Hardwiring Commitment:

Responsive Competence, Policy Priorities, and Leadership Continuity in U.S. Federal Executive Agencies[*]

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Abstract

Personnel turnover is a major challenge of executive administration. Turnover among political executives adversely affects the organizational stability of U.S. federal executive agencies, while undermining presidential efforts at facilitating their administration's policy goals. A novel theory is proposed that political executives' tenure will be comparatively longer when it is of mutual benefit to *both* the president and appointee compared to when this condition is not met. The empirical evidence comports with this logic by revealing that appointee loyalty results in a longer tenure in office when their agency constitutes a stated policy priority for the president at the time of agreed upon service compared to when this happens not to be the case. These findings indicate that responsive competence entails a 'two-sided' commitment that must mutually benefit both the president and political executives to enhance leadership continuity within U.S. federal executive agencies.

A crucial element of executive authority granted by the U.S. Constitution is the concept of '*duration*' advocated by Alexander Hamilton in *Federalist 70, 72, and 77.* '*Duration*' refers to length of tenure in office by executive branch officials, and hence is a measure of the degree of continuity and change involving executive administration. '*Duration*' is necessary for ensuring sufficient time and stability such that government can both prepare and act upon its administrative activities (Green 2002: 549). '*Duration*' not only refers to the length of service of presidents, but also that of subordinate executive positions (Caldwell 1964: 90; see also Green 1990: 514). Modern U.S. presidents' value both the continuity and experience necessary to ensure effective, coherent executive administration (e.g., Aberbach and Rockman 1988, 2000; Bertelli and Lewis 2013; Heclo 1977; Resh 2015; Seidman and Gilmour 1986). Appointee turnover naturally transpires within a presidency, yet excessive turnover signified by a short time commitment of those in leadership positions within executive agencies generates adverse consequences for executive administration (e.g., Heclo 1977; Seidman and Gilmour 1986).

The rapid turnover of presidential appointed leadership positions not only undermines the president's policy initiatives and implementation, but also the effectiveness of executive agencies. Presidents enter office with policy agendas that often require years to both enact and administer through executive agencies to fulfill desired policy outcomes. Churn within these positions generates bureaucratic stasis, which negatively impacts public policy (Dull, et al. 2012; O'Connell 2009). Further, presidents also incur both greater information search and political costs when filling vacant positions, whether these positions happen to be filled with PAS or acting officials (Kinane 2021; O'Connell 2020). Higher turnover of U.S. federal agency appointees thus can induce organizational instability associated with executive branch governance.

A novel thesis is proposed asserting that presidents, via appointment choice, exert some measure of influence over the 'revolving door' among individuals serving in appointed leadership positions within U.S. federal agencies. Presidents are privy to public information regarding each nominee's background that can assist them in facilitating the prospects of executive administration that is responsive to their policy interests. Yet, political executives' incentives for turnover in these appointed positions varies by their own incentives to facilitate the president's agenda vis-à-vis their loyalty to the president. Since loyalist political executives wish to be placed in a situation where they can faithfully serve facilitating the president's policy agenda (i.e., *'proponent'*), their appointed service will be longer when the agency is a stated priority at time of nomination. Yet, when a political executive's policy commitment is lacking (i.e., *'caretaker'*), they serve a shorter tenure since their loyalty offers much less value-added to executive administration as well as themself. This 'two-sided' commitment perspective departs from the canonical top-down 'loyal lieutenant' view of political appointees which subsumes that appointee loyalty is unconditional, and hence, presidential efforts at steering executive administration is neither constrained by finite policy goals nor the incentives of loyalist bureaucratic agents.

Based on a sample of 860 U.S. federal agency leadership 'at-will' appointments spanning 41 major U.S. federal executive agencies and subagencies covering the Carter through Bush, 43 administrations, the statistical evidence uncovers compelling empirical support for the importance of two-sided commitments for explaining meaningful variation in the duration of political executives' service. These positions constitute major administrative policy positions that are vital for linking presidential objectives to administration action. Greater presidential loyalty displayed by political executives is associated with longer service when a policy commitment is made to their agency while such loyalty results in shorter service when no such commitment is made.

This study underscores a key tension underlying executive branch governance – presidential efforts to ensure responsive competence and continuity in the leadership of federal executive agencies require a policy commitment that mutually benefits both political principal and bureaucratic agent. Otherwise, neither presidents nor loyalist political executives have sufficient incentives to encourage stable leadership of these public agencies. Although the logic and corroborative evidence presented in this study highlights a key element of presidential efforts at facilitating executive branch coordination through loyalist political executives (e.g., Moe 1985; Nathan 1983), it also underscores the limits of a politicization strategy since principal-agent loyalty entails a 'two-sided' commitment, whereby continuity and change among administrative leaders is jointly determined by these individuals and their appointing presidents.

The next section discusses the central importance of personnel continuity within U.S. federal agencies, with an emphasis on agency leadership positions. The third section seeks to understand continuity and change in U.S. federal executive branch leadership by proposing a logic that encompasses both the president and their political executives' incentives for service rooted in a shared policy commitment. The fourth section discusses data and empirical strategy issues, followed by the statistical findings. This study concludes by discussing this study's implications for understanding the limits of a politicization strategy for effective executive branch governance during the modern presidency era.

On the Importance of U.S. Federal Executive Appointees' Tenure: Continuity and Change in Administrative Leadership Positions

Personnel continuity is of the utmost importance to the president and ultimately for sustained governance, especially as it pertains to those that are appointed to high-level

leadership positions. Appointing loyalists is requisite for ensuring presidents' policy goals are to be faithfully executed by the federal bureaucracy (Gallo and Lewis 2012; Hollibaugh, et al. 2014; Moe 1985; Nathan 1983). Appointees serving longer tenures increase the probability of policy success and reduce the potential of bureaucratic drift that a president may incur when high-level administrative officials must be routinely replaced (Bertelli and Lewis 2013). It is beneficial for upper-echelon political executives to serve for a substantial amount of time in their appointed leadership positions within U.S. federal agencies so that they can cultivate trust with careerist civil servants (e.g., Aberbach and Rockman 2000; Heclo 1977; Resh 2015). Another benefit of personnel continuity of agency leadership is that it mitigates the problems associated with turnover that results in agency inactivity, loss of agency expertise, and disruption to implementing either new or nascent policies (Bertelli and Lewis 2013; Dull, et al. 2012; O'Connell 2009). Presidential appointment choices have direct implications for stability and change in executive administration.

The duration of executive appointee service has implications beyond the execution of the administration's policy demands. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina made land fall in the Gulf Coast region of the United States, causing vast destruction to both life and property. What followed was one of the largest failures in government response in U.S. history. At the time of the disaster, it is estimated that 15 to 20 percent of the positions in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) were vacant (Bertelli and Lewis 2013). Without stable leadership in the upper-level positions, an agency is poorly equipped to handle the routine policy and management tasks required of all federal agencies. The 2006 bipartisan congressional report, *Failure of Initiative*, noted that the confusion within FEMA, and among its leadership, was exacerbated by such problems relating to 'inexperienced' political appointees (*U.S. House of Representatives* 2006: 298). Although the failures associated with

an inadequate emergency response was numerous, clearly much of FEMA's failures can be traced to inexperienced leadership resulting from high levels of personnel turnover.

Considerable variation occurs in the tenure distribution of U.S. federal executive leadership appointees analyzed in this study. For instance, the Department of Education has a median leadership appointee tenure of 718 days, with Assistant Secretary Albert Bowker [Carter appointee] serving a low of 206 days and Secretary Richard Riley [Clinton appointee] serving a high of 2,920 days. Conversely, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative has a median tenure of 1,352 days, with Rob Portman (George W. Bush appointee, U.S. Trade Representative) holding the position for 403 days and U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor (Clinton appointee, U.S. Trade Representative) 2,627 days. As it pertains to individual appointees, Leslie Kramerich (Clinton Appointee, Assistant Secretary of Labor) served for 20 days, while Ernest Ambler (Carter appointee, the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology, Commerce Department) held the position for 4,074 days. Over the entire sample, the median appointee tenure was 907 days [mean of 988 days] and a standard deviation of 588 days.

The few systematic empirical studies analyzing appointee tenure offer invaluable insight into how political and agency conditions shape appointee tenure service (Dull, et al. 2012; Wood and Marchbanks 2008). Nonetheless, these studies largely infer variability in administrative agent characteristics across presidential administrations (Wood and Marchbanks 2008: 386), or by the type of agency or position of service in question (Dull, et al . 2012: 903). Yet, the loyalty of presidential appointees is treated as *unobservable* to presidents when evaluating appointee choices, and hence, do not consider its consequences for tenure longevity. For instance, Wood and Marchbanks (2008: 380) note that "*The problem is that the president can never know the appointee's true values and preferences. Therefore, the president's choice requires an element of trust on the appointee's reason for*

serving. Under such conditions, errors in staffing may occur due to asymmetric information. Moreover, some appointees may engage in deception and misrepresent themselves. Thus, there will always be a proportion of presidential appointees who fail to effectively represent the president and/or exit the administration early. However, due diligence in initial selection decisions can reduce the severity of the adverse selection problem." Prior studies propose that shape appointee tenure is related to political conditions, as well as agency or position considerations. Both the type and caliber of political appointees chosen by presidents, however, represent an important consideration for executive branch governance (e.g., Krause and O'Connell 2016, 2019; Lewis and Waterman 2013; Ouyang, Haglund, and Waterman 2017; Ouyang and Waterman 2020).

