By opposing the expansion of slavery into the territories, the Republicans contributed to divisions within the Democratic Party. Of course, no issue since slavery has divided America as deeply, and subsequent realignments have never brought a new political party to power. But those realignments have always been based on the division of the electorate over new issues.

Lastly, most political scientists argue that partisan realignments occur when voters change not just their voting patterns but also the way they think about the political parties, thus creating an erosion of partisan loyalties. For example, in 1932, during the Great Depression, many voters who thought of themselves as Republicans voted against Hoover. Later, many of these voters returned to the Republican side, but others began to think of themselves as Democrats. Likewise,

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in 1936 some voters who thought of themselves as Democrats disliked FDR's policies and voted against him. Some of these defectors may have returned to the Democratic fold in subsequent elections, but others began to think of themselves as Republicans.

Not all scholars believe that the concept of realignment is useful. In 1991, Byron E. Shafer edited a volume in which several chapters questioned its utility.[20] More recently, David R. Mayhew published a monograph critiquing scholarship on realignment, and his book received widespread critical acclaim.[21] Mayhew cites fifteen claims made by scholars of realignment and then tests these claims. He argues that many of these claims do not stand up to empirical scrutiny, questions the classification of several elections as "realigning," and suggests that the concept of realignment should be abandoned.

While we agree with some of the claims made by Mayhew, we see no reason to abandon the concept completely. Some electoral changes may correspond to the critical election-realignment dynamic—a long period of stability in the party system is altered by a rapid and dramatic change, which leads to a new, long-term partisan equilibrium. Using biological evolution as a theoretical analogue, Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson argue that partisan realignments of this type are similar in form to the evolutionary dynamic known as cataclysmic adaptation.[22] These authors note, however, that biological examples of the cataclysmic adaptation dynamic are extraordinarily rare, and they suggest that critical election realignments are likely to be rare also.

Carmines and Stimson articulate two additional evolutionary models of partisan change. They argue that Key's secular realignment dynamic is consistent with the model of Darwinian gradualism. In this view, electoral change does not result from a critical moment but instead is "slow, gradual, [and] incremental."[23] As noted in Key's original work, the secular realignment dynamic "operate[s] inexorably, and almost imperceptibly, election after election, to form new party alignments and to build new party groups."[24]

The third model of partisan change espoused by Carmines and Stimson is consistent with the punctuated equilibrium model of evolution.[25] In this dynamic process,

> the system moves from a fairly stationary steady state to a fairly dramatic rapid change; the change is manifested by a "critical moment" in the time series—a point where change is large enough to be visible and, perhaps, the origin of a dynamic process. Significantly, however, the change—the dynamic growth—does not end with the critical moment; instead it continues over an extended period, albeit at [a] much slower pace.[26]

In our view, the punctuated equilibrium model best captures the dynamic nature of electoral change in the United States since the 1960s.

The 1960s were a critical moment in American politics. The events of the decade were the catalysts for fundamental changes in the rules that govern

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political parties and the partisan sentiments that would govern voters for years to come.[27] Of particular interest is the transformative power of the issue of race. By 1960, the national Democratic Party's sponsorship of civil rights for African Americans had created a schism between the more liberal elements of the party and white southern Democrats. But it had also allowed the party to chip away at black voters' allegiance to the Republican Party, "the party of Lincoln." The partisan loyalties of African Americans had been shaped by the Civil War, and black loyalties to the Republican Party—where and when African Americans were allowed to vote—lasted through the 1932 election. By 1960, a majority of African Americans identified with the Democratic Party, but a substantial minority were still Republican identifiers. Between 1960 and 1964, however, African American loyalties moved sharply toward the Democrats. The civil rights demonstrations of the early 1960s and the eventual passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act solidified the position of the Democratic Party as the party of civil rights. By late 1964, more than 70 percent of African Americans identified as Democrats, a level of loyalty that persists today. The change in partisanship among blacks and the subsequent mobilization of black voters following the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act provided the rapid, critical moment that disrupted the stable equilibrium created by the New Deal coalition. And, as the punctuated equilibrium dynamic suggests, the electorate continued to change in a direction set forth by the critical era of the 1960s, but it did so at a slower rate, and the shift continues to have ramifications for politics today.

The political events of the 1960s also had effects on white partisanship, but those changes were neither immediate nor decisive. From the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, there was substantial erosion in party loyalties among whites. The proportion of the white electorate who considered themselves "independent" increased noticeably. By 1978, nearly 40 percent of whites said they were either pure independents or independents who "leaned" toward one of the two parties, nearly double the proportion found in the late 1950s and early 1960s.[28] These changes led some scholars to use the term *dealignment* to characterize American politics during the period.[29] The term was first used by Ronald Inglehart and Avram Hochstein in 1972.[30] A dealignment is a condition in which old voting patterns break down without being replaced by newer ones. Yet beginning in the 1980s, the proportion of whites claiming to be pure independents declined, as whites nationally began to lean toward the Republican Party. In the once "solid Democratic South," whites have become decidedly Republican.

Despite these changes, the Republicans have never emerged as the majority party among the electorate. Democrats, however, saw a growth in political loyalties between 2004 and 2012, and they have once again emerged as the majority party, albeit a small majority among party identifiers. Democrats' electoral gains have largely been the product of the critical events of the 1960s, which established them as the party of civil rights. As America's nonwhite population has increased—more than half of the growth in the U.S. population between 2000 and 2010 was due to an increase in the nonwhite population—Democrats have

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been the beneficiaries. For instance, roughly two out of every three Hispanic voters in the United States identify with the Democratic Party, and 45 percent of Hispanic voters say that Democrats have more concern for them, compared to only 12 percent who say that Republicans do.[31] America's racial and ethnic minorities continue to view the Democrats' adherence to the civil rights agenda of the 1960s as providing them with a natural political home, and America's whites are increasingly more likely to side with the Republicans. In our view, the 2012 elections do not represent a fundamental change in America's electoral politics. Instead, these elections continue to reflect electoral alignments set in motion by a critical era that occurred nearly a half century ago.

VOTERS AND THE ACT OF VOTING

Voting is an individual act. Indeed, the national decision made on (or before) November 6, 2012, was the product of more than 221 million individual decisions.[32] Two questions faced Americans eighteen years and older: whether to vote and, if they did, how to cast their ballots. These decisions, of course, are not made in isolation. Voters' decisions are influenced by the social, economic, and information contexts in which the voters live; by the political attitudes the voters have acquired throughout their lifetimes; and by the voting decisions the voters have made in the past.[33] Voters' decisions are also constrained by America's electoral rules and two-party system—these are the primary sources of continuity in our political system.

How voters make up their minds is one of the most thoroughly studied subjects in political science—and one of the most controversial.[34] Voting decisions can be studied from at least three theoretical perspectives.[35] The first approach is *sociological* in character and views voters primarily as members of social groups. Voters belong to primary groups of family members and peers; secondary groups such as private clubs, trade unions, and voluntary associations; and broader reference groups such as social classes and religious and ethnic groups. Understanding the political behavior of these groups is central to understanding voters, according to Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Bernard R. Berelson, and their colleagues. Social characteristics determine political preferences.[36] This perspective is still popular, although more so among sociologists than among political scientists.[37]

A second approach places greater emphasis on the *psychological* (or, more aptly, attitudinal) variables that affect voting. The "socio-psychological model" of voting behavior was developed by Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, scholars at the University of Michigan Survey Research Center, in their classic book *The American Voter.*[38] The Michigan scholars focused on attitudes most likely to have the greatest effect on the vote just before the moment of decision, particularly attitudes toward the candidates, the parties, and the issues. An individual's party identification emerged as the most important socio-psychological variable that influences voting behavior. The

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Michigan approach is the most prevalent among political scientists, and party identification continues to be emphasized as one of the most influential factors affecting individual vote choice, although many de-emphasize its psychological underpinnings.[39]

A third approach draws heavily from the work of economists. According to this perspective, citizens weigh the costs of voting against the expected benefits when deciding whether to vote. And when deciding for whom to vote, they calculate which candidate favors policies closest to their own policy preferences. Citizens are thus viewed as rational actors who attempt to maximize their expected utility. Anthony Downs and William H. Riker helped to found this *rational choice* approach.[40] The writings of Riker, Peter C. Ordeshook, John A. Ferejohn, and Morris P. Fiorina are excellent examples of this point of view.[41]

Taken separately, none of these approaches adequately explains voting behavior; taken together, the approaches are largely complementary.[42] Therefore, we have chosen an eclectic approach that draws on insights from each viewpoint. Where appropriate, we employ sociological variables, but we also employ sociopsychological variables such as party identification and feelings of political efficacy. The rational choice approach guides our study of the way issues influence voting behavior.

