

Executive Control and Turnover in the Senior Executive Service*

Kathleen M. Doherty
Price School of Public Policy
University of Southern California
Lewis Hall 312
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0626
kdoherly@price.usc.edu

David E. Lewis
Department of Political Science
Vanderbilt University
Commons Center PMB 0505
230 Appleton Place
Nashville, TN 37203-5721
david.lewis@vanderbilt.edu

Scott Limbocker
U.S. Military Academy at West Point
Lincoln Hall Bldg 607
West Point, NY 10996
scott.limbocker@usma.edu

Abstract: If presidents wish to see their policy priorities implemented, they need control over key decision-making positions often occupied by *career* executives. This paper examines whether political conflict with a new administration drives career executives from their positions. This can happen because presidents target specific individuals or because career professionals anticipate conflict and strategically exit before a new president takes office. To assess this dynamic, we use novel data that combines individual survey responses with personnel records to analyze the probability that an agency executive departs her position from March 2015 to July 2017. Given our findings that turnover is driven both by presidential marginalization and

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strategic exit by bureaucrats, we conclude with implications for presidential efforts to control the bureaucracy.

Modern governance is increasingly bureaucratic governance. Legislatures have responded to the expanding volume and complexity of government work by delegating more policymaking authority to the administrative state. In the U.S. government of close to 2.8 million civilian employees, only a fraction of management positions are filled by political appointment. Members of the permanent bureaucracy staff the remainder of important positions. In theory, career executives staffing agencies are neutral and serve presidents of either party equally well. Yet, many career executives have preferences over the direction of agency policymaking that conflict those of the president. The strength of those preferences may make it difficult for them to work with an administration and some may resist implementation of the president's policy agenda if it conflicts with their views. Ideological conflict between career executives and the president affects both the incentives of presidents to control agencies and the incentives of career executives to remain in their position. In this article, we ask: do presidents marginalize career executives with whom they conflict and how do career executives respond?

The transition from President Obama to President Trump illustrates the conflict between presidents and career executives and its implications for the career decisions of civil servants. In news reports, career executives describe the new administration's use of tactics intended to drive them from their positions, including involuntary reassignments, exclusion from policymaking, and being asked to retire (Cohen 2017; Price 2017; Clement 2017; Shear and Lichtblau 2017). For example, a scientist in the Department of the Interior described being involuntarily reassigned from a policy analyst position that focused on adaptation to climate change to an accounting office (Clement 2017). Others explain that exit is the result of deep disagreement

with the policies of the Trump administration (Price 2017; Cohen 2017; Rank 2017). These anecdotal accounts suggest an exodus of federal bureaucrats who find themselves in conflict with the Trump administration with some exiting before the transition and others after. In what follows, we aim to provide a careful exploration of how the political environment affects departures of high level bureaucrats.

If presidents wish to see their priorities implemented, they need to establish control over key decision-making positions. Some positions exert more authority over the direction of agency policymaking, particularly individuals in positions that personnel officials have labeled as “choke points” for policymaking (Hecl 1977; Lewis 2011; Lewis and Waterman 2013). These are positions that are the spigots of policymaking in the agencies. Persons holding such positions often must sign off on key decisions. We contend that presidents are more likely to target those in such positions. We also expect that presidents are more likely to marginalize individuals with ideologically divergent preferences who are unlikely to support their agenda. As a result, turnover among these individuals should increase *after* a presidential transition. Yet, because of the protections that civil service rules provide, we argue that the incentives of career officials also affect turnover. We contend that after an election career executives consider working conditions under a new presidential administration and some will strategically exit *before* a transition occurs if they anticipate conflict under the new administration.

We assess presidential efforts to control positions filled by high level career executives by examining the behavior of members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) through the transition from President Obama to the President Trump. Members of the SES typically occupy top level positions, and by design, serve as the link between the administration and the career officials more generally. They are a class of career bureaucrats that have an impact on

policymaking in the agency and are visible enough that they may be targeted by a presidential administration.¹ Although we focus on the SES, we believe that our argument is generalizable to other career executives at a comparable level of management, but do not expect that argument extends to those occupying lower level positions.