The present study focuses squarely on appointed positions that provide both guidance and direction for both policy and administrative matters, and hence, serve as the main fulcrum between elected and unelected officials involving matters of executive branch governance -- *agency leadership positions*. Existing research includes positions of extremely limited administrative influence, such as appointed officials in non-policymaking positions within federal agencies (e.g., Chief Financial Officer or General Counsel), or those whose position does not rise to a level of policy direction and leadership necessitating Senate confirmation. Next, a novel logic is developed to explain continuity and change via the mechanism of executive appointments for upper-echelon political executives.

Understanding How Presidential Appointments Shape Both Continuity and Change in Executive Administration

Presidents view their appointment powers as an instrument intended to facilitate executive administration that is consistent with their policy objectives. Presidential appointment choices therefore have tangible consequences for executive administration

(e.g., Aberbach and Rockman 2000; Lewis 2008; Lewis and Waterman 2013; Waterman, Haglund, and Ouyang 2017). These appointee characteristics have direct implications for administrative performance. A study of Obama era appointee finds that presidents seek to place non-policy oriented, patronage-type appointees in ideologically-aligned agencies to limit their adverse impact on administrative performance (Hollibaugh, Horton, and Lewis 2014). Because loyalist appointees earn lower performance ratings than counterparts exhibiting less loyalty to the president (Gallo and Lewis 2012), presidents must make tradeoffs between administrative responsiveness and effective performance for executive nominees requiring Senate confirmation (PAS) (e.g., Hollibaugh 2015; Krause and O'Connell 2016, 2019). Such leadership appointment choices affect administrative processes, including cooperative agreement investments (Krause and Zarit *nd*.**a**) and the distribution of federal grant retrenchments (Krause and Zarit *nd*.**b**).

Because these appointee characteristics are known at the time of nomination decisions, presidents can shape both continuity and change in U.S. federal agencies through appointment choices. This is an important element of a president's executive branch governance strategy has yet been fully understood or appreciated by scholars of the modern presidency. In a sample of 860 upper-echelon political executives from the 41 major U.S. federal executive agencies from the Carter through G.W. Bush presidencies analyzed in this study, roughly 38% of these leadership appointees serve two years or less, while nearly 62% serve three years or less, and 84% serve four years or less.[1] Yet, appointee tenure is not

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[1] Even accounting for the end of presidential period problem, the brevity of service remains high when excluding appointees who began service during the last two years of each presidential term (comprising almost 24% of leadership appointee serve 2 years or less, almost 53% for three years of service or less, and 82% for four years of service or less).

solely determined by presidents. Appointees' time service commitment to the president will also depend upon both incentives and opportunities for remaining in office. The confluence between the type of appointees' chosen by presidents and the context in which these individuals serve an administration is critical for determining leadership stability within U.S. federal executive agencies. President's ability to achieve desired policy goals crucially depends upon executive administration that not only exhibits coherence sought from responsive competence, but also the requisite stability in terms of both direction and effort. Presidents must partner with leadership appointees so that both actors are in a mutually beneficial organizational arrangement to generate continuity in administrative leadership. Otherwise, both actors have a propensity for change in the form of higher turnover. The logic below outlines how the incentives for *both* the president and loyalist appointed political executives are critical for understanding whether continuity or change occurs in U.S. federal administrative leadership positions.

'Proponent' versus 'Caretaker' Loyalists: Leadership Stability in Public Agencies

Appointee loyalty to the president is premised on both the ideological consistency and non-policy fealty exhibited by the appointed leader to the president (Krause and O'Connell 2016, 2019). That is, appointee loyalty to the president reflects the extent that they are congruent on policy with their appointing president, as well as exhibit an organizational loyalty to the administration by their willingness to serve as a 'team player'. With respect to appointee loyalty, presidents prefer those whom they believe will better reflect responsive competence in executive administration, ceteris paribus. Responsive competence refers to the necessity of modern presidents' utilizing senior administrative appointments to consolidate authority and coordinate executive action consistent with presidential policy objectives (Moe 1985; Nathan 1983). This is an especially critical issue

for obtaining both coherent and coordinated executive administration. Less loyal agency leaders are more prone to side with careerist agency personnel on administrative policymaking matters than presidents (Heclo 1977; Seidman and Gilmour1986), thus undermining the latter's efforts at attaining their policy objectives. Agency leaders play a pivotal role by engaging in bureaucratic delay in the enactment of administration policies, and thus undermine the long-run effects of these policies from the president's vantage point. For example, EPA head Christine Todd Whitman's effectiveness at delaying presidential-advocated reforms of the New Source Review (NSR) process used for evaluating new environmental rules undermined the George W. Bush administration's policy efforts at relaxing air pollution emission standards (Krause and Dupay 2009).

Yet, appointing more loyal political executives is not a guarantor of greater leadership stability in executive agencies. This is because an appointee's tenure is not only determined by the president, but also of their own accord. Presidents want loyalist political executives whom they can rely upon to facilitate their policy objectives through administrative channels, while loyalist political executives wish to assist the president in carrying out their policy goals. Loyalist appointed leaders who enjoy a policy commitment from the president are 'proponents' who play a vital role in advancing the administration's policy goals. For instance, Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley, who served 2,920 days was a 'proponent' loyalist political executive (74th percentile of *Presidential Loyalty* among executive agency political executives) with respect to educational reforms and initiatives that he spearheaded on behalf of the Clinton administration as a stated policy priority at time of his nomination (*U.S. Department of Education*). Conversely, an appointee exhibiting robust loyalty to the president, sans a policy commitment, is essentially a 'caretaker' insofar that are of marginal value in achieving administration policy goals in their appointed position. An example of a 'caretaker' loyalist is U.S. Trade Representative Robert J.

Portman whom he served only 403 days (98th percentile of *Presidential Loyalty* among executive agency political executives) where no such agency policy commitment had been made, and subsequently departed to serve as George W. Bush's OMB Director.

Policy commitment confers mutual benefits between presidents and loyalist political executives. Presidents will feel more vested in offering greater agency leadership stability for a strong loyalist acting as a 'proponent' whom they depend upon to facilitate their policy priorities compared to one whom their policy agenda does not rely upon that is merely serving as a 'caretaker'. The basis for mutual policy commitment is that greater appointee continuity is often required to ensure that the presidents' policy goals can be faithfully executed since it often requires several years from the time that a policy is enacted until the policy outcomes are fully realized. Specifically, this mutual policy commitment occurs when presidents' policy priorities pertain to an agency that the leadership appointee is willing to serve at the time of their nomination. This formalizes the mutual policy commitment since the appointed leader's decision to serve within a given agency coincides with the president's decision to invest policy capital into that agency.

The mutual policy commitment between presidents and their appointed administrative leaders is reflected in their respective interests and talents from the data analyzed in this study. This can be shown by analyzing mean differences in appointee characteristics known at time of nomination between 'higher' loyalist appointees assigned to a position within an agency that is an administration policy priority at time of nomination [n = 236 leadership appointees] compared to those whose nomination does not epresent such a priority [n = 100 leadership appointees].[2] Higher loyalists lacking a

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[2] 'Higher' loyalty is defined here as standardized loyalty scores above zero (61st percentile), which lies between the median value of −0.165 and mean value of 0.128 in this study's sample of observations.

presidential policy commitment are not noticeably more loyal than those placed in a priority agency (mean difference: −0.07 standardized units, t = −0.84, p = 0.40). Conversely, higher loyalists appointed to priority agencies exhibit not only marginally stronger management skills reflected by qualifications than counterparts placed in 'off-agenda' agencies (mean difference: 0.21, t = 1.74, p = 0.08), but an even larger differential with respect to policy expertise derived from qualifications (mean difference: 0.35, t = 3.41, p = 0.001).