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SURVEY RESEARCH SAMPLING

Because of our interest in individual-level voting behavior, our book relies heavily on surveys of the American electorate. It draws on a massive exit poll conducted by Edison Research for the National Election Pool, a consortium of six news organizations, as well as surveys conducted in people's homes by the U.S. Census Bureau and telephone polls conducted by the Pew Research Center. But our main data source for 2012 is a face-to-face survey of 2,054 U.S. citizens conducted in their homes as part of the American National Election Studies (ANES) Time Series Survey.[43] Originally conducted by the Survey Research Center (SRC) and Center for Political Studies (CPS) at the University of Michigan, the ANES surveys have been conducted using national samples in every presidential election since 1948 and in every midterm election from 1954 through 2002.[44] The 2012 ANES was conducted jointly by Stanford University and the University of Michigan, with funding by the National Science Foundation.[45] Since 1952, the ANES surveys have measured party identification and feelings of political effectiveness. The CPS, founded in 1970, has developed valuable questions for measuring issue preferences. The ANES surveys provide the best and most comprehensive data available for studying the issue preferences and party loyalties of the American electorate.[46]

Readers may question our reliance on the ANES surveys of 2,054 people when some 221 million Americans are eligible to vote. Would we have similar results if all adults eligible to vote had been surveyed?[47] The ANES uses a procedure

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called multistage probability sampling to select the particular individuals to be interviewed. This procedure ensures that the final sample is likely to represent the entire population of U.S. citizens of voting age, except for Americans living on military bases, in institutions, or abroad.[48]

Because of the probability procedures used to conduct the ANES surveys, we are able to estimate the likelihood that the results represent the entire population of noninstitutionalized citizens living in the United States. Although the 2012 ANES survey sampled only about 1 in every 108,000 voting-eligible Americans, the representativeness of a sample depends far more on the size of the sample than on the size of the population being studied, provided the sample is drawn properly. With samples of this size, we can be fairly confident (to a level of.95) that the results we get will fall within three percentage points of what would have been obtained if the entire population had been surveyed.[49] For example, when we find that 54 percent of respondents approved of the job Barack Obama was doing as president, we can be reasonably confident that between 51 percent (54 – 3) and 57 percent (54 + 3) approved of his performance. The actual results could be less than 51 percent or more than 57 percent, but a confidence level of.95 means that the odds are nineteen to one that the entire electorate falls within this range. The range of confidence becomes somewhat larger when we look at subgroups of the electorate. For example, with subsets of about 500 (and the results in the 50 percent range) the confidence error rises to plus or minus six percentage points. Because the likelihood of sampling error grows as our subsamples become smaller, we often supplement our analysis with reports of other surveys.

Somewhat more complicated procedures are needed to determine whether the difference between two groups is likely to reflect the relationship that would be found if the entire population were surveyed. The probability that such differences reflect real differences in the population is largely a function of the size of the groups being compared.[50] Generally speaking, when we compare the results of the 2012 sample with an earlier ANES survey, a difference of four percentage points is sufficient to be reasonably confident that the difference is real. For example, in 2008 during the final year of the George W. Bush presidency and during the onset of the "Great Recession," only 2 percent of respondents said that the economy had improved in the last year; in 2012, 28 percent did. Because this difference is greater than four percentage points, we can be reasonably confident that the electorate was more likely to think the national economy was improving in 2012 than they were to think it was improving back in 2008.

When we compare subgroups of the electorate sampled in 2012 (or compare those subgroups with subgroups sampled in earlier years), a larger percentage is usually necessary to conclude that differences are meaningful. For example, 53 percent of men and 55 percent of women approved of Obama's performance as president. Even though 930 men and 1,001 women answered this question, a two-point difference is too small to allow us to conclude safely that this gender difference was real. Generally speaking, in comparisons of men and women a

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difference of five percentage points is needed.[51] By contrast, 42 percent of whites approved of Obama's performance as president, whereas 94 percent of blacks did. Granted, 1,356 whites were interviewed, but only 237 blacks.[52] In general, a difference of nine percentage points is needed to conclude that differences between whites and blacks are meaningful.

This discussion represents only a ballpark guide to judging whether reported results are likely to represent the total population. Better estimates can be obtained using the formulas presented in many statistics textbooks. To make such calculations or even a rough estimate of the chances of error, the reader must know the sizes of the groups being compared. For that reason, we always report in our tables and figures either the number of cases on which our percentages are based or the information needed to approximate the number of cases.

PLAN OF THE BOOK

We begin by following the chronology of the 2012 campaign itself. Chapter 1 examines the battle for the Republican Party presidential nomination. Eight major Republican candidates campaigned for the chance to square off against Obama in the general election. As is typical when an incumbent president stands for reelection, President Obama faced no opposition for the Democratic Party nomination. In Chapter 1, we discuss the regularities in the nomination process that explain why some candidates run while others do not. We then examine the rules governing the nomination contests, and we also assess the importance of campaign finance. The dynamics of multicandidate contests and the concept of momentum used by John H. Aldrich to discuss nomination contests in the 1970s are covered in Chapter 1 as well.

Chapter 2 moves to the general election campaign. Because of the rules set forth by the U.S. Constitution for winning presidential elections, candidates must think about how to win enough states to gain a majority (270) of the electoral vote (538 since 1964). We examine the Electoral College strategies adopted by the campaigns. There were three presidential debates and one vice presidential debate, and we discuss their impact. Finally, we turn to the end game of the campaign, the battle over turnout. It was widely argued that the Democrats' innovative "ground game" allowed them to win these get-out-the-vote efforts; we evaluate this claim.

Chapter 3 turns to the actual election results, relying largely on the official election statistics. Our look at the electoral vote is followed by a discussion of the election rules, where we note that the U.S. plurality vote system supports "Duverger's law." We examine the pattern of results during the seventeen postwar elections as well as those in all forty-six elections from 1832 through 2012. We then analyze the state-by-state results, paying particular attention to regional shifts in the elections between 1980 and 2012. We focus special attention on electoral change in the postwar South, because this region has been the scene of

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the most dramatic changes in postwar U.S. politics. Finally, we study the results of the last five presidential elections to assess the electoral vote balance.

Chapter 4 analyzes the most important decision of all: whether to vote. We examine the dynamics of electoral participation in U.S. politics, particularly changes in turnout during the postwar period. Although turnout grew fairly consistently between 1920 (the year women were enfranchised throughout the United States) and 1960, it fell in 1964 and in each of the next four elections. We show that the decline in turnout during this period coincides with steep declines in partisan attachment and political efficacy in the electorate. As partisan attachment has increased in recent decades, turnout has risen, but it remains lower than its 1960 high. Turnout is low in the United States compared with other advanced democracies, but it is not equally low among all social groups. In Chapter 4, we examine social differences in turnout in detail, using both the 2012 ANES survey and the Current Population Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.

In Chapter 5, we examine how social forces influence the vote. The ANES surveys enable us to analyze the vote for Obama and Romney by race, gender, region, age, education, income, and union membership; we used exit polls to study the influence of religion. The impacts of these social factors changed considerably in the postwar period as the New Deal coalition broke down and new partisan alignments emerged after the critical era of the 1960s. We show that minorities—specifically blacks and Latinos—are now central to the modern Democratic coalition.

Chapter 6 examines attitudes toward both the candidates and the issues. We begin by examining voters' feelings toward the candidates (using "feeling thermometers") before turning our attention to their appraisals of the candidates' personal traits. We then attempt to assess the extent to which voters based their votes on issue preferences. We conclude that voters' issue concerns were particularly important in determining their vote choices in 2012.

We then turn to how presidential performance influences voting decisions—this is particularly important when an incumbent is on the ballot. Existing research suggests that many voters decide how to vote on the basis of "retrospective evaluations" of the incumbents. In other words, voters decide mainly on the basis of what the candidates have done in office, not what they promise to do if elected. In Chapter 7, we show that retrospective evaluations, particularly those related to the performance of the economy, were a powerful reason for Obama's victory. Interestingly, while voters appeared to be disenchanted with the status of the war in Afghanistan, they did not appear to hold President Obama responsible.

In Chapter 8, we explore the impact of party loyalties on voting using the ANES data. Since the 1980s, there has been a substantial shift in whites' partisan loyalties—particularly in the South—toward the Republican Party. The clear advantage the Democratic Party once held among whites has dissipated. While the 2008 election that initially brought Obama to office saw a resurgence in whites' Democratic identification, that advantage proved temporary as whites'

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party loyalties reverted to near parity in 2012. We examine partisanship among whites and blacks separately, tracking change from 1952 to 2012. This analysis reveals that the patterns of change among whites and blacks have been markedly different. We also examine Latino partisanship in recent elections. Finally, we take a close look at the role of party loyalties in shaping issue preferences, retrospective evaluations, and voting preferences. We find that the relationship between party identification and the vote was very strong in 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012.

In Chapters 9 and 10 we are reminded that election day 2012 featured many elections. In addition to the presidential election, there were twelve gubernatorial elections and elections for thousands of state and local offices, as well as thirty-three elections for the U.S. Senate and elections for all 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives.[53] We focus our analysis on the 2012 House and Senate elections, which are by far the most consequential for national public policy.

Chapter 9 examines the pattern of congressional outcomes for 2012 and brings to light those factors that affect competition in congressional elections. We review the pattern of incumbent success in House and Senate races between 1954, the first Democratic victory in the party's forty-year winning streak, and 2012. The proportion of House incumbents reelected in 2012 was below the thirty-election average, while the success rate for Senate incumbents was above the average for that chamber. We examine the interplay of national and regional factors in structuring congressional election outcomes. And, of course, we give particular attention to the critical factors of candidate recruitment, reapportionment and redistricting, and campaign finance. Finally, we speculate on the future of congressional elections and party polarization in Congress in 2014 and beyond.

Chapter 10 explores how voters make congressional voting decisions. Using the same ANES surveys we employed to study presidential voting, we examine how social factors, issues, partisan loyalties, incumbency, and retrospective evaluations of congressional and presidential performance influence voters' choices for the House and Senate. We also try to determine the existence and extent of presidential "coattails"—that is, whether Democrats were more likely to be elected to Congress because of Obama's presidential victory.

Chapter 11 examines the 2014 congressional midterm elections. We begin by discussing the pattern of outcomes, showing that, despite anti-incumbent sentiments, most incumbents who sought reelection were successful. We also explore regional differences, noting that, while Republican gains in the House were evenly distributed across the country, GOP gains in the Senate were more concentrated in the South and West. We examine the 2014 results in terms of historical trends and compare the actual results with those that political observers expected. We briefly discuss academic models of congressional elections, paying particular attention to the economy and to public approval for Obama's performance as president. As we argue in Chapter 11, voters in 2014 were substantially different from those who went to the polls in 2012. Exit polls in both years suggest that they were older, more Republican, and more conservative. These

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changes do not reflect demographic shifts, since such changes are highly unlikely to occur in two years. The tendency of the electorate to be more Republican and more conservative reflects differential turnout between presidential and midterm elections, not changes in the party loyalties of the electorate or their ideological identification. Voter turnout during the 2014 congressional elections, only 36.1 percent, was the lowest for any midterm since World War II.