To test the claims advanced in the article, we use a novel dataset that combines individual survey responses (providing details of career executives' positions and policy views) with personnel records (providing details about their careers including exit). With this data, we analyze the probability that an agency executive departs her position each month from March 2015 to July 2017. In the past, it has been difficult to identify key positions and examine both the views and actual careers of their occupants. Yet with access to new data, we are able to obtain information about an individual career executive's ideology, professional responsibilities, and exit decisions. The paper leverages new data to assess these questions more systematically and with greater precision than has been previously possible.

We find suggestive evidence that in the transition from President Obama to President Trump, individuals in positions with more authority over the direction of policymaking are more likely to leave. Departure is clearly more likely when civil servants experience ideological conflict with the president. After President Trump's election, liberal executives were more likely to depart than conservative executives. This contrasts with the two years prior to the election, when ideology is not associated with departure decisions. Departures by ideologically distant

¹ While the argument applies to top level career bureaucrats and is tested on a sample of career SES, we refer to these individuals with several terms, including career executives and civil servants throughout the text.

career executives enhance presidential control over key positions held by career service personnel, because turnover provides the new administration with the opportunity to promote like-minded bureaucrats to important positions.

We conclude that U.S. presidents have substantial latitude to reshape the key positions in government held by civil servants, partly because of voluntary choices made by these career executives. Of course, the cost of this form of control is the loss of experienced civil servants. Knowledgeable, experienced, career executives are vital for the successful implementation of complex policies and the presence of executives with views contrary to the president significantly limits the influence of the new administration on policy outcomes (Harris and Milkis 1989; Rourke 1990).

Presidential Control and Exit Decisions

Extensive research examines the factors that drive turnover among agency personnel. Some scholars have examined how factors, such as job security, agency specific expertise, policy discretion, and job market conditions, affect a civil servant's incentives to remain in the agency and develop expertise (Bertelli and Lewis, 2013; Gailmard and Patty, 2007, 2012; Huber and McCarty 2004). Others focus on the impact of economic opportunity and paths of professional advancement on the decision to remain in a position or depart (Lee and Whitford 2008; Teodoro 2011; Adolph 2013; Whitford and Lee 2015). Another important area examines the influence of public service motivation and values on the decision to remain in public service (see, e.g., Perry and Wise 1990; Bright 2008). Research has also explored how organizational factors, such as performance pay, affect career decisions (Pitts, Marvel, Fernandez 2011; Moynihan, Wright and Pandey 2008; Bertelli 2006).

The political environment also importantly shapes exit. The primary means by which presidents exert control over the bureaucracy is through the strategic use of personnel (see, e.g., Durant 1987, 1992; Nathan 1975; Weko 1995). Scholars have carefully examined presidential strategies for controlling agency personnel through appointments (see, e.g., Mackenzie 1981; Moe 1985; Pfiffner 1996; Weko 1995; Hecl 1977; Lewis 2008; Light 1995). Considerably less research assesses how senior career executives respond to conflict with elected officials and their appointees. Scholars have examined executive self-reports from interviews and surveys that highlight instances of appointees marginalizing ideologically divergent bureaucrats, particularly during the Nixon and Reagan administrations (e.g., Aberbach and Rockman 2000; Golden 1992, 2000; Maranto 1993, 2005; Durant 1987, 1992; Nathan 1975). Although one response to conflict is shirking or sabotage, another is for bureaucrats with skills to exit the agency (Bertelli and Lewis 2013; Bolton et al. 2017; Brehm and Gates 1997; Cameron et al. 2017; Golden 1992, 2000; Richardson 2016). Recent research has found aggregate turnover is higher in a transition year and in agencies ideologically distant from the president (Bolton et al. 2017). Yet despite advances, our knowledge of the impact of political conflict on career executives is limited because existing research has not been able to systematically track both individual level ideology and career choices. Understanding the extent of presidential control of key positions in the career civil service is vital to understanding the presidency, the insulation of civil servants from politics, and the role of presidents and civil servants in the public policy process.