Although no systematic presidential loyalty differences favoring political executives placed in priority agencies over non-priority agencies are observed from these data, clearly 'proponent' type loyalists enjoy both a greater capacity and willingness to facilitate the president's policy objectives compared to 'caretaker' loyalist counterparts. Analogous to Gailmard and Patty's (2012) endogenous theory of executive policy investment, higher skilled loyalists will invest greater service time in their appointed leadership positions when facilitating the president's policy priorities relative to less skilled loyalists who are not afforded the same opportunity to serve the president's policy interests. In short, presidents and appointed leaders both desire continuity in executive agency leadership – but only when it serves each parties' mutual interests. Otherwise, the president and appointee each have an incentive to 'defect'. Hence, the connection between appointee loyalty and tenure in office will enhance leadership stability in the presence of a policy commitment compared to when one is absent. This logic yields the main testable hypothesis regarding how presidents can shape continuity and change in executive administration through agency leadership appointments:
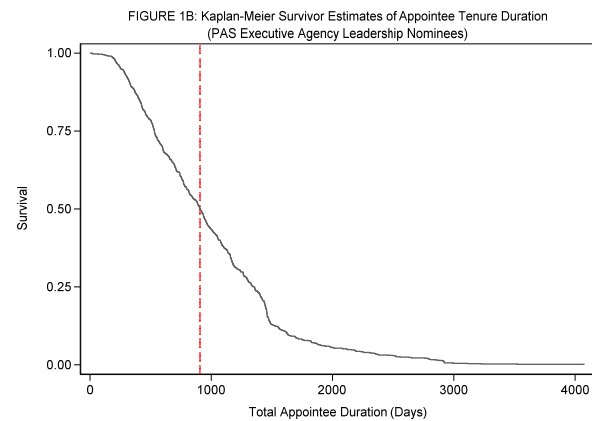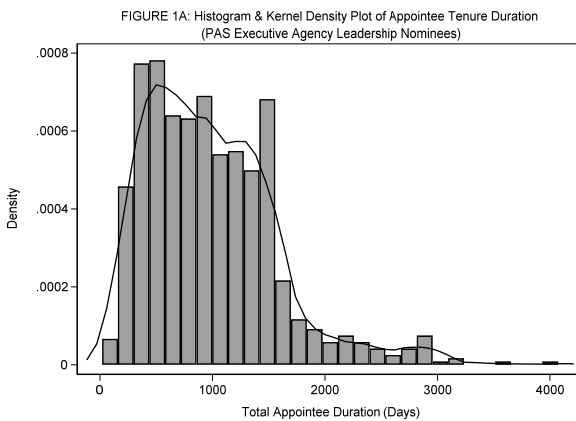
> **Mutual Benefit Hypothesis:** *Appointed leaders' loyalty to the president is associated with **relatively longer tenure** when their service is predicated on administering a presidential policy priority compared to 'off-agenda' items.*

This hypothesis purports that continuity in executive administration relating to appointee loyalty to presidents is conditioned by the presidents' premium for responsive competence for those agencies central to their policy agenda, as well as loyalist appointee's desire for facilitating such policies invested by presidents.

Data and Empirical Strategy

The empirical analysis focuses on 860 U.S. federal executive branch agency leadership appointees covering a sample of 41 organizational units comprised of presidential units, executive departments, executive bureaus and offices, and independent executive agencies that cover a 32 year period (1977-2008) across five presidential administrations (Jimmy Carter through George W. Bush). The focus on leadership PAS positions is simply due to these individuals being largely responsible for both setting and directing policies administered by U.S. federal agencies. As a result, turnover among both mid and lower level political executives is less consequential for the broader operations of federal agencies. The sample is restricted to executive agencies since they serve 'at-will' of the appointing president, and hence, account for challenges attributable to confounding with respect to appointee tenure duration due to alternative constraints on appointment (e.g., partisan balancing requirements), terms of appointment (e.g., staggered terms), and other unobserved characteristics relating to tenure (e.g., term renewals) that undermine comparisons with non-executive agencies. The dependent variable is *Appointee Leader Tenure Duration* and has a median/mean of 907 / 988 days (2.485 / 2.707 years), a standard deviation of 588 days (1.611 years), with a minimum of 20 days and a maximum of 4,074 days (11.162 years). **Figures 1A** and **1B** display the histogram plot (with kernel density overlay) and univariate Kaplan-Meier nonparametric survival function. **Figure 1A** reveals

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some positive skewness in the distribution of leadership appointee tenure (skewness =

1.20), with service exceeding 1400 days (3.836 years) becoming less common compared to

those individuals serving a shorter duration. Similarly, **Figure 1B** shows a corresponding

sharp tapering off of the survival estimates among this sample of U.S. federal executive

agency leadership appointees beyond the 1,460 day (four year) service mark (with the

vertical red line representing the unconditional median days of service [907 days]). Much of

this distinction in the distribution occurs for those individuals who serve across terms of a

given presidential administration.[3]

FIGURE 1A: Histogram & Kernel Density Plot of Appointee Tenure Duration (PAS Executive Agency Leadership Nominees)

FIGURE 1B: Kaplan-Meier Survivor Estimates of Appointee Tenure Duration (PAS Executive Agency Leadership Nominees)

Evaluating 'Two-Sided' Commitments Between Presidents and Political Executives

The two key covariates of interest are *Presidential Loyalty* that is operationalized as

the perceived loyalty that an appointee has towards the appointing president at the time of

nomination. An appointee's loyalty consists of an indicator that reflects a *shared political*

orientation between the president and the appointee (i.e., nominee is a co-partisan of the

president and made a campaign donation prior to their nomination). This latent trait

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[3] In addition, the respective means and variances are significantly larger and more dispersed among

these long-term service individuals compared to those serving 1400 days or less:

$(\bar{x}_{T>1400} = 1,811 \ days, \ \bar{x}_{T \leq 1400} = 749 \ days, p = 0.000; \ sd_{T>1400} = 506 \ days, \ sd_{T \leq 1400} = 342 \ days, p = 0.000).$

measure also employs a set of binary indicators to account for *fealty*, or *non-policy responsiveness*, that appointees may have towards the president (i.e., whether the nominee previously served in an appointed position by an administration of the same party, the nominee had prominent experience with national or state party organizations of the president's party, previous electoral experience, and whether the nominee served in the executive branch of a state during the time when the president previously served as governor). This measure is estimated from a Bayesian generalized latent trait structural measurement model (Krause and O'Connell 2016, 2019: 532-533). The second key covariate is *Policy Priority* which is simply a binary indicator whether a policy issue is mentioned by a president in the State of the Union Speech (SOTU) that is directly relevant to the agency to which the respective appointee was named in the year of nomination (see Krause and O'Connell 2016: 921, Note 15). The *Mutual Benefit Hypothesis* is supported when the interaction between *Presidential Loyalty × Policy Priority* exhibits a smaller hazard rate (i.e., negative coefficient/hazard ratio < 1.0) relative to the additive *Presidential Loyalty* hazard rate/coefficient based on the relationship between loyalty and tenure when an agency is not a policy priority in the year a nomination was made.

Control Covariates

Other appointee characteristics may also affect political executives' tenure longevity. *Managerial Competence* refers to the relevant public sector managerial skills of the appointee. This is a latent measure constructed from information regarding whether the appointee recently lived in the DC area (i.e., 'social embeddedness' with those both living and working in the U.S. federal bureaucracy), had substantial federal government management related professional experience (defined as being at the assistant secretary or equivalent level outside the federal government), possessed any prior federal management experience, or whether the nominee had prior agency-specific managerial experience via an

appointed PAS or Non-PAS position (Krause and O'Connell 2016, 2019: 533-534). This covariate is predicted to be inversely related to appointee tenure since these generalist skills are highly portable in other administrative contexts. Conversely, an appointee's policy expertise should be less portable across organizations, and hence, should translate into longer appointed service, ceteris paribus. Policy expertise is measured in terms of skills and qualifications as a latent measure (*Policy Competence*) that gauges the nominee's policy-relevant specific expertise for the agency. This expertise is represented by indicators consisting of the nominee's educational background, whether the appointee had prior professional experience in the policy issue area, whether the appointee had prior policy relevant employment in the federal government, had any prior civil service experience, or whether the appointee had any prior civil service position within the agency that they were appointed (Krause and O'Connell 2016, 2019: 534-535).

A variety of agency specific characteristics are also relevant for potentially shaping appointee tenure. *Agency Position Type* indicates whether the position is within the top executive positions (i.e., cabinet secretaries and administrator/director positions within executive bureaus and stand-alone agencies) or a subordinate leadership position (i.e., assistant/deputy/under cabinet secretaries, under cabinet secretaries, and deputy directors/administrators). Additionally, a pair of indicators are included to account for whether tenure durations vary amongst those agencies that are ideologically aligned with the president (*President-Agency Aligned)* or ideologically opposed with the president *(President-Agency Opposed),* by interacting the ordinal classification of the Clinton and Lewis (2008) agency ideology measure with the party of the president, with moderate agencies being captured in the baseline intercept term. Agencies that are ideologically aligned with the president are posited as having a positive effect on tenure duration. Conversely, an appointee's tenure duration is hypothesized to decrease when the agency

and the president are ideologically opposed. Another factor that may impact appointee tenure is the agency in which the appointee is confirmed.

A pair of indicator variables are employed to distinguish among independent agencies, subagencies, and executive department positions. *Independent Executive Agency* indicates whether an agency is a 'stand-alone' agency (i.e., Central Intelligence Agency, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Emergency Management Agency), and *Executive Subagency* corresponds to whether the position is for a subagency of an executive department (i.e., Census, Drug Enforcement Administration, Food and Drug Administration). Tenure duration, for both independent executive agency and subagencies positions, should be shorter than for Executive Cabinet department positions since the latter are more prestigious positions with greater responsibility. In addition, whether a leadership appointee serves multiple presidential terms is accounted for in model specifications using a binary indicator, *Crossover Presidential Terms*, that equals 1 when an appointee serves longer than one presidential term, and 0 otherwise.