In Chapter 12 we note that the alternation of partisan victories between presidential and congressional midterm elections is a product of the long-term partisan balancing that has become a feature of American politics. While Democrats seem to be advantaged during presidential elections, Republicans have an advantage during midterms. The reason, again, is differential turnout. But, as we demonstrate in Chapter 12 using a simple statistical analysis, midterm election outcomes have little to no bearing on future presidential outcomes. This stands in sharp contrast to the claims sometimes made by election night pundits and politicians from the winning party, who argue that midterm victories serve as an ominous sign for the losing party's chances for victory in the next presidential election. By this account, the Republican victories of 2014 should diminish the Democrats' chances of retaining the presidency in 2016. We show that this claim has no empirical merit. Rather, the long-term factors that influence American electoral politics suggest the 2016 presidential election is likely to be highly competitive. We then assess the prospects for both the Democratic and Republican Parties and their candidates in 2016.

Finally, in Chapter 13, we attempt to place the 2012 and 2014 elections in the proper historical context. Though we examine changes and continuities in American elections over the course of the nation's history, the great advantage of our analysis is its use of high-quality surveys of the electorate over the past sixty years. This wealth of data provides extraordinary insights regarding the political preferences of the American people, how those preferences have varied with time, and how they relate to voting behavior. Thus, we explore the long-term changes and continuities in the politics of American national elections.

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Chapter 1

The Nomination Struggle

The Republican Party's presidential nomination campaign was especially interesting, even if a bit chaotic, with the sudden rise and equally rapid decline of a seemingly endless sequence of candidacies. Through it all, former Governor Mitt Romney (MA) persevered with the backing of a minority of Republicans in the electorate, a minority that became, first, a plurality of the Republican electorate and, then, a majority of the delegates selected to attend the Republican National Convention.[1] After a roller coaster opening for nearly everyone else in the race, Romney gradually increased his popular following among Republicans in the electorate, going from about 25 percent support at the end of 2011, into the lead for good in late February, and then to be the first choice for nomination of about 40 percent of Republican identifiers in April. All the while, first one candidate, then another, burst onto the scene, winning this primary or that caucus, springing up in the polls, only to fall back just as suddenly.

While there were a number of unique aspects to this contest, the major story was actually one of continuity with multicandidate nomination contests since 1972. The result is that there are lessons to be learned about the nature of presidential nominations revealed in 2012 as there have been in prior campaigns. Of course, President Obama's renomination illustrates one regularity about the nomination system that went into place in 1972: incumbents are extraordinarily unlikely to lose. In his case, like others before, that is because the incumbent has no serious opposition at all. But even in those rare cases when there is serious contestation, they are likely to win, just as they have always have won renomination under the current system.[2] But Romney's victory in a party with no incumbent seeking nomination illustrated a number of regularities to be discovered in these more interesting and competitive contests.

Reforms in the late 1960s and early 1970s had brought about a new form of nomination campaign, one that required public campaigning for resources and votes. The "new nomination system of 1972," as we call it, has shaped many aspects of all contests from 1972 onward, and we examine the similarities that

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have endured over its forty-year existence. Each contest, of course, differs from all others because of the electoral context at the time (e.g., the state of the economy or of war and peace) and because the contenders themselves are different. And in the new nomination system, the rules change to some degree every four years as well. The changes in rules, and the strategies that candidates adopt in light of those rules, combine with the context and contenders to make each campaign unique.

In 2012, two changes in rules (or their application) had major consequences for the conduct of the campaign on the Republican side (of course, rules have little effect on an uncontested race such as Obama's renomination!). One set of rule changes occurs every four years and consistently alters the contours without, however, fundamentally changing the strategy of campaigning for nomination. These are the dates on which the various state delegation selection events are held. The major consequence had been, through 2008, what is known as *front-loading*. State legislatures (which determine the dates of primaries) and state parties (which determine the dates of caucuses) had increasingly tried to hold their primaries or caucuses as early in the year as possible. This front-loading became one of the most important forces shaping campaign strategy from 1996, when front-loading first became significant, to 2008. Front-loading reversed direction in 2012, and that again changed the strategies that the candidates followed and the special features of the Republican contest that year. Learning from the experiences of their predecessors, in 2012 the candidates carefully designed their strategies around the no-longer-quite-so-front-loaded campaign. This confluence of circumstances accounts for many of the most striking aspects of this campaign—its early beginning and its early end, albeit a less early end than in more front-loaded campaigns. This confluence also helps us understand why Romney was able to prevail over a large set of opponents, many of whom were more popular, at least briefly, among potential primary voters.

The second major change is in the nature of funding of presidential (and congressional) campaigns in general and in the presidential nomination campaigns in particular. Between 1976 and 2008 candidates turned to the federal government for provision of matching funds, thereby effectively doubling small contributions. And this feature played a major role in determining who serious candidates were and in helping shape who won.[3] After changes in the last decade, and in the growing competitive costs for conducting a campaign, virtually no serious candidate would accept federal funds—and the limitations that acceptance of them impose. Instead, candidates and various campaign-related organizations gather ever-increasing war chests on their own, with campaign spending thereby being all but unrestricted as well. Interestingly, it appears that the candidates have adjusted to these new funding realities without dramatically altering the nature of dynamics of campaigning and voting. That is to say, many of the regularities that we observed under the older funding regime continue today under the new funding regime.

In this chapter, we examine some of the regularities of the campaigns since 1972 to see how they helped shape the 2012 nomination contest. Next, we turn

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to the first step of the nomination process: the decisions of politicians to become—or not to become—presidential candidates. Then we examine some of the rules of the nomination system they face. Finally, we consider how the candidates ran and why Romney won.

WHO RAN

A first important regularity of the nomination campaign is that when incumbents seek renomination, only a very few candidates will contest them, and perhaps no one will at all. In 1972, although President Richard M. Nixon did face two potentially credible challengers to his renomination, they were so ineffective that he was essentially uncontested. Ronald Reagan in 1984, Bill Clinton in 1996, George W. Bush in 2004, and Barack Obama in 2012 were actually unopposed. This was the case, in large part, because even a moderately successful president is virtually undefeatable for renomination. Conversely, Gerald R. Ford in 1976, Jimmy Carter in 1980, and George H. W. Bush in 1992 faced one, or at most two, credible challengers. Although Bush defeated his challenger, Pat Buchanan, rather easily, Ford and Carter had great difficulty defeating their opponents, Reagan and Democratic senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts, respectively. Those two campaigns, while demonstrating that incumbents are not assured of victory, nevertheless demonstrate the power of presidential incumbency because both incumbents were in fact victorious despite facing the strongest imaginable challengers and despite being relatively weak incumbents.

The second major regularity in the nomination system concerns the other set of contests, those in which the party has no incumbent seeking renomination. In such cases, a relatively large number of candidates run for the nomination. Eight major candidates sought the Republican Party's nomination in 2012. Several more had declared but dropped out of the race before January 1, 2012. There have been eleven such campaigns since 1980, and the number of major candidates that were in the race as the year began varied remarkably little: seven in 1980 (R), eight in 1984 (D), eight (D) and six (R) in 1988, eight in 1992 (D), eight in 1996 (R), six in 2000 (R), nine in 2004 (D), and eight in both parties' contests in 2008, to go along with the eight-candidate Republican contest in 2012. The major exception to this regularity is that only Vice President Al Gore and former New Jersey senator Bill Bradley sought the Democratic nomination of 2000, even though many others seriously considered doing so.

The eight candidates whose campaigns were still active on January 1, 2012, were Rep. Michele Bachmann (MN), former Rep. Newt Gingrich (GA), former Gov. and Ambassador Jon Huntsman (UT), Rep. Ron Paul (TX), Gov. Rick Perry (TX), former Gov. Buddy Roemer (LA), former Gov. Mitt Romney (MA), and former Sen. Rick Santorum (PA). Businessman Herman Cain (GA) and former Gov. Tim Pawlenty (MN) had declared—and suspended—their candidacies in 2011. And there were a good number of others who were touted as strong candidates, only to

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choose not run in 2012. Many, for example, thought that such candidates as Gov. Chris Christie (NJ) or Gov. Mitch Daniels (IN) would be the strongest candidates.

We have so far illustrated two regularities: few or no candidates will challenge incumbents, but many candidates will seek the nomination when no incumbent is running. A third regularity is that among the candidates who are politicians, most hold, or have recently held, high political office. This regularity follows from "ambition theory," developed originally by Joseph A. Schlesinger to explain how personal ambition and the pattern and prestige of various elected offices lead candidates to emerge from those political offices that have the strongest electoral bases.[4] This base for the presidential candidates includes the offices of vice president, senator, governor, and, of course, the presidency itself. Note that Bachmann and Paul were the only sitting members of the U.S. House to run for the presidential nomination. House members do not have as strong an electoral base from which to run for the presidency and may have to forgo a safe House seat to do so. As a result, few run and fewer still are strong contenders.