Explaining Turnover in Key Positions

This section first discusses constraints on the president's ability to alter the composition of personnel and the strategies presidents have employed to circumvent constraints. Then we

consider the conditions under which turnover in key positions is likely to occur. We conclude that turnover, and ultimately presidential control, is influenced both by the conditions that incentivize an administration to marginalize bureaucrats and those that incentivize bureaucrats to exit.

Presidents and Continuing Professional Personnel: Institutional Constraints

Presidents operate within a set of institutional constraints on their ability to alter the composition or placement of bureaucrats. Congress has created a personnel system loosely divided between political appointees and career executives that have different levels of protection against removal.² The ease of transfer or removal varies depending upon the location of the official in the hierarchy. Political appointees are the easiest to remove as they usually serve at the pleasure of the president while career professionals in the traditional civil service are the most difficult.³

While new presidents may possess strong incentives to control key positions in agencies, they are limited in their ability to alter the composition of the incumbent team by civil service regulations that apply to the bulk of agency employees. Merit system principles require that civil service employees be hired, promoted, demoted, and fired on the basis of merit. Disagreements over politics or policy are not legitimate motivations for transfer or removal. Ideally, civil

² For a good overview, see Kaufman 1965 or Ingraham 1995.

³ A subset of appointees cannot be removed by the president except for cause (Lewis and Selin 2012).

servants serve either party equally well, and merit, rather than politics, determines position and pay.

The SES consists of managerial positions that sit between traditional civil service employees and the Senate-confirmed (PAS) political appointees that administer government agencies. Individuals in the SES occupy top level management positions with responsibilities such as directing the work of a unit, exercising important policymaking functions, and being held accountable for program success.⁴ They report involvement in every phase of policy development and have frequent contact with political officials in executive branch (Dolan 2000). There are about 7,000 SES managers comprised of career civil servants and a maximum of 10 percent of noncareer (i.e., politically appointed) members. Presidents have greater, though still restricted, flexibility to reassign a member of the SES after a certain length of time.⁵ This provides administration officials the authority to put people of their own choosing in some key positions. An incoming administration will likely scrutinize individuals in the SES more than other career executives because of their potential to influence the direction of agency policymaking.

While civil service rules provide protections against removal, enterprising presidential administrations have found ways of working around the spirit, if not the letter, of the law. Nixon

⁴ See Office of Personnel Management's overview of the Senior Executive Service. Access at: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/senior-executive-service/overview-history/> .

⁵ Career members of the Senior Executive Service may be reassigned more easily than other federal employees. See Office of Personnel Management, *Guide to the Senior Executive Service*, March 2017, pp. 10-11.

White House Aide, Fred Malek, famously circulated the *Federal Political Personnel Manual* to administration officials detailing informal ways of working around civil service rules to get civil servants to leave their jobs creating vacancies to be filled with ideological allies (U.S. Congress 1972).⁶ Recommended tactics included bluntly asking the executive to move on or assigning them to a project with responsibilities (like travel or a new location) that would make it difficult for them to remain. Alternatively, the manual encouraged appointees to use reorganizations or parallel processes to marginalize or dislodge troublesome career executives from key positions. Testifying before a Senate committee, Malek detailed how the administration would submit lists of names to agency personnel offices to give a “political push” so that when vacancies arose individuals supportive of the president’s agenda were promoted (Quoted in Cole and Caputo 1979, 403).