In addition, a variety of political covariates are accounted for based on a single-record data design employ the starting day of service.[4] *Senate Party Polarization* corresponds to the absolute difference between the ideological means of the two major political parties within the Senate at the start of service. As the ideological distance between the two parties' increases, creating divergent priorities for the principle [the

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[4] In **Supplementary Analysis** (**Appendix B**), we evaluate the sensitivity of our estimates relating to the *Mutual Benefit Hypothesis* using a multiple spells daily design for each appointee observation. In this data design, the relevant covariate values that vary across time in the political executive's tenure pertain to the relevant day an appointee is at risk for departing from their position (e.g., average monthly presidential approval, Senate polarization within a given Congress).

political parties within the Senate], an appointee has greater latitude within their agency. As Senate party polarization increases, appointees should be more likely to stay in their respective positions for an increased amount of time since they will incur a divided Senate that will afford them greater leeway from this institution. *Filibuster Distance* measures the absolute distance between the Senate filibuster and the president's ideal points at the start of service. The distance between the president's ideal point and the Senate filibuster provides insights into the ideological differences between the administration and the Senate. As the ideological distance between the two political branches increase, the legislative branch has an incentive to escalate executive branch oversight activity, limiting an appointee's ability to pursue the president's [and their own] policy/agency objectives. Therefore, the ideological distance between the president and the Senate is posited as being inversely related to an appointee's tenure. Likewise, the average monthly *Presidential Job Approval* rating at start of service is hypothesized as being inversely related to an appointee's tenure. As the president's job approval increases, appointees will not only enjoy the benefits from the administration's positive public standing in terms of job opportunities outside of government, but also may result in presidents feeling more comfortable at moving appointees to other positions. *Unemployment Rate* is the seasonally-adjusted civilian monthly civilian unemployment rate at the start of service. This measure is posited as being inversely related to risk of departure by political executives. *Administration Year* is a series of binary indicators that equal 1 for each administration year in which appointee service commences for Years 2 through 8 of presidential administration (Year 1 is captured in the baseline intercept term). These measures account for within administration timing of service cycles that may shape appointee tenure is finite since it typically ends (with few exceptions) at the close of a given presidential administration. Finally, model specifications include both agency and presidential administration unit effects to account for variations in

political executives' tenure attributable to idiosyncratic aspects of both agencies and presidents not accounted for by the preceding set of covariates.

Political executive tenure is modeled using both Cox semiparametric and Weibull parametric models for both single record and multiple record events data for each of the 860 executive agency leadership appointees in the sample. Standard errors are clustered by agency to account for intra-unit correlation among leadership appointees' tenure within a given administrative unit. Next, the statistical findings are presented.

Empirical Findings

Table 1 presents the main regression estimates from the Cox semiparametric model (**Models 1 & 2**) and Weibull parametric model (**Models 3 & 4**), based on omission of agency and presidential administration unit effects (**Models 1 & 3**) as well as the inclusion of these unit effects (**Model 2 & 4**). The findings relating to the control covariates offer additional insights for explaining variation in political executives' duration of appointed service in a given position. Although neither the policy nor managerial qualifications of appointed leaders systematically affect their tenure of service based on the null findings for the *Policy Competence* and *Managerial Competence* covariates, clearly individuals serving in top leadership positions (*Agency Position Type*) are anywhere from 40.5% [**Model 3**] to 49.1% [**Model 2**] less likely to depart on a given day compared to those in subordinate level political executive positions.[5] Ideological policy conflict between the president and Congress at the onset of service (*President−Senate Filibuster Pivot Distance at Start*) consistently increases the likelihood that political executives depart their positions due to

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[5] The reduction from the baseline hazard (1.0) is computed as (hazard estimate −1)*100.

interbranch tensions, while internal party polarization within the Senate at the onset of service (*Senate Party Polarization at Start*) increases the likelihood of departure. For example, the estimates from **Model 3** show that an interquartile increase in *Senate Party Polarization at Start* (0.0533) yields a 32.22% decreased risk of departure, while an analogous increase in *President−Senate Filibuster Pivot Distance at Start* (0.186) is associated with a 10.37% increased risk of departure. In tandem, these findings suggest internal divisions within Congress ease pressures on political executives and their respective agencies, while conflict that spills into over the executive branch ramps up political pressure on these upper-echelon political executives who are often the focal point of interbranch policy conflict. Accounting for individuals serving across presidential terms (*Crossover Presidential Terms*) indicates that these subset of appointed political executives are less likely to depart relative to those whose appointed service in a given position does not span presidential terms. The particular juncture within an administration that appointed political executives commence service is linked to the hazard of departure, with hazard of departure being most pronounced for those political executives that commence service during the final two years of each presidential term (*Administration: Years Three, Four, Seven, & Eight*). These set of covariates are important to explicitly consider as potential confounders since they net out the potential rival explanation that evidence of the *Mutual Benefit Hypothesis* is a byproduct of the temporal constraints imposed on service, as well the appointee's propensity to serve across presidential terms when significant natural turnover occurs primarily within a given administration.

The relationship between appointee loyalty and appointee tenure when a presidential policy commitment to the agency is lacking (*Presidential Loyalty*) reveals between a 21.9% [**Model 1**] and 24.1% [**Model 3**] higher hazard rate across model

TABLE 1

Cox and Weibull Regression Model Hazard Ratio Estimates of
U.S. Federal Executive Agency Leadership Appointee Tenure

Covariates	Model 1 [Cox]	Model 2 [Cox]	Model 3 [Weibull]	Model 4 [Weibull]
Presidential Loyalty	1.219*	1.236+	1.241*	1.228+
	(0.121)	(0.146)	(0.122)	(0.141)
Policy Commitment	0.990	1.040	1.026	1.046
	(0.120)	(0.208)	(0.129)	(0.213)
Presidential Loyalty × Policy Commitment	0.766*	0.723*	0.755*	0.731*
	(0.092)	(0.106)	(0.089)	(0.102)
Policy Competence	0.978	1.033	0.984	1.039
	(0.063)	(0.074)	(0.065)	(0.074)
Managerial Competence	1.058	1.035	1.062	1.043
	(0.058)	(0.065)	(0.057)	(0.065)
Agency Position Type	0.578***	0.509***	0.595***	0.540***
	(0.043)	(0.051)	(0.046)	(0.052)
President−Agency Ideological Alignment	1.437***	0.711	1.448***	0.802
	(0.127)	(0.170)	(0.131)	(0.185)
President−Agency Ideological Opposed	1.350***	0.674	1.348**	0.752
	(0.123)	(0.169)	(0.124)	(0.181)
Executive Subagency	1.018	1.507*	0.999	1.431*
	(0.146)	(0.245)	(0.155)	(0.225)
Independent Executive Agency	0.873	1.896*	0.865	1.607*
	(0.073)	(0.492)	(0.072)	(0.387)
Senate Party Polarization at Start	0.001**	0.000*	0.001**	0.000*
	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.002)	(0.000)
President − Senate Filibuster Distance at Start	1.572*	904.774**	1.700*	701.348**
	(0.333)	(2080.073)	(0.352)	(1580.114)
Presidential Job Approval at Start	0.995	0.990*	0.996	0.991*
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Crossover Presidential Terms	0.199***	0.168***	0.207***	0.178***
	(0.033)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.036)
Unemployment Rate at Start	0.932	1.152	0.930	1.142
	(0.040)	(0.102)	(0.039)	(0.101)
Administration: Year Two	1.652**	1.405	1.614*	1.441
	(0.311)	(0.312)	(0.312)	(0.315)
Administration: Year Three	4.734***	3.336***	5.214***	3.752***
	(0.605)	(0.713)	(0.654)	(0.759)
Administration: Year Four	3.773***	3.006***	4.258***	3.404***
	(1.184)	(0.986)	(1.257)	(1.048)
Administration: Year Five	1.217	1.501	1.201	1.404
	(0.146)	(0.367)	(0.153)	(0.344)
Administration: Year Six	2.570***	3.425***	2.517***	3.216***
	(0.312)	(0.823)	(0.277)	(0.774)
Administration: Year Seven	4.447***	4.822***	4.984***	5.455***
	(1.190)	(1.597)	(1.240)	(1.729)
Administration: Year Eight	6.611***	8.010***	7.815***	9.048***
	(2.017)	(3.098)	(2.273)	(3.423)
Agency & Presidential Administration Fixed Effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
ln (p)	−	−	2.440***	2.623***
			(0.082)	(0.081)
AIC	9423.262	9371.281	1169.380	1082.168
Observations	860	860	860	860

Notes: + $p \leq 0.10$, * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$ (one-tailed test). Entries are hazard rate estimates (H_O: exp(β) = 1.0). Robust standard errors clustered by agency appear inside parentheses. Probability values appear inside brackets. N = 860.

specifications (p-values range between 0.03 and 0.07). In **Model 3** this translates into the hazard ratio ranging from a 13.01% [HR = 0.8699] lower risk of departure when appointee loyalty is at the 10th percentile value (−0.6452) to a 44.71% [HR = 1.4471] higher risk of departure at its 90th percentile value (1.7113). These findings indicate that low loyalist political executives whose agencies are off the president's institutional agenda are at lower risk for departure compared to high loyalist political executives operating under similar terms. The hypothesized sign of the *Mutual Benefit Hypothesis* is represented by a hazard ratio < 1.0 corresponding to the interaction effect between *Presidential Loyalty × Policy Priority*. That is, a rise in appointee loyalty is hypothesized to be associated with a lower average level of departure for appointees with a presidential policy commitment compared to those that lack such a commitment. This average differential lower hazard effect ranges between −23.4% (**Model 1**) to −27.7% (**Model 2**). These set of estimates are further analyzed to evaluate the numerical effects corresponding to appointee loyalty on appointee tenure, conditional on the policy commitment differential, based on the differential risk of departure on any given day, as well as both the differential predicted median confirmation days and survival rates at varying levels of appointee loyalty.