Most candidates in 2012, as in all earlier campaigns under the new nomination system, emerged from one of the strong electoral bases. Table 1-1 presents the data for 2012 and for all campaigns from 1972 to 2012 combined. Over two-thirds of the presidential candidates had already served as president, vice president, senator, or governor; another one in eight was a member of the U.S. House. Note, however, that, unlike in many other years, in 2012 only one senator entered the race, while three candidates were current or former members of the U.S. House. Many of the presidents in the early years of the nation were chosen from the outgoing president's cabinet (especially the sitting secretary of state) and other high-level presidential appointees, but the cabinet is no longer a serious source of presidential candidates.[5] Although mayors rarely run for president, the mayor of New York City is particularly prominent in the media, and Mayor Rudy Giuliani's unique role in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States gave him great national visibility for his 2008 race. But note how rare his case is.

A fourth regularity, also consistent with ambition theory, is that of the many who run in nomination contests without incumbents, only a few put their current office at risk to do so. Among the Republicans in 2012, only the two current House members and Gov. Perry were in office (and he was not up for reelection in 2012), while five others were former officeholders.

THE RULES OF THE NOMINATION SYSTEM

The method that the two major parties use for nominating presidential candidates is unique and amazingly complicated. To add to the complication, the various formal rules, laws, and procedures for the nomination are changed, sometimes in large ways and invariably in numerous small ways, every four years. Beyond the formal rules lie informal standards and expectations, often set by the news media or the candidates themselves, that help shape each campaign.

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TABLE 1-1 Current or Most Recent Office Held by Declared Candidates for President: Two Major Parties, 1972–2012

Office held	Percentage of all candidates who held that office	Number 1972–2012	Number 2012
President	6	8	1
Vice president	3	4	0
U.S. senator	37	48	1
U.S. representative	14	18	3
Governor	22	29	5
U.S. cabinet	3	4	0
Other	7	9	1
None	8	11	1
Total	100	131	12

Source: 1972–1992: *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections*, 4th ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2001), 522–525, 562; 1996: Paul R. Abramson, John H. Aldrich, and David W. Rohde, *Change and Continuity in the 1996 and 1998 Elections* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1999), 13; 2000: *CQ Weekly*, January 1, 2000, 22; 2004: *CQ Weekly*, Fall 2003 Supplement, Vol. 61, Issue 48. The 2008 results were compiled by the authors. 2012: "Republican Presidential Candidates," *New York Times*, http://elections.nytimes.com/2012/primaries/candidates.

As variable as the rules are, however, the nomination system of 1972 has one pair of overriding characteristics that define it as a system: first, even though the formal nomination is made by vote of delegates at the national party conventions, since 1972 the major-party presidential nominees have effectively been selected in public and by the public; second, as a result all serious candidates have pursued the nomination by seeking the support of the public through the various communication media.

The complexity of the nomination contests is a consequence of four major factors. The first of these, federalism, or the state as the unit of selection for national nominees, is at least 180 years old. The second factor, the rules on the selection (and perhaps instruction) of delegates to the convention, and the third factor, the rules on financing the campaign, are the oft-revised products of the reform period. The fourth factor is the way in which candidates react to these rules and to their opponents, and grows out of the keen competition for a highly valued goal. The first three factors are described in more detail in the sections that follow, while the last informs the discussion throughout the rest of the chapter.

Federalism or State-Based Delegate Selection

National conventions to select presidential nominees were first held for the 1832 election, and for every nomination since then the votes of delegates attending the conventions have determined the nominees. Delegates have always been allocated at the state level; whatever other particulars may apply, each state

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selects its parties' delegates through procedures adopted by state party organizations if they choose to use caucuses and conventions, by state law if primary elections are employed, or both. Votes at the convention are cast by state delegation, and in general the state is the basic unit of the nomination process.[6] Thus there are really fifty separate delegate selection contests in each party.[7] There is no national primary, nor is there serious contemplation of one.

The fact that there are more than fifty separate contests in each party creates numerous layers of complexity, two of which are especially consequential. First, each state is free to choose delegates using any method consistent with the general rules of the national party. Many states choose to select delegates via a primary election, which is a state-run election like any other, except that each primary selects delegates for only one party's convention. The Democratic Party requires that its primaries be open only to registered Democrats. States not holding primaries use a combination of caucuses and conventions, which are designed and run by each political party and not by the state government. Caucuses are simply local meetings of party members. Those attending the caucuses report their preferences for the presidential nomination and choose delegates from their midst to attend higher-level conventions such as at the county, congressional district, state, and eventually the national levels.

The second major consequence of federalism is that the states are free (within bounds described below) to choose when to hold their primaries or caucuses. These events are thus spread out over time, although both parties now set a time period—the delegate selection "window"—during which primaries and caucuses can be held. The specific provisions for the GOP in 2012 are a window that "opened" March 6:

> In an effort to decrease the large cluster of contests at the beginning of the primary and caucus calendar, the phenomenon known as front-loading, the Republican Party adopted these two important changes to national party rules for the 2012 primary process:
>
> - Delegate selection events could not be held before the first Tuesday in March, with exceptions for Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire, and South Carolina, which could hold their events on or after February 1 (regardless, Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina scheduled January events for 2012); and
> - A related change required states that held contests before April 1 to allocate delegates on a proportional basis, although it did not impose a specific proportional system. Many state parties used winner-take-all in the past, but the new rule required that delegates be awarded to presidential candidates in proportion to their primary vote totals, in some fashion.[8]

New Hampshire has held the first primary in the nation since the state began to hold primaries in 1920, and state law requires that New Hampshire's primary

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be held before any other state holds its. A more recent tradition, dating from 1976, is that Iowa holds the first caucuses before the New Hampshire primary, but this "tradition" has been challenged by other states, which have tried from time to time to schedule even earlier caucuses. In 2012, as in 2008, some states continued to push their starting dates earlier and earlier. As a result, Iowa held its caucus on January 3, making the last two campaigns by far the two earliest starts to delegate selection. South Carolina and Nevada were granted exceptional timing by the Democratic national party to hold their primaries early in 2008, with that exception continuing into 2012 (and essentially agreed to by the Republican Party). South Carolina chose to hold its primary on January 21, 2012. Therefore, New Hampshire was again forced to hold its primary very early in 2012, to maintain its "first in the nation" status, this time holding it on January 10.

Two large states decided to hold their primaries early in 2008—Michigan on January 15 and Florida on January 29—thereby defying their national parties. The result was conflict over whether the delegates would be given votes or "punished" for intentionally violating party rules. A compromise was eventually reached on the Democratic side. On the Republican side in both 2008 and 2012, Wyoming, Michigan, and Florida saw their delegate totals cut in half because they held their primary or caucus before the Republicans' window opened.

All this shows why there is pressure toward front-loading and how that pressure was overcome and even reversed for 2012. In Figure 1-1, we compare the cumulative total of delegates awarded by week of the campaigns in 1976, 2008, and 2012. In 1976, 60 percent of the delegates were selected by the seventeenth week of the campaign. In 2008, front-loading had moved the 60 percent mark to the fifth week, but in 2012 that percentage reverted back toward the 1976 timing. While the 50 percent mark was reached five weeks earlier in 2012 than in 1976, there was a clear reversal from what had been a continuing push to move toward the front. The main reason for this change was the move of the California primary, and other early June primaries, from 1976 first up toward the beginning and then, between 2008 and 2012, back to June again. These large states meant that there were many delegates up for grabs later in 2012 than in 2008.

The Nomination System of 1972: Delegate Selection

Through 1968, presidential nominations were won by appeals to the party leadership. To be sure, public support and even primary election victories could be important in a candidate's campaign, but their importance stemmed from the credibility they would give to the candidacy in the eyes of party leaders. The 1968 Democratic nomination, like so many events that year, was especially tumultuous.[9] The result was that the Democratic Party undertook a series of reforms, led by the McGovern-Fraser Commission and adopted by the party convention in 1972. The reforms were sufficiently radical in changing delegate selection procedures that they, in effect, created a new nomination system. Although it was much less aggressive in reforming its delegate selection

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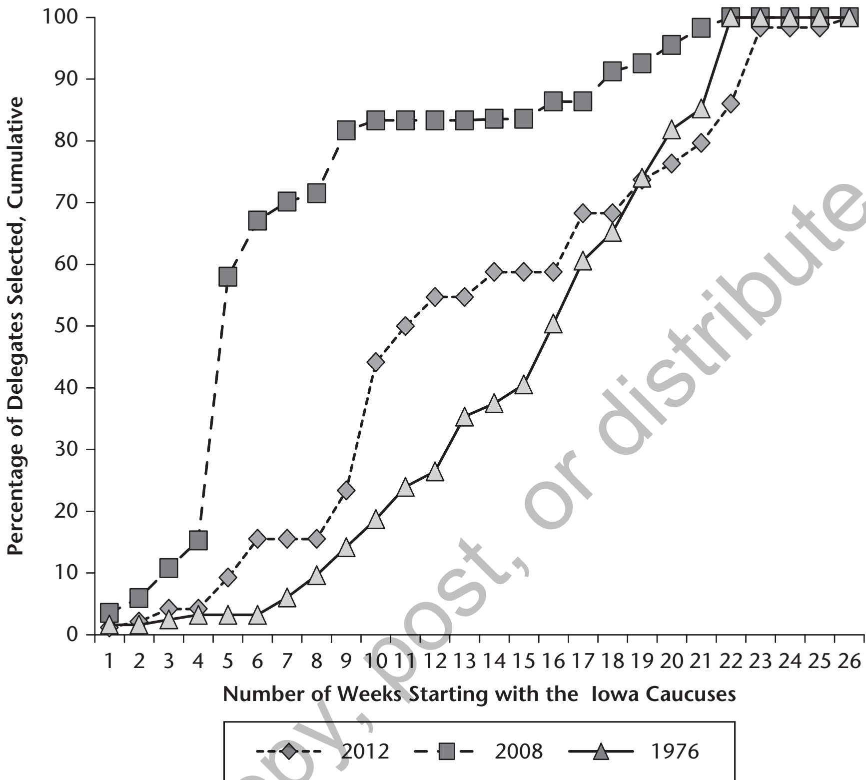
FIGURE 1-1 Front-loading in Republican Nomination Campaigns, 1976, 2008, and 2012 Compared



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procedures, the Republican Party did so to a certain degree. However, the most consequential results of the Democratic reforms, for our purposes—the proliferation of presidential primaries and the media's treatment of some (notably the Iowa) caucuses as essentially primary-like—spilled over to the Republican side as well.

In 1968 Democratic senators Eugene J. McCarthy of Minnesota and Robert F. Kennedy of New York ran very public, highly visible, primary-oriented campaigns in opposition to the policies of President Lyndon B. Johnson, especially the conduct of the war in Vietnam. Before the second primary, held in Wisconsin, Johnson surprisingly announced, "I shall not seek and I will not accept the nomination of my party for another term as your President."[10] Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey took Johnson's place in representing the establishment and the policies of the Democratic Party. Humphrey, however, waged no public campaign; he won the nomination without entering a single primary, thereby splitting

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an already deeply divided party.[11] Would Humphrey have won the nomination had Robert Kennedy not been assassinated the night he defeated McCarthy in California, effectively eliminating McCarthy as a serious contender? No one will ever know. Democrats did know, however, that the chaos and violence that accompanied Humphrey's nomination clearly indicated that the nomination process should be opened to more diverse candidacies and that public participation should be more open and more effective in determining the outcome.

The two most significant consequences of the reforms were the public's greater impact on each state's delegate selection proceedings (many delegates would now be bound to vote for the candidate for whom they were chosen) and the proliferation of presidential primaries.[12] Caucus-convention procedures became timelier, were better publicized, and, in short, were more primary-like. Today in most elections, including in 2012, the media treat Iowa's caucuses as critical events, and the coverage of them is similar to the coverage of primaries—how many "votes" were "cast" for each candidate, for example.

At the state level, many party officials concluded that the easiest way to conform to the new Democratic rules in 1972 was to hold a primary election. Thus the number of states (including the District of Columbia) holding Democratic primaries increased from fifteen in 1968 to twenty-one in 1972 to twenty-seven in 1976, and the number of Republican primaries increased comparably. By 1988 thirty-six states were holding Republican primaries, and thirty-four were holding Democratic ones. In 2000 forty-three states were conducting Republican primaries, and Democratic primaries were being held in forty states. In 2012 there were thirty-nine primaries on the Republican side. Thus it is fair to say that the parties' new nomination systems have become largely based on primaries or more primary-like conventions.

The only major exception to this conclusion is that about one in five delegates to the Democratic National Convention is chosen because he or she is an elected officeholder or a Democratic Party official. Supporters of this reform of party rules (first used in 1984) wanted to ensure that the Democratic leadership would have a formal role to play at the conventions of the party. These "superdelegates" may have played a decisive role in the 1984 nomination of Walter F. Mondale and again in 2008 when Obama, like Mondale, had a majority of the non-superdelegates, but not a majority of all delegates. Each candidate needed only a relatively small number of additional superdelegates to commit to vote for him to win the nomination. They both received those commitments the day after the regular delegate selection process ended, and, with that, they were assured the nomination.[13]

The delegate selection process has, as noted, become considerably more front-loaded, which changed nomination politics.[14] The rationale for front-loading was clear enough: the last time California's (actual or near) end-of-season primary had an effect on the nomination process was in the 1964 Republican and the 1972 Democratic nomination contests. Once candidates, the media, and other actors realized, and reacted to, the implications of the reformed nomination system, the action shifted to the earliest events of the season, and nomination

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contests, especially those involving multiple candidates, were effectively completed well before the end of the primary season. More and more state parties and legislatures (including California's) realized the advantages of front-loading, bringing more attention from the media, more expenditures of time and money by the candidates, and more influence to their states if they held primaries sooner rather than later. By 2008, however, other factors started to affect state decisions. First, the rewards for early primaries were concentrated in a relatively small number of the very earliest primaries. And, as we noted above, the national parties regulated which ones could go when, and threatened to penalize states that violated the national party decisions. Indeed, Michigan and Florida were actually penalized in 2008 and 2012. In addition, the very early presidential primaries forced states to make an increasingly difficult choice. If they held their presidential primaries early in the year, they had to decide whether to hold the primary elections for all other offices at the same time, which was proving quite a bit earlier than made sense for candidates for local, state, and even national congressional posts, or to pay the costs of two primaries, one for the president and one for all other offices. Since states like California, for example, which were not able to reap the major benefits of being among the very earliest of events, received lesser benefits of being early, they chose to return to late in the season.

If the rationale for front-loading was clear by 1996, when it first became controversial, the consequences were not. Some argued that long-shot candidates could be propelled to the front of the pack by gathering momentum in Iowa and New Hampshire and could, before the well-known candidates could react, lock up the nomination early. The alternative argument was that increasing front-loading helps those who begin the campaign with the advantages associated with being a front-runner, such as name recognition, support from state and local party or related organizations, and, most of all, money.

Indeed, as the primary season became more front-loaded, the well-known, well-established, and well-financed candidates increasingly dominated the primaries. Sen. George S. McGovern of South Dakota and Gov. Jimmy Carter of Georgia won the Democratic nominations in 1972 and 1976, even though they began as little-known and ill-financed contenders. George H. W. Bush, successful in the 1980 Iowa Republican caucuses, climbed from being, in his words, "an asterisk in the polls" (where the asterisk is commonly used to indicate less than 1 percent support) to become Reagan's major contender and eventual vice presidential choice. And Colorado senator Gary Hart nearly defeated former vice president Mondale in 1984. In 1988 the two strongest candidates at the start of the Republican race, George H. W. Bush and Bob Dole, contested vigorously, with Bush winning. Gov. Michael S. Dukakis of Massachusetts, the best-financed and best-organized Democrat, won the nomination surprisingly easily. Clinton's victory in 1992 appeared, then, to be the culmination of the trend toward an insuperable advantage for the strongest and best-financed candidates. Clinton was able to withstand scandal and defeat in the early going and eventually cruise to victory.

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The campaign of former Democratic senator Paul Tsongas of Massachusetts in 1992 illustrates one important reason for Clinton's victory. Tsongas defeated the field in New Hampshire, and, as usual, the victory and the media attention it drew opened doors to fund-raising possibilities unavailable to him even days earlier. Yet Tsongas faced the dilemma of whether to take time out of daily campaigning for the public's votes so that he could spend time on fund-raising or to continue campaigning in the upcoming primaries. If he campaigned in those primaries, he would not have the opportunity to raise and direct the funds he needed to be an effective competitor. Front-loading had simply squeezed too much into too short a post–New Hampshire time frame for a candidate to be able to capitalize on early victories as, say, Carter had done in winning the nomination and election in 1976. The events of 1996 supported the alternative argument—that increased front-loading benefits the front-runner—even though it took nearly all of Dole's resources to achieve his early victory that year.[15]

This lesson was not lost on the candidates for 2000, especially George W. Bush. In particular, he began his quest in 1999 (or earlier!) as a reasonably well-regarded governor, but one not particularly well known to the public outside of Texas (although, of course, sharing his father's name made him instantly recognizable). He was at that point only one of several plausible contenders, but he worked hard to receive early endorsements from party leaders and raised a great deal of money well ahead of his competition. When others sought to match Bush's early successes in this "invisible primary," they found that he had sewn up a great deal of support. Many, in fact, withdrew before the first vote was cast, suddenly realizing just how Bush's actions had lengthened the odds against them. Bush was therefore able to win the nomination at the very opening of the primary season. Incumbent vice president Al Gore, on the other side, also benefited from the same dynamics of the invisible primary, although in the more classical role of one who began the nomination season as the odds-on favorite and therefore the one most able to shut the door on his opposition well before it was time for most voters to cast their ballots.[16]

The pre-primary period on the Republican side in 2008 was quite variable, with first McCain, then Giuliani, then Romney surging to the front. McCain's campaign was considered all but dead in the water by that point, but it gathered strength again before 2007 ended. There was, then, no strong front-runner in the GOP; the campaign was wide open. It was not so wide open, however, that pundits imagined former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee had a chance, and so his victory in the Iowa caucuses was a genuine surprise (at least from the perspective of, say, October 2007). On the Democratic side, Hillary Clinton was a clear front-runner. In retrospect, it was also clear that Obama had developed an impressive organization both by mobilizing support across the nation and by fund-raising, especially through adroit use of the Internet. Thus once his organizational strength became publicly visible, it was no surprise that he and Clinton easily defeated their rivals.

The 2012 contest had some similarities to 2008, with Romney moving from his also-ran slot to replace McCain as the candidate who early on seemed strong,

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lost steam, and then resurged back to victory. One effect of the decline in front-loading was that Romney, even though ahead, was not able to completely shut the door on his opposition until much later in the season. Simply too few delegates were selected early in 2008. This extended length of time had several effects, as we detail below, including permitting relative long-shot candidacies such as Santorum's to emerge rather later in the season than usual and giving all candidates longer to raise funds, and thus maintain candidacies longer. Perhaps even more costly, it also permitted Romney's opponents to run negative campaigns against him, quite possibly hurting his ability to shape his own image and providing fodder for attacks in the general election campaign.