     Figure 2 displays the substantive effects of the hazard ratio estimates pertaining to the *Mutual Benefit Hypothesis*. Specifically, these substantive effects involve an interquartile unit marginal increase in appointee loyalty [1.3653] multiplied by the hazard ratio associated with the *Presidential Loyalty × Policy Loyalty* interaction covariate. The estimates reveal estimated hazard ratios that fall well below the 1.0 threshold associated with null effects. Regardless of estimation strategy (Cox or Weibull) and model specification (omission/inclusion of both agency and presidential unit effects), the evidence shows a much lower likelihood of appointee departure takes place on a given day of service. These

substantive effects range between a low of a 30.5% ([0.695 − 1] *100) decline in the hazard rate of appointee departure (**Model 1**) to a high of a 35.8% ([0.642 − 1] *100) hazard rate decline in appointee departure (**Model 2**).

FIGURE 2
Marginal Differential Effect of Appointee Loyalty on Appointee Tenure Hazard
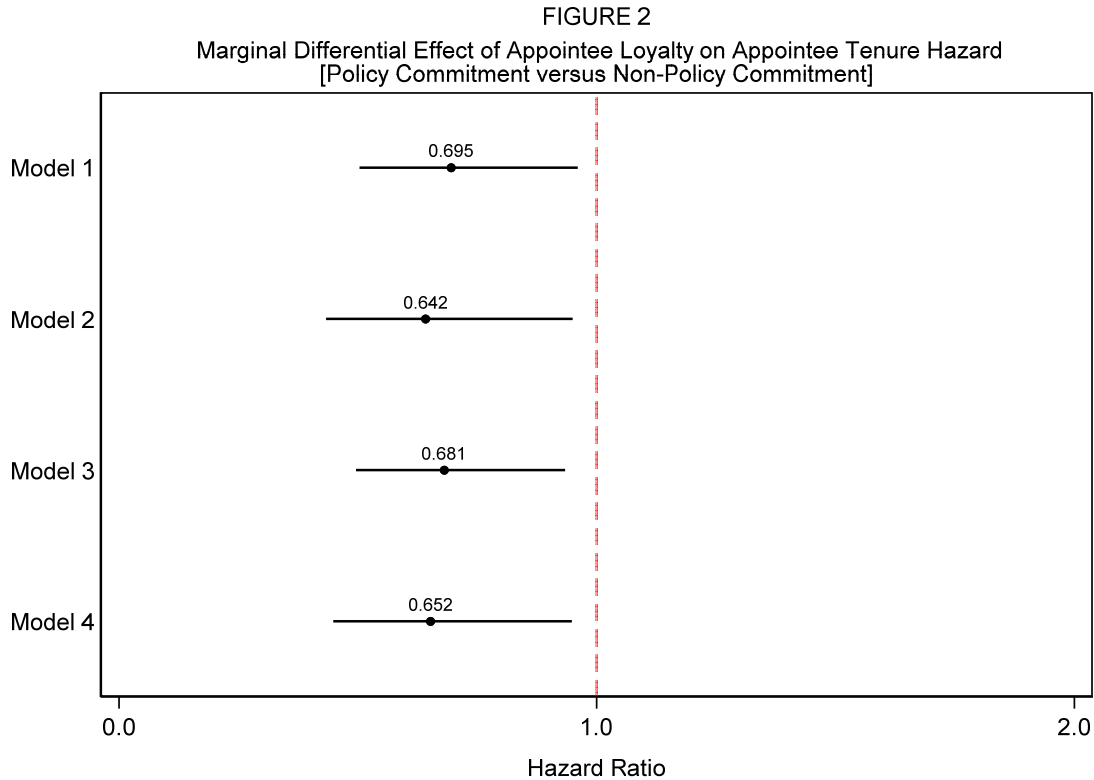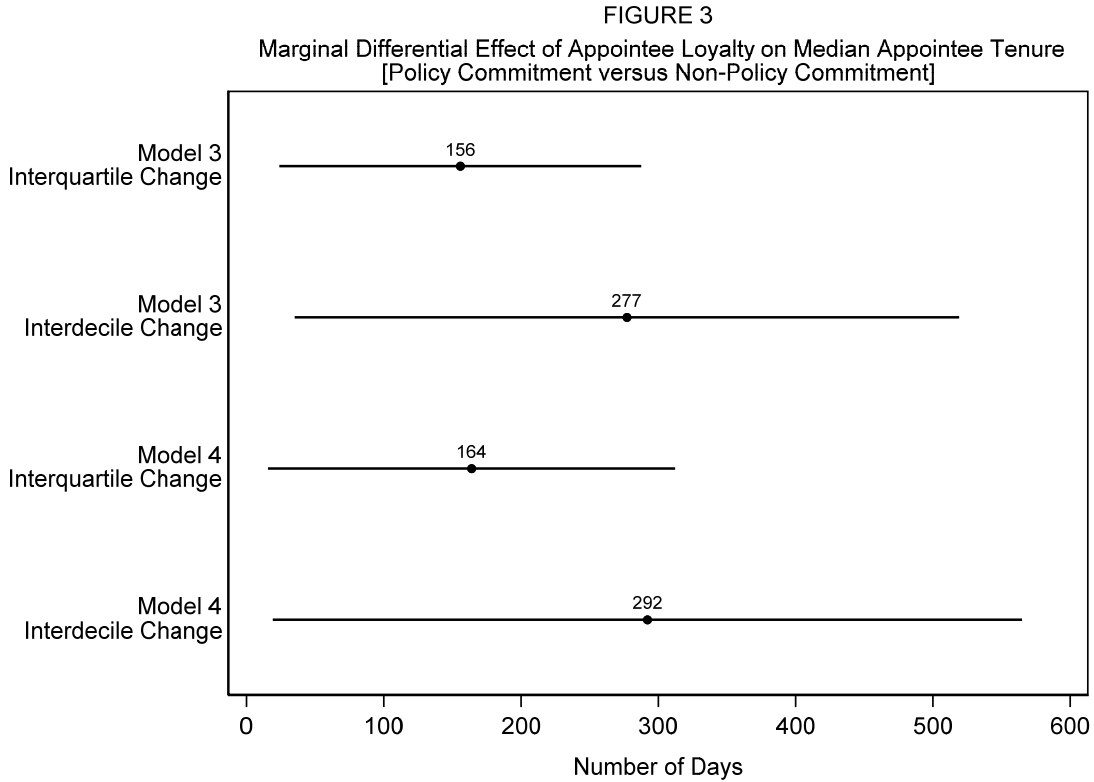[Policy Commitment versus Non-Policy Commitment]

Figure 3 analyzes the *Mutual Benefit Hypothesis* in terms of the predicted median survival times with corresponding 95% confidence intervals based on the Weibull duration models (**Models 3 & 4**). This analysis arrives at estimates of the 'extra days' of service differential that can be expected from executive agency leadership appointees between those with and without a policy commitment at time of nomination based on when appointee loyalty is evaluated at $q = 75$ minus and $q = 25$ (Interquartile change), as well as when it is evaluated at $q = 90$ minus $q = 10$ (Interdecile change). These estimates are naturally more imprecise than the estimated hazard rate effects reported in **Figure 2** since

the predicted median survival times account for both (point) estimate uncertainty and overall model (prediction error) uncertainty generated from the full model specification.

FIGURE 3
Marginal Differential Effect of Appointee Loyalty on Median Appointee Tenure
[Policy Commitment versus Non-Policy Commitment]

The estimated interquartile increase in appointee loyalty between policy commitment and non-policy commitment political executives is 156 days (0.43 years) and 164 days (0.45 years) additional confirmation days that respectively omit and include both agency and presidential administration unit effects. These effects constitute a 17.17% and 18.08% differential increase in predicted median tenure between those with a policy commitment made at the time of nomination versus those which do not.[6] When analyzing starker interdecile changes in appointee loyalty, this differential commitment effect is

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[6] These percentage change effects on predicted median tenure is computed as Unconditional Median Tenure – UMT (907 days, 2.49 years), such that [(UMT + ΔAL | IQR) / UMT]*100.

associated with a predicted median tenure increase of 277 days (0.76 years) and 292 days (0.80 years) in these respective models. In turn, this interdecile change yields a 30.55% and 32.20% differential increase in predicted median tenure relative to the baseline of unconditional median tenure.