The Nomination System of 1972: Campaign Finance

Campaign finance is the second aspect of the reform of the presidential nomination process. In this case, changes in law (and regulation in light of the law) and in the technology for raising money in nomination contests have made the financial context widely different from one campaign to the next. The 2012 campaign was no exception. As the first run under a new regulatory environment in light of the Supreme Court case popularly known as *Citizens United*, candidates tried a large variety of new or modified strategies for campaign financing in response.[17]

Our story begins, however, with the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, and especially the 1974 and 1976 amendments to the act. The Watergate scandal during the Nixon administration included revelations of substantial abuse in raising and spending money in the 1972 presidential election (facts discovered in part in implementing the 1971 act). The resulting regulations limited contributions by individuals and groups, virtually ending the power of individual "fat cats" and requiring presidential candidates to raise money in a broad-based campaign. The federal government would match small donations for the nomination, and candidates who accepted matching funds would be bound by limits on what they could spend.

These provisions, created by the Federal Election Commission to monitor campaign financing and regulate campaign practices, altered the way nomination campaigns were funded. Still, just as candidates learned over time how to contest most effectively under the new delegate selection process, they also learned how to campaign under the new financial regulations. Perhaps most important, presidential candidates learned—though it is not as true for them as for congressional candidates—that "early money is like yeast, because it helps to raise the dough."[18] They also correctly believed that a great deal of money was necessary to compete effectively.

The costs of running presidential nomination campaigns, indeed campaigns for all major offices, have escalated dramatically since 1972. But a special chain of strategic reactions has spurred the cost of campaigning for the presidential nomination. The *Citizens United* case seems to have reached a culmination of an increasingly unregulated environment.

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When many states complied with the McGovern-Fraser Commission reforms by adopting primaries, media coverage grew, enhancing the effects of momentum, increasing the value of early victories, and raising the costs of early defeat. As we described earlier, these reactions, in turn, led states to create the front-loaded season that candidates faced up to 2008. All of these factors created not only a demand for more money, but also a demand for that money to be raised early, ahead of the primary season. Indeed, media and other observers used the amount of early money raised as a marker of just how strong a candidate's campaign was likely to be, as they assessed the opening rounds of the contests. As noted above, Bush's strong, early fund-raising in 2000 (or actually 1999) forced contenders to begin serious fund-raising even earlier.

By 2008, however, very few candidates were accepting federal matching funds, because doing so would bind them to spending limits in individual states and over the campaign as a whole. Among Republicans, only McCain accepted these funds; among Democrats, Biden, Dodd, Edwards, and Gravel accepted such funding. By 2012, only one candidate, Buddy Roemer, applied for federal funding, and his candidacy was considered sufficiently hopeless that many debates did not even bother to include him among the contestants.

Much money is being raised. Through May 2008, the fund-raising totals for the three major contenders were $296 million for Obama, $238 million for Clinton, and $122 million for McCain.[19] By the same point in 2012, Romney reported raising $121 million, with Paul having raised $40 million, Gingrich $24 million, and Santorum $22 million.

The 2008 campaign also marked the dramatic expansion in the use of the Internet to raise money, following on the efforts of Democrat Howard Dean, the former governor of Vermont, in 2004 (and, to an extent, McCain in 2000). Ron Paul, for example, raised more than $6 million on a single day, December 6, 2007, through the Internet, a strategy he built on in 2012. But Obama's success served as the model for future campaigns, such as the $55 million he raised in February 2008 at a critical moment for the campaign.[20] Indeed, not only did Obama's organizational ability lead to all but the ending of federal funding of presidential nominations, but the carryover to the fall signaled its demise in general election campaigns as well (see Chapter 2). Finally, Internet fund-raising solved the "Tsongas dilemma" described earlier, because the Obama team could raise money on the Internet without the candidate having to leave the campaign trail.

The *Citizens United* decision in 2010 changed the landscape dramatically. In the narrow, it overturned the 2002 Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act and held that corporations and unions could spend unlimited money in support of political objectives and could enjoy First Amendment free speech rights, just as individuals could. These organizations, however, continued to be banned from directly contributing to candidates and parties. This case and especially a subsequent one decided by a U.S. Court of Appeals in light of this case, spurred the development of what are known as *super PACs*, which are political action committees that can now accept unlimited contributions from individuals, corporations, and unions

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and spend as much as they like, so long as it is not in explicit support of a candidate or party's election campaign or coordinated with their campaign organization.[21] According to data from the Center for Responsive Politics, expenditures on behalf of the three major nomination contenders were quite large. About $14 million was spent in behalf of Romney, $19 million for Gingrich, and $21 million for Santorum. Note that the expenditures in behalf of the last two approximate the amount of money their campaigns raised themselves (see above).[22] These organizations altered the terms of the campaign in that their expenditures had to be independent of the candidates and their (and their party's) organizations. It is therefore not necessarily the case that the candidate and, in the fall, the party will retain total control over the campaign and its messages.

Another consequence of these changes is that what were once dubbed "fat cats" are once again permitted. The 2012 exemplar is Sheldon Adelson, a casino magnate and a strong supporter of Israel. He contributed $5 million to the Winning Our Future super PAC in support of Newt Gingrich before the South Carolina primary. The PAC ran an advertising campaign, effectively against Romney's candidacy, presumably helping create the surprising Gingrich victory there. Adelson and his wife contributed another $5 million immediately thereafter, in preparation for the Florida primary, which this time turned out less well for Gingrich, effectively ending his candidacy. The common interpretation was that Adelson's support, and it alone, made possible the late portion of Gingrich's campaign. Without it he might not have been able to compete in South Carolina. And it is only the post–*Citizens United* environment that permits one individual to have made such an apparently discernible difference.[23] A side note is that the ad campaign in South Carolina featured attacks on Romney's work for Bain Capital, a line of attack that Democrats picked up from the Gingrich attack ads.

With all these changes, the candidates remain convinced that raising money early is, if not actually necessary, at least extremely helpful. In 2012 all candidates raised at least half their funds before 2011 ended except Romney (he raised 46 percent by then) and Santorum (who had raised under 10 percent by then).[24] While Santorum's case demonstrates that significant sums can be raised during the campaign itself, just as Obama had shown four years earlier, his campaign suffered from lagging receipts compared to his competitors. Therefore, early is most helpful and perhaps even necessary.

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THE DYNAMICS OF MULTICANDIDATE CAMPAIGNS

The most significant feature, from the candidates' perspectives, of the nomination process is its dynamic character. This system was designed to empower the general public, giving it opportunities to participate more fully in the selection of delegates to the national party conventions, and often even instructing them on how to vote. The early state delegate selection contests in Iowa and New Hampshire allowed largely unknown candidates to work a small state or two

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using the "retail" politics of door-to-door campaigning to achieve a surprising success that would attract media attention and then money, volunteers, and greater popular support. In practice, this was exactly the route Jimmy Carter followed in 1976.

John H. Aldrich developed this account of momentum in campaigns, using the 1976 campaigns to illustrate its effect. He first showed that there is no stable balance to this process.[25] In practical terms, he predicted that one candidate will increasingly absorb all the money, media attention, and public support, and thereby defeat all opponents before the convention. He further showed that the tendency for this process to focus rapidly on a single winner increases the *more* candidates there are. This finding was just the opposite of the original theories in this area and, indeed, what at the time seemed obvious: the greater the number of candidates, the longer it would take to reach victory. But common sense was not a helpful guide in this case.

There is one exception to this pure momentum result: the possibility of an unstable but sustainable balance with two candidates locked in a nearly precise tie. Early campaigns offered two illustrations compatible with two candidates in (unstable) equipoise, the 1976 Republican and 1980 Democratic contests.[26] In both cases, a relatively moderate but unpopular incumbent was challenged by a popular contender who represented the ideological (and thus relatively more extreme) heart of his party. In both cases, the campaigns lasted for a considerable period in this nearly even balance. And in both cases, the incumbents eventually moved ahead, sufficiently so that they achieved a majority of committed delegates by the end of the primary season. There is a second route to a long-lasting two-candidate campaign, a route that has now also appeared twice. In both the 1984 and 2008 Democratic contests, the campaigns began with a large number of candidates. Each featured a strong, well-financed, well-known, well-organized candidate who, it turned out, was challenged strongly by a heretofore little known (to the public) candidate who offered a new direction for the party. The multicandidate contest quickly shrank to just two viable candidates.

It is not a coincidence that the latter two cases were on the Democratic side. In that party, there is a large bloc of uncommitted party leaders, the superdelegates, to woo late in the campaign. With the ending of front-loading (at least for 2012) the conditions become ripe for an extended, close contest between two equally plausible candidates lasting well into the spring before one or the other is able to secure a firm hold on a majority of actual delegates. In the more usual case of momentum yielding one leader who emerges to win, front-loading strengthens the rapidity of the dynamics of momentum. This dynamic fits every other campaign in which no incumbent president is seeking renomination—until 2012.