Figure 4 displays the predicted differential survival rates relating to low ($q = 10$), moderate ($q = 50$), and high ($q = 90$) levels of appointee loyalty between policy commitment versus non-policy commitment for appointed individuals serving in U.S. federal executive agency leadership positions. This analysis of the **Model 4** estimates gauges the dynamic differential in survival attributable to appointee loyalty associated with the presence of a policy commitment compared to an asence of one that cannot be gleaned from the preceding analysis of differential hazard rates and predicted median confirmtion days. Each of the vertical red lines represent predicted years of service time elapsed. Specifically, this predicted survival rate differential between Low ($q = 10$) and High ($q = 90$) appointee loyalty is a modest 2% [0.95 – 0.93] when evaluated at the end of the first year of service (T = 365 days). This differential rises to 12% [0.79 − 0.67] and 17% [0.49 − 0.32] differentials respecptively in the second (T = 730 days) and third (T = 1,095 days) years of service, before declining to 13% [0.22 − 0.09] at the end of the fourth year of service (T = 1,460 days). This three year range between two and four years of appointed service is substantively meaningful since it yields the greatest risk for appointee turnover that is germane for nearly half of the leadership executive agency appointees in this sample [83.84% – 38.26% = 45.58%]. For longer years of service, these differentials attenuates with the passage of survival time (i.e., appointee tenure), with estimated 5% [0.08 − 0.03] and 1% [0.02 − 0.01] differentials in the fifth and sixth years of service (T = 1,895 days, T = 2,190 days), respectively. Clearly, conjoining appointee loyalty with policy commitment yields the best prospects for leadership continuity in U.S. federal executive branch governance.

FIGURE 4
Predicted Survival Function Differential Between
Policy Commitment versus Non-Policy Commitment
[Varying Levels of Appointee Loyalty: Model 4]
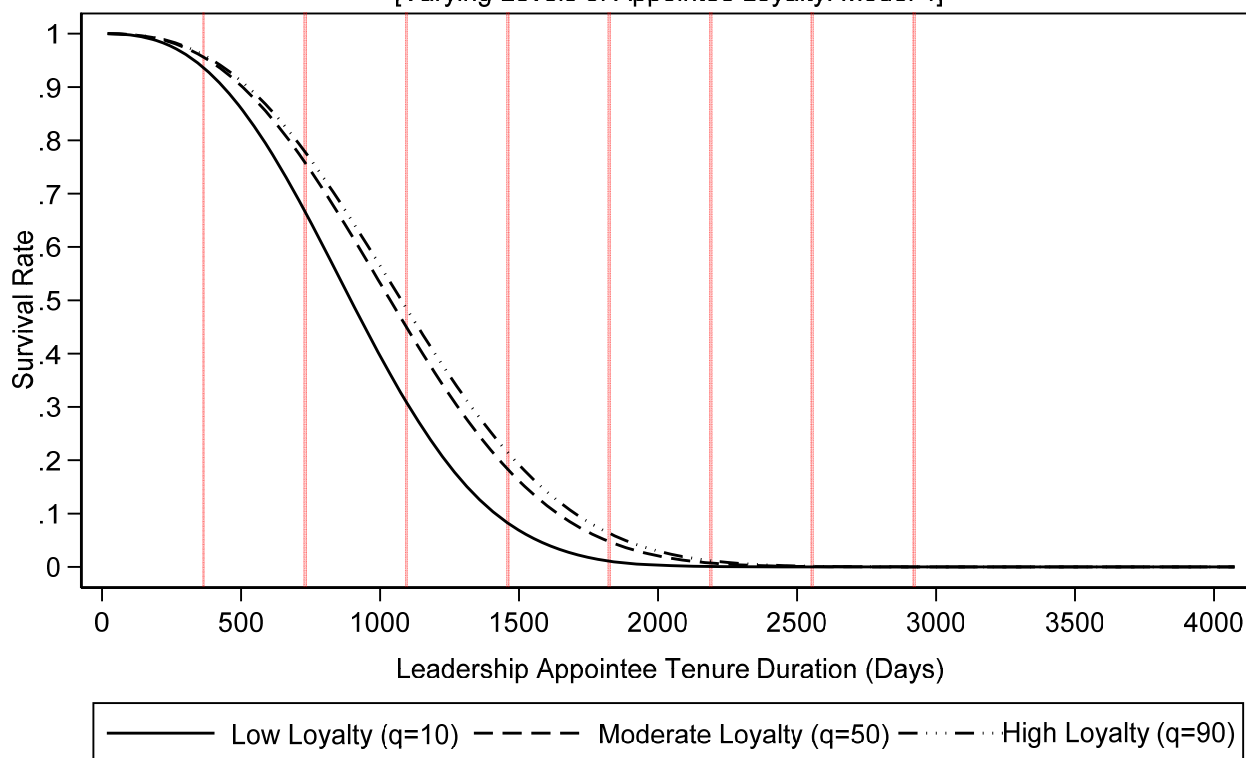
Taken together, these findings offer quantitative leverage in terms of understanding what presidents can feasibly hope to obtain from enhancing greater stability among their executive appointee leadership ranks that is known at the time of nomination, and not subject to the vagaries associated with environmental conditions arising from both politics and economic conditions that are beyond the president's purview in crafting both leadership continuity and change in executive administration. The power of presidential appointments clearly goes beyond what these unelected officials can accomplish once in office, but also determines the extent to which presidents can instill stability in executive administration. These findings indicate that presidents obtain a *conditional tenure premium* from loyalist political executives, that can only be realized when a policy commitment is made to the

appointee's agency that is known at the time of formal nomination. More broadly, such two-sided policy commitments facilitate the president's goals of responsive competence insofar that they can rely on greater leadership stability. When these conditions are lacking, presidents seemingly place less emphasis on responsive competence since either an agency is either 'off-the-agenda' or a strong loyalist is not appointed. Under such conditions, presidents appear to be rationally less averse to leadership appointee turnover since this subset of political executives are less critical to advancing the president's policy agenda.

Alternative Analyses: Alternative Mechanisms, Estimation and Data Designs

In supplementary analyses appearing at the end of this manuscript in the **Appendix**, a series of analyses are performed to evaluate alternative mechanisms (*Appendix A*), as well as the sensitivity of the core estimates to alternative modeling strategies and data structure (*Appendix B*). The former set of analyses in *Appendix A* – presented in detail – reveals that the differential effect of an appointee's level of managerial skills and policy expertise on appointee tenure, conditional on a policy commitment being made at time of nomination is not observed in these data. In addition, differential effects of appointee loyalty on appointee tenure are analyzed based on **(i)** whether they are in a top official leadership position or a subordinate leadership position, **(ii)** ideological policy conflict between the president and Senate filibuster pivot, and **(iii)** whether the position is in a less prestigious executive agency that is less proximate to the president (independent executive agency) or otherwise. In all instances, these conditional differential effects are neither statistically significant nor produce models offering an equivalent model fit (based on AIC and BIC statistics reported in **Table A1**) compared to those presented in the manuscript. The *Appendix B* analyses reveal that the reported estimates using both Cox and Weibull models evaluating the *Mutual Benefit Hypothesis* are consistent with those

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generated from both Gompertz and Generalized Gamma distributional survival models. In addition, these reported Cox and Weibull model estimates are substantively similar to corresponding estimates generated from multiple spells data that allows naturally time-varying covariates to vary across time (days of service) for each appointee observation nature. Finally, supplementary analysis estimating a competing risks model indicates that these differential effects posited by the *Mutual Benefit Hypothesis* do not systematically differ when comparing the departure of a political executive for a subsequent presidential appointed position versus one that is outside the purview of U.S. executive branch politics.

Discussion

Scholarly attention on U.S. executive politics has almost exclusively focused on either the executive branch's unity command structure (e.g., unilateral executive action), or competent powers via tools to check the power of other governmental branches (e.g., executive veto and appointment authority). A critical, yet underappreciated aspect of executive power pertains to the duration of service from both elected and unelected officials. '*Duration'*, as defined by Alexander Hamilton, is synonymous with governance stability since the executive branch, and more specifically, the administrative state, is responsible for ensuring that policies are seen through to achieved intended outcomes. As Alexander Hamilton notes in various *Federalist* writings (*Federalist 70, 72, and 77*), the executive must be an 'energetic' one, such that is combines unity of command with competent powers, as well as adequate '*duration*' (Green 1990: 498; see also Green 2002: 549-550).

Unfortunately, little scholarly attention has focused on Hamilton's notion of '*duration*' in executive administration. This concept is central to the proper functioning of subordinate executive offices charged with responsibility for policy administration (Caldwell 1964: 90; see also Green 1990: 514), and also a means of avoiding both chaos and

disruption in executive administration as duly noted in *Federalist 72* (Rossiter 1961: 436; see also, Green 1990: 514). This issue is critical to the modern study of executive branch governance since different incentives and tensions naturally arise within the U.S. federal bureaucracy between highly transient political executives and relatively permanent career officials (e.g., Aberbach and Rockman 2000; Heclo 1977; Lewis 2008; Resh 2015), made all the more important in light of the emergence of 'acting' officials providing leadership to U.S. federal executive agencies (e.g., Kinane 2021; O'Connell 2020).

This study has sought to better understand Hamilton's concept of '*duration*' in office by analyzing the administrative agents who are charged with responsibility for setting, directing, and guiding executive administration of public policies – U.S. federal agency appointed leadership positions. The scant research analyzing how long political appointees serve in office focuses on the type of position or environmental conditions while in office that shape the longevity of political appointees' service in office. Although past studies bring to bear important empirical insights on longevity of service among U.S. federal appointees (Dull, et al. 2012; Wood and Marchbanks 2008), they are also limited insofar that they treat presidential appointment choices have no *direct* bearing on the degree of stability present in U.S. federal executive agency leadership. Because presidents have direct control over the extent that they select loyalist appointees for particular positions, as well as making policy priority commitments, they exercise a considerable measure of control over the stability of administrative leadership within U.S. federal executive agencies. Therefore, it is natural to infer that presidential appointment choices shape executive administration through affecting the organizational stability of public agencies entrusted with responsibility for shepherding the president's policy goals through executive branch governance.

More broadly, this study highlights a critical mechanism that presidents employ for purposes of effectively crafting continuity among politically responsive agency leaders in those administrative settings most vital to their policy agenda. Because executive-level political appointees typically serve rather short tenures that only represent a small fraction of a president's time in office, coherent executive branch governance necessitates stable administrative leadership if efforts at reconciling the fundamental tension between political leadership ('mandates') and bureaucratic professionalism ('mandarins') noted by Aberbach and Rockman (1988) are to be effective. The logical basis to the 'two-sided commitment' thesis that differentiates 'proponent' versus 'caretaker' loyalist appointees in executive administration is firmly rooted in the notion that presidents seek to use administrative means to achieve policy goals (Nathan 1983). However, presidents cannot maximize executive branch control in an unconstrained manner through a politicization strategy (e.g., Moe 1985). Although a politicization strategy is constrained by inherent tradeoffs between political control and administrative expertise (e.g., Lewis 2008), presidents are additionally constrained beyond such delegation-based tradeoffs. This study demonstrates that presidents cannot attain Alexander's Hamilton's aim for adequate 'duration' in executive administration from merely appointing loyalists, unless it is coupled with a firm policy commitment as a term of appointment. Hence, presidents must prioritize their efforts for effective politicization of executive agencies through leadership stability to those settings where responsive competence benefits both themselves and their bureaucratic agents.

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Appendix A explicitly considers alternative competing mechanisms in comparison

to the *Mutual Benefit Hypothesis* that is derived from the logic of a 'two-sided' commitment

between president and appointed political executive advanced in this study. These

alternative mechanisms are discussed in the manuscript (see *Alternative Analyses:*

Alternative Mechanisms, Estimation and Data Designs subsection). The Cox and

Weibull model specifications accounting for both agency and presidential administration

unit effects are employed in **Figure A1** (**Models 2 & 4**), while the same Weibull Model

formulation (**Model 4**) is employed in **Figure A2**.

These alternative set of differential substantive effects on the hazard of appointee

departure are not only more modest, but also fail to come close to attaining statistical

significance at conventional levels in **Figure A1** with exception of *Presidential Loyalty ×*

Agency Position Type (**Models A3.2 & A3.4**). In this particular case, an interquartile

increase in presidential loyalty is associated with roughly a 30% higher likelihood of

departure than compared to a subordinate political executive. This finding contrasts with

the unconditional effect of *Agency Position Type* on the hazard of appointee departure

reported in the manuscript that finds top agency officials are less likely to depart, on

average, compared to subordinate officials. Taken together, this finding suggests that lower

and moderate loyalist chief political executives are comparatively more durable in terms of

service to the administration than their subordinate counterparts. Yet, a closer inspection

of the predicted median survival effects in **Figure A1** reveals that these substantive

differential interquartile and interdecile effects are not only numerically modest in

magnitude (-97 and -164 days) compared to the corresponding differential median survival

consequences attributable to *Presidential Loyalty × Agency Position Type* (164 and 292

days), but the latter reported models offer a better representation of these data based on

both lower AIC and BIC statistics (**Table A1**). Further, the reported mechanism also offers

larger substantive effects in terms of hazard rates (**Figure A1**) and corresponding

predicted median survival times (**Figure A2**), and superior model fit (**Table A1**) compared

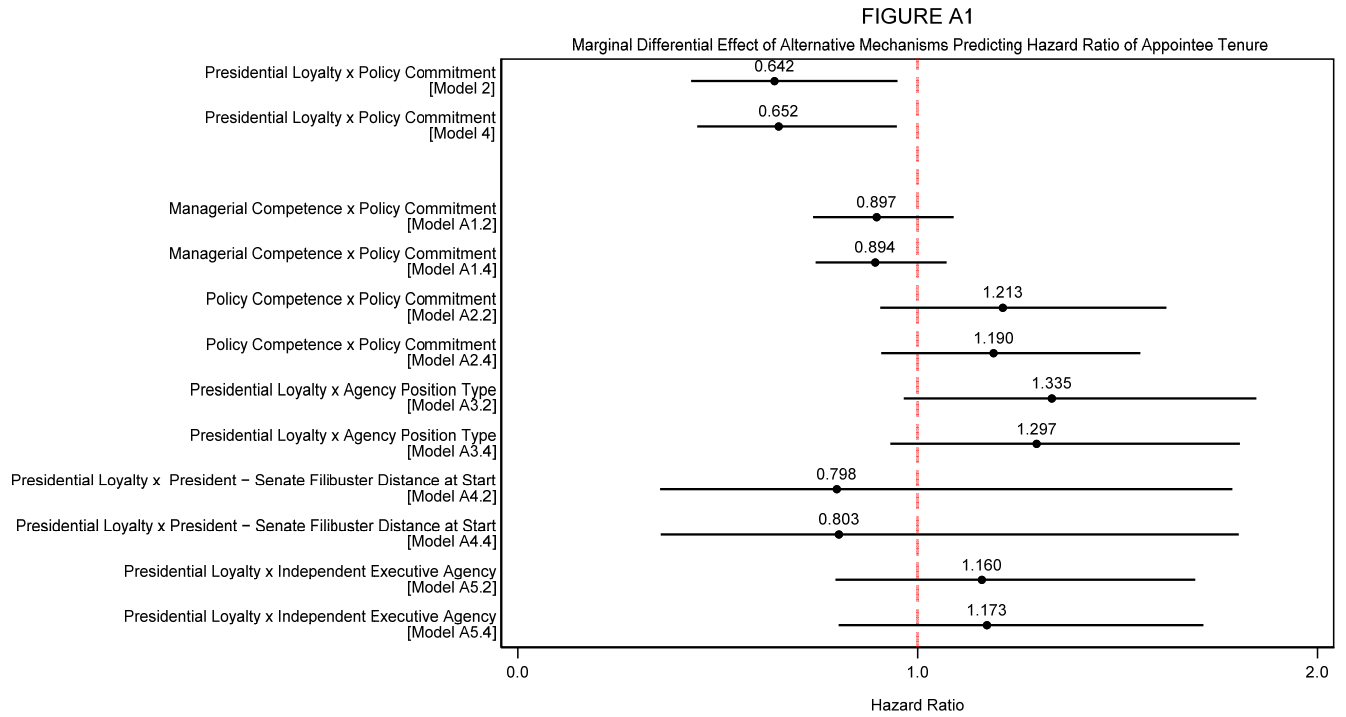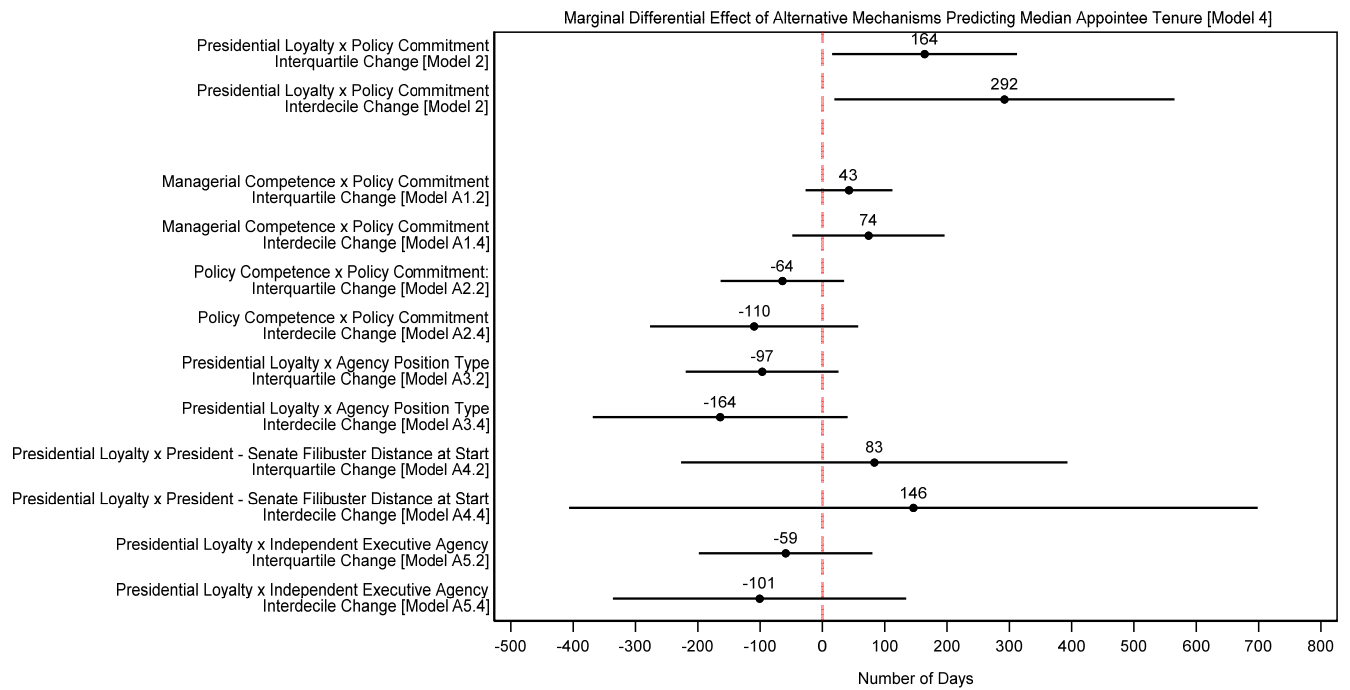to the other alternative mechanisms investigated here