In Figure 1-2, we report the length of all campaigns without a presidential incumbent running—that is, the number of weeks between the New Hampshire primary and the end of the campaign.[27] The standard until 1988 was that the campaign lasted until the end of the primary season. But beginning with 1988 on the Republican side, and extending with no exceptions until 2008's Democratic

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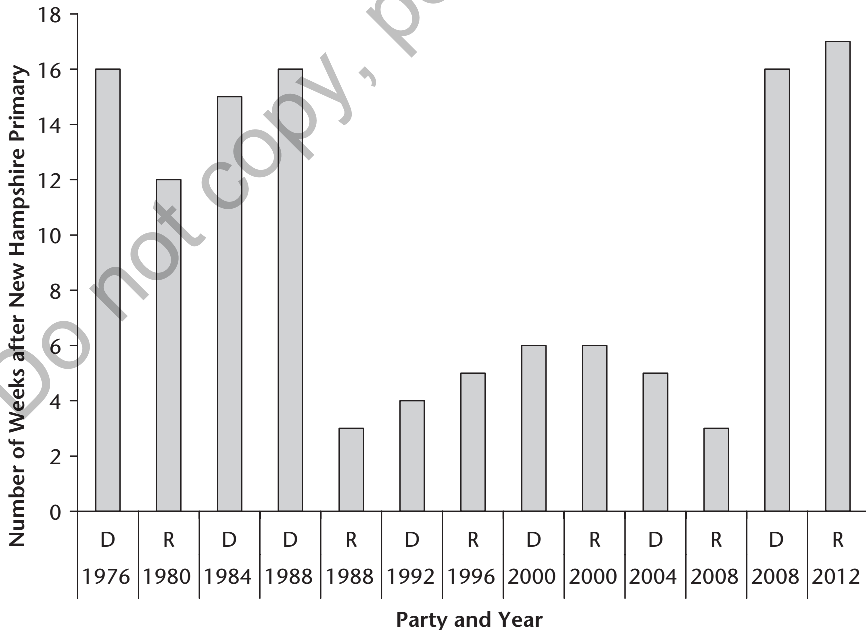
contest, all subsequent campaigns ended shortly after the New Hampshire primary. The change in delegate selection rules undid front-loading and means that the 2012 campaign lasted as long as any other ever has. One consequence of this is tying even an all-but-inevitable winner like Romney in 2012 to continued campaigning for Republican votes—and continued vulnerability to attack from one's own partisan side—much longer than before. While Romney had momentum and while no other candidate could realistically imagine winning nomination, it all goes back to rule one—the nominee is the candidate who wins a majority of votes cast by delegates at the national convention. In earlier years, momentum and winning a majority of delegates meshed smoothly, as front-loading meant that a momentum-induced victor could secure that majority early on. In 2012's campaign, it simply took weeks and months longer before a sufficient number of delegates was actually selected to translate momentum into nomination.

How Romney Won

It was by no means inevitable that Romney would win the 2012 Republican presidential nomination, even though he started with significant assets. He was better known than his competitors and among the leading contenders in poll

FIGURE 1-2 Length of Multicandidate Campaigns, 1976–2012



Source: Compiled by authors.

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standings as 2012 opened. He was experienced in politics in general and in campaigning in particular, and he had run a credible, although not terribly successful, campaign in 2008.[28] He had put together a strong campaign and financial organization, and he had long been in the field campaigning. This put him in a position a bit like Hillary Rodham Clinton's in 2008. He was the strongest contender with a lead on most of the field, but not a runaway sure thing. Indeed, he had several liabilities. The most important one was the ability to convince the conservative wing of the Republican Party that he was one of them. Part of this was policy. Perhaps the most prominent example of his inability to convince strongly conservative Republicans that he was really one of them was health care. As Governor of Massachusetts, he had successfully fought for a statewide, government-run health insurance plan that was the model for the Obama-supported health care law (the Affordable Care Act) that proved so controversial among the Republican right. His Mormon faith at least moderated enthusiasm among conservative Christian Republicans. As a result, many hesitated to endorse his candidacy, searching to see if a better alternative came along. While, as we discussed earlier, some of the potentially strongest alternatives chose not to run at all, there were a considerable number who hoped to become that alternative.

In many respects, it seemed that the Republican Party gave virtually each claimant for the conservative vote a chance—and then quickly rejected them, one after the other. Bachmann broke through first, with a victory in the closely watched and hotly contested Iowa "straw poll" on August 13, 2011. That brought her attention, but perhaps because it was so early or perhaps because it is a contrived event, it had little lasting power, and her inability to follow up that slim victory with any serious showing thereafter (including in the real Iowa event) led her to end her campaign early.

Cain's moment came next. In part because of a simply described tax plan ("9-9-9" standing for 9 percent rate each for a business tax, for a flat income tax, and for a federal sales tax) and in part because of victory in a Florida straw poll on September 24, 2011, he too got a moment of heightened attention and popular support. That ended in late 2011 as charges of sexual harassment and misconduct dogged his campaign.

Rick Perry entered the campaign "late" (officially entering on August 13, 2011). He showed an ability to raise money quickly, however (raising $17 million by the end of September according to FEC data), and he used it to attract attention through a series of advertisements that were primarily positive claims about his policy stances and his record as governor. Those high moments ended with a series of blunders and negative impressions left in the seemingly endless series of televised debates among the Republican candidates. In a debate in November 2011, for example, he could not remember the names of all three government agencies he promised to eliminate. A fifth-place finish in New Hampshire effectively ended his chances for real.

This left a three-person race. To be sure, Paul was a fourth candidate who continued his candidacy late into the season (formally suspending his campaign

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on May 14, 2012).[29] But the race was effectively down to Romney, Gingrich, and Santorum. Figure 1-3 gives one sort of overview of the race. There we report the results of Gallup polls that asked Republican respondents who they would support for the presidential nomination, at polls conducted over the course of the campaign. While the graph begins in December 2011, so many contenders were effectively eliminated by the end of January that we follow the paths of only these four. Note, among other things, that Paul held steady at about 10 percent to 12 percent support, while there was much more dynamism for the fortunes of the other three. Tables 1-2 and 1-3 provide the more formal accounting, reporting the actual primary vote (or caucus participation) for each candidate at all Republican events over the course of 2012.

After Perry's rapid fall, Gingrich's turn came next. As former Speaker of the House and architect of the Republican majority in the 1994 congressional elections, he had much to commend him. It also left baggage (resignation as Speaker

FIGURE 1-3 Popular Support for Major Republican Candidates for Presidential Nomination, 2012

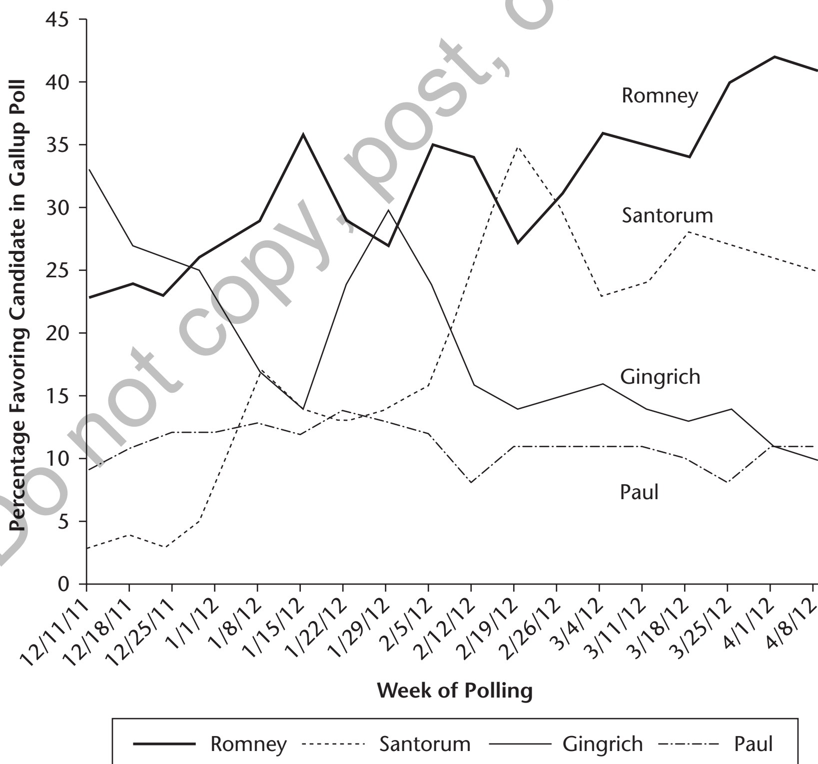

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TABLE 1-2 Results of Republican Caucuses, 2012 (percent)

State		Date	Romney	Santorum	Gingrich	Paul	Perry	Huntsman	Bachmann	Other
Iowa	Caucus	1/3/2012	24.51	24.54	13.29	21.41	10.33	0.61	4.97	0.33
Nevada	Caucus	2/4/2012	50.01	9.94	21.10	18.74	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.21
Colorado	Caucus	2/7/2012	34.85	40.31	12.79	11.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.30
Minnesota	Caucus	2/7/2012	16.85	44.95	10.76	27.15	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.29
Washington	Caucus	3/3/2012	37.65	23.81	10.28	24.81	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.44
Alaska	Caucus	3/6/2012	32.23	30.11	13.29	24.13	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.24
Idaho	Caucus	3/6/2012	61.59	18.17	2.10	18.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04
North Dakota	Caucus	3/6/2012	23.71	39.74	8.48	28.07	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Kansas	Caucus	3/10/2012	20.93	51.21	14.40	12.60	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.85
Hawaii	Caucus	3/13/2012	44.47	25.31	10.91	19.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Source: Adapted from "Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections," http://www.uselectionatlas.org. Compiled by authors.

Note: Maine and Wyoming held caucuses, beginning on February 4 and February 11, respectively, for which no results are reported. Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, and the Virgin Islands had caucuses on March 10, and American Samoa had caucuses on March 13; these results are not reported.

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in light of romantic entanglements, among other concerns). In December 2011, he was leading in the Gallup poll (see Figure 1-2). That lead quickly evaporated over a series of concerns about his insider political status and then about his personal style and even his personality. His poll standings fell to 17 percent (tied with Santorum) right before the Iowa caucuses, leaving him seven points behind Romney, and he finished in fourth place in Iowa. Such a result would doom many candidacies, but with the newfound money (noted above) and his experience, he was able to focus his efforts on the South Carolina primary, a place more congenial to him and less so to Romney. He used the opportunity to launch a series of tough attacks, particularly concerning Romney's role at Bain Capital. These led (or so it was generally interpreted in the media) to a decisive victory there (see Table 1-3). Under continuing pressure from leading Republicans nationally, however, what began as a lead in Florida, the next primary, changed to a slide, along with a rise in support for the remaining conservative contender, Santorum. It was also a state more congenial than South Carolina to Romney. Romney won that primary (46 percent), leaving Gingrich's campaign in disarray (with 32 percent) and leading to its eventual demise.