FIGURE A1

Marginal Differential Effect of Alternative Mechanisms Predicting Hazard Ratio of Appointee Tenure

FIGURE A2

Marginal Differential Effect of Alternative Mechanisms Predicting Median Appointee Tenure [Model 4]

TABLE A.1

Model Fit for Alternative Model Specifications Reflected in Both Figures A1 & A2

Model Specification	AIC	BIC
Presidential Loyalty × Policy Priority: **Model 2**	**9371.281**	**9561.559**
Presidential Loyalty × Policy Priority: **Model 4**	**1082.168**	**1196.334**
Managerial Competence × Policy Priority: **Model A1.2**	9381.094	9571.371
Managerial Competence × Policy Priority: **Model A1.4**	1091.362	1205.529
Policy Competence × Policy Priority: **Model A2.2**	9379.611	9569.888
Policy Competence × Policy Priority: **Model A2.4**	1090.387	1204.553
Presidential Loyalty × Agency Position Type: **Model A3.2**	9376.768	9567.046
Presidential Loyalty × Agency Position Type: **Model A3.4**	1088.022	1202.189
Presidential Loyalty × President − Senate Filibuster Distance at Start: **Model A4.2**	9381.643	9571.92
Presidential Loyalty × President − Senate Filibuster Distance at Start: **Model A4.4**	1092.02	1206.186
Presidential Loyalty × Independent Executive Agency: **Model A5.2**	9381.453	9571.73
Presidential Loyalty × Independent Executive Agency: **Model A5.4**	1091.711	1205.877

APPENDIX B

Appendix B considers alternative estimation and data designs for evaluating the

Mutual Benefit Hypothesis to ensure that the findings reported in the manuscript are not

an artifact of the type of statistical model or data design employed to evaluate this

hypothesis. These alternatives are summarized in the manuscript (see *Alternative*

Analyses: Alternative Mechanisms, Estimation and Data Designs subsection). As

with **Appendix B**, comparisons to the reported model estimates involve both the Cox and

Weibull model specifications accounting for both agency and presidential administration

unit effects (**Models 2 & 4**) in **Figure B1**, while the same Weibull Model formulation

(**Model 4**) is employed in **Figure B2**. Because the Generalized Gamma model parametric

survival estimates are in a different time metric (Accelerated Time Failure [AFT]), they are

not reported in this set of supplementary graphics. Nonetheless, these Generalized Gamma

AFT estimates are extremely similar to those generated from the Weibull model (0.1164

versus 0.1194) and have substantively identical p-values (0.023 versus 0.025).

Figure B1 reveals that the reported model estimates denoted by **Models 2 & 4** are

not only robust to alternative distributional assumptions (**Gompertz**, **Model B1.4**), but

also to both omission of observations (n = 33, 3.85% of full sample) excluded from the

competing risk model analysis due to lack of information on destination following appointee

departure (**Cox Model, B2.2**) and multiple spells data that treats the appointee

observation-day as the unit of analysis (**Model B3.2 & Model B3.4**). The predicted median

survival times presented in **Figure B2** display that these sensitivity checks offer very

similar, and in some cases, less conservative estimates of the consequences of the *Mutual*

Benefit Hypothesis on the estimated duration of service for upper-echelon political

appointees within U.S. federal executive agencies. The estimates in both **Figures B1** and

B2 for the multiple spells data design are of similar magnitude, albeit slightly less precise

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(p = 0.076 and 0.083 respectively in **Models B3.2 & B3.4**) – most likely the result of the augmentation of idiosyncratic variance attributable to the expansion of the database from 860 appointee observation cases to 850,034 appointee observation-days.

The competing risk model analyzing whether the differential effect of conditional loyalty on departure destination reveals that loyalist political executives exhibiting a policy commitment in their present position are no more likely to land in a subsequent administration appointed position than a destination outside this purview (e.g., private sector, non-profit, or retirement) relative to loyalist political executives whose positions are void of a presidential policy commitment. This estimate is numerically modest (hazard rate = −0.971, 2.9% differential effect), and estimated with substantial imprecision that clearly renders a null finding.

FIGURE B1

Marginal Differential Effect of Appointee Loyalty
on Appointee Tenure Hazard using Alternative Parametric Hazards & Data Designs
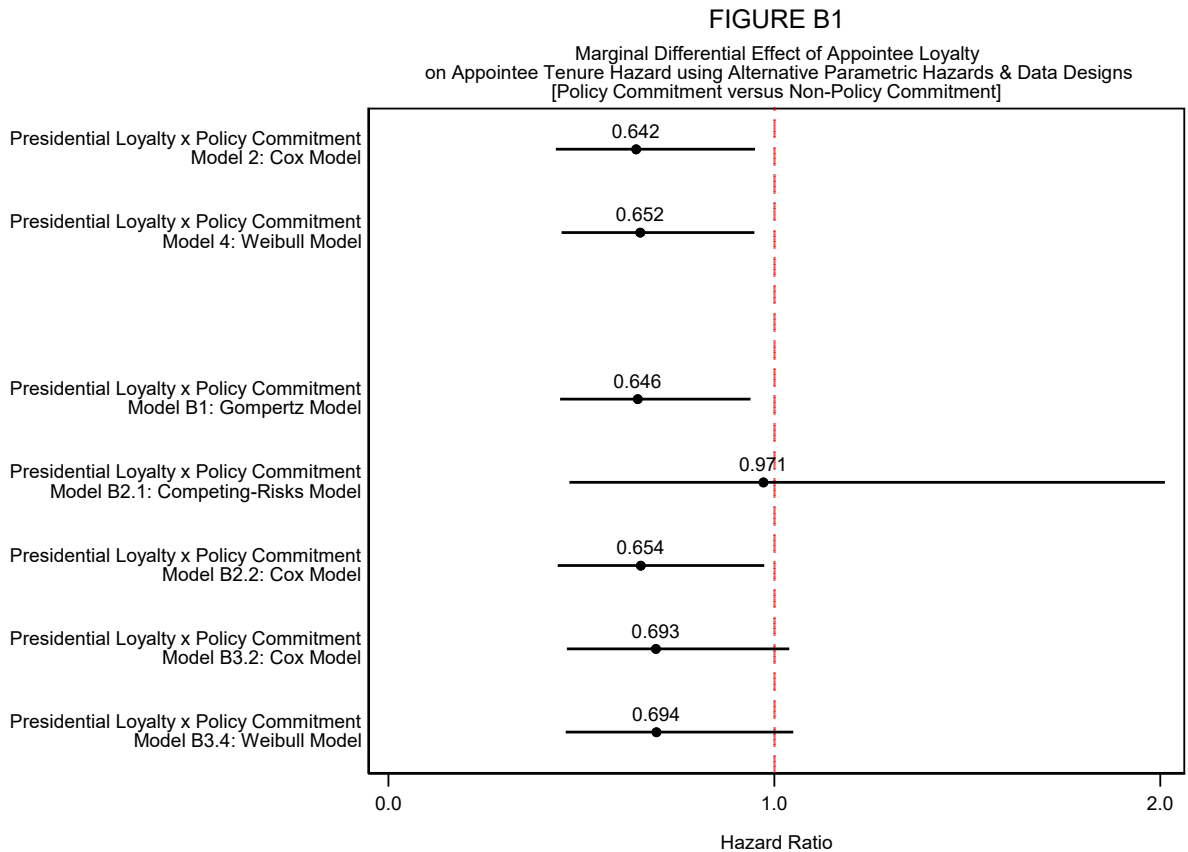[Policy Commitment versus Non-Policy Commitment]

FIGURE B2

Marginal Differential Effect of Appointee Loyalty Predicting
Median Appointee Tenure using Alternative Parametric Hazards & Data Designs
[Policy Commitment versus Non-Policy Commitment]