This left Santorum. He started early but seemed to be able to garner no serious attention or consideration, in part because his organizations (both campaign and financial) were weak and ineffective. With little national name recognition at the outset and weak organizations, his poll standings lagged. He did something similar to what Jimmy Carter did on the Democratic side in 1976 (and then many others followed), which was to focus his efforts on Iowa almost to the exclusion of every other aspect of the campaign. And like Carter, Santorum emerged as a contender, doing so only in the very last week or so before the caucuses. Initial counts had him a close second to Romney there, which later turned out to be a very narrow victory (a 34 "vote" edge). His rise in the polls thereafter first caught him up to a second-place tie with Gingrich until South Carolina, and then, with Gingrich's fall and the end of all but Paul's contestation of Romney, a rise into strong second place and, briefly, even first place among Republicans. He quickly fell back after Romney won Florida, but remained solidly in second place among Republican partisans. He was unable to capitalize on his emergence in part because he was not organized to campaign in many states, and thus his needed "knockout victories" over Romney never materialized. Facing a primary in his home state of Pennsylvania, where polls showed he had a good chance of losing, and with his three-year-old daughter, who suffers from a rare genetic disorder, having a relapse, Santorum ended his campaign.

Why was Romney able to withstand such a barrage of contenders? Three reasons stand out. That Romney was unable to convince the right wing of the party that he supported their views was not all negative. The right wing was concerned precisely because he was virtually uncontested in securing the support of the rest of the Republican Party, the more moderate conservatives.[30] Thus, he had a solid base that none of the conservative contenders could touch (a base that could be augmented by plausible claims that, as the more moderate

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TABLE 1-3 Results of Republican Primaries, 2012 (percent)

State		Date	Romney	Santorum	Gingrich	Paul	Perry	Huntsman	Bachmann	Other
New Hampshire	Primary	1/10/2012	39.28	9.43	9.43	22.89	0.71	16.89	0.00	1.38
South Carolina	Primary	1/21/2012	27.85	16.97	40.42	12.98	0.42	0.00	0.00	1.36
Florida	Primary	1/31/2012	46.40	13.35	31.93	7.02	0.41	0.37	0.00	0.52
Missouri	Primary	2/7/2012	25.30	55.20	0.00	12.20	1.00	0.40	0.70	5.20
Arizona	Primary	2/28/2012	46.87	27.05	16.02	8.61	0.40	0.00	0.00	1.04
Michigan	Primary	2/28/2012	41.10	37.87	6.53	11.63	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.88
Georgia	Primary	3/6/2012	25.91	19.55	47.19	6.56	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79
Massachusetts	Primary	3/6/2012	72.05	12.06	4.60	9.53	0.27	0.61	0.00	0.89
Ohio	Primary	3/6/2012	37.96	36.95	9.33	14.60	0.62	0.53	0.00	0.00
Oklahoma	Primary	3/6/2012	28.05	33.80	27.48	9.63	0.45	0.26	0.33	0.00
Tennessee	Primary	3/6/2012	28.06	37.11	23.96	9.04	0.35	0.00	0.34	1.13
Vermont	Primary	3/6/2012	39.45	23.61	8.13	25.29	0.89	1.97	0.00	0.64
Virginia	Primary	3/6/2012	59.54	0.00	0.00	40.46	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Alabama	Primary	3/13/2012	28.99	34.50	29.30	4.98	0.30	0.17	0.27	1.49
Mississippi	Primary	3/13/2012	30.66	32.73	31.15	4.40	0.46	0.00	0.33	0.27
Illinois	Primary	3/20/2012	46.69	35.01	7.98	9.32	0.60	0.00	0.00	0.40
Louisiana	Primary	3/24/2012	26.69	48.99	15.91	6.15	0.51	0.00	0.33	1.41
District of Columbia	Primary	4/3/2012	70.08	0.00	10.93	12.17	0.00	6.82	0.00	0.00
Maryland	Primary	4/3/2012	49.26	28.72	10.96	9.50	0.45	0.60	0.00	0.51
Wisconsin	Primary	4/3/2012	44.03	36.83	5.84	11.15	0.00	0.65	0.77	0.74
Connecticut	Primary	4/24/2012	67.43	6.83	10.30	13.48	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.96
Delaware	Primary	4/24/2012	56.46	5.91	27.08	10.55	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

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State		Date	Romney	Santorum	Gingrich	Paul	Perry	Huntsman	Bachmann	Other
New York	Primary	4/24/2012	62.72	10.02	12.65	14.61	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Pennsylvania	Primary	4/24/2012	57.70	18.36	10.41	13.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.44
Rhode Island	Primary	4/24/2012	63.02	5.66	6.04	23.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.42
Indiana	Primary	5/8/2012	64.61	13.43	15.50	6.47	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
North Carolina	Primary	5/8/2012	65.62	10.39	7.64	11.12	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
West Virginia	Primary	5/8/2012	69.56	12.09	6.29	11.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.01
Nebraska	Primary	5/15/2012	70.46	13.85	5.16	9.92	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.61
Oregon	Primary	5/15/2012	70.91	9.39	5.37	12.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.55
Arkansas	Primary	5/22/2012	68.39	13.33	4.89	13.39	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Kentucky	Primary	5/22/2012	66.77	8.87	5.95	12.53	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.88
Texas	Primary	5/29/2012	69.09	7.97	4.71	12.02	0.00	0.60	0.83	4.78
California	Primary	6/5/2012	79.07	5.28	3.72	10.29	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.63
Montana	Primary	6/5/2012	68.43	8.93	4.35	14.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.88
New Jersey	Primary	6/5/2012	81.05	5.22	3.11	10.35	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.28
New Mexico	Primary	6/5/2012	73.17	10.56	5.88	10.39	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
South Dakota	Primary	6/5/2012	66.23	11.43	3.91	13.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.42
Utah	Primary	6/26/2012	93.05	1.48	0.47	4.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.24

Source: Adapted from "Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections," http://www.uselectionatlas.org. Compiled by authors.

Note: Missouri held both a primary (on February 7) and a caucus (which ran March 15–24). The results from the primary are adapted from the Missouri Secretary of State's Office, www.sos.mo.gov. No results from the March caucus have been released (as caucus-goers cast votes for delegates rather than in preference of any candidates) and, as such, are not reported. Puerto Rico held a primary on March 18 for which no results are reported.

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alternative, he alone stood the best chance to defeat Obama). Second, for reasons detailed above, all the conservative alternatives had flaws that kept them from being the one of their group to have lasting power as *the* conservative choice. Perhaps Santorum finally achieved that status, if for no other reason than no one else was left. But that came so late that Romney's final major advantage took over. His experience, early start, and strong campaign organization permitted him to build campaign organizations in virtually every state. No other candidate even came close to matching his ability to seek delegates everywhere in the country. With the exception of the Minnesota caucuses, in no other state did he poll under 20 percent support, and he rarely dipped under 40 percent of the primary vote outside the South, and then only barely. Even there he held at least a quarter of the vote and handily won the biggest delegate catch there, Florida. As a result, his march toward 50 percent of the delegates was inexorable.

The Republican National Convention

That Romney's victory was inexorable did not mean it was rapid. As we discussed earlier (and see Figure 1-2), the reversal of front-loading, combined with a candidate that a major part of the party was slow to endorse, meant that the campaign lasted into June. Even as competitors backed away, Romney was unable to turn his full attention away from the nomination and toward the general election campaign. Of course, he was able to begin to prepare for the fall, and especially for the national party convention, which essentially is the transition to the general election campaign, even if unable to give it his undivided attention.

Conventions no longer have a decision-making role in choosing a presidential nominee. The public effectively chooses that nominee. It is true that the delegates play little role as long as a candidate wins a majority of delegates before the convention, as they have in all contests since 1972, and thus it is possible they may have a genuine decision to make some day. But as we described above, there is good reason to think that this eventuality is unlikely in the foreseeable future. As such, the convention can be seen more as the opening of the general election campaign than as the decision point of the nomination campaign.

All three major decisions made at the convention have become general election events. The platform is worked out in advance of the convention to reduce the chances of controversy at the convention itself and to ensure it reflects the views that the nominee wants to run on in the fall. The selection of the vice presidential running mate has long been the choice of the presidential nominee, and it is seen as the first major presidential-like decision by the soon-to-be-nominee, who all but invariably makes that decision in public deliberations well before the convention. In this case, Romney chose Rep. Paul Ryan (WI) to unite the party behind a young conservative known for policymaking, especially budget-related policies. The rest of the national convention is the stage on which the party and its nominees present themselves to the nation. Their acceptance

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speeches provide the now-formal nominees with the opportunity to speak at length to the entire nation alone on the stage.

In 2012, the Republicans held their convention late in August in Tampa, Florida. It may be remembered as the convention affected by Hurricane Isaac (which fortunately only sideswiped Tampa) and which led to the cancellation of the first day's events after a ten-minute opening session. However, its timing had other effects that may have been more consequential to the Romney campaign.

Presidents running for reelection may value a convention late in the summer, as a direct beginning of them moving on to the campaign trail in the fall. After all, the president gets to run for reelection in the best way possible and can do so for a full four years—that way is by being the president. The challenger cannot contest in that way. Indeed, presidential candidates remain constrained to separate nomination and general election campaign funds, so the money that Romney raised to win the nomination was not available for running against Obama, and, of course, he had to keep raising and spending nomination campaign funds until he actually had the nomination in hand. But the more important effect was almost certainly that Romney remained a candidate, while Obama remained an active president, and it was not really until the fall campaign formally began—at the conventions themselves—that Romney was able to be on equal footing with Obama, simply as their parties' nominees for president.

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