Examples of these tactics can be found in the behavior of political appointees over time. When interviewed about his tenure as Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, Dr. James Goddard, appointed by President Johnson, emphasized the importance of placing staff committed to his agenda in positions of power and described using reorganizations and transfers to sideline troublesome civil servants (“Interview with James Goddard” 1969, 172, 178, 180, 316-318, 475). The Reagan Administration created teams of political officials or “shadow staffs” used to bypass career managers (Ingraham 1987; Aberbach and Rockman 1990). Famously, President Reagan’s first Environmental Protection Agency administrator, Anne Gorsuch, compiled hit lists of personnel whose policy preferences conflicted with those of the

⁶ Presidents may also strategically leave positions vacant to minimize the impact of career officials on policy in a particular area.

administration and targeted these employees for reassignment, demotion, or removal (Golden 2000, 121-126). President Trump's, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke testified before Congress that he employed reassignments as a strategy to encourage departures among agency employees.⁷

What is clear from the examples above is that presidents have used personnel decisions to control agency policy. Presidents have sought not only to control the selection of appointees but also key career positions as well. Despite historical examples and case studies, there is very little systematic information about how bureaucrats anticipate and respond to targeting. Top civil servants, knowing presidents and new administrations use these tactics, should anticipate this form of presidential influence. When these civil servants exit, the administration gains greater control of the executive branch by selecting the exiting civil servant's replacement. An assessment of turnover provides insight into the scope of presidential marginalization and the conditions under which the strategic incentives of bureaucrats facilitate presidential control.

Marginalization

Presidents do not need to establish control over *all* career executives to control an agency. Some positions have more influence on the pace and content of policy change than others (see, e.g., Haglund 2014; Kumar 2009; Parsneau 2013). Even among individuals in the upper echelons of the civil service, the ability to influence policymaking varies considerably. Some career executives hold key positions that personnel officials have labeled as “choke

⁷ Congressional testimony is accessed at:

https://www.energy.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=E4146E42-E6AD-4519-AE88-3EE0402ABED2 (accessed August 12, 2018).

points” for policymaking (Lewis 2011; Hecl 1977). Individuals in choke point positions have the ability to slow down or shift policymaking toward their preferred outcomes.⁸ Limits on the time and attention of a new administration increase the probability that presidents and their appointees target key positions rather than attempt to displace bureaucrats on a wide scale.

Agency authority is often expansive, but agencies typically suffer resource constraints that limit their ability to equally pursue all policy activities within their purview. An individual in a position responsible for managing a broad range of agency policymaking activities is more likely to be able to affect the direction of policymaking, because she has influence over how agencies balance competing priorities. If a career executive influences how agencies prioritize certain policy activities at the expense of others, she will be able to delay or elevate presidential priorities.

Consider the policy influence of the career executive who heads the Counterterrorism section in the Department of Justice. This individual is responsible for investigating and prosecuting domestic and international terrorism cases among other activities and has discretion over the types of investigations the department pursues as well as their pace. The head of the Office of Ground and Drinking Water in the Environmental Protection Agency, also a career executive, is responsible for developing and implementing national drinking water standards and overseeing source water protection. Other career executives construct budget and spending plans

⁸ The White House Transition Project has developed a similar concept for appointed positions. They identify the most important appointed positions referred to as “stand up positions” and track president’s ability to fill these positions. See:

<http://whitehousetransitionproject.org/appointments/>)

such as the chief financial officer in the National Institutes of Health. Individuals in these positions have the opportunity to influence the direction and pace of policymaking in the offices they oversee.

Past presidents have recognized the importance of controlling key positions. Presidents have transformed some key policy positions held by career executives into political appointments or bypassed career officials with temporary teams of political appointees (Hecklo 1975, 1977; Ingraham et al. 1995; Lewis 2008, 2010, 2011). Given the size and scope of executive branch authority, replacing career executives is not always possible nor is always desirable considering the potential costs to expertise of extensive politicization. As an alternative, presidents and their appointees may marginalize career officials in key positions to create an opening. Once the position is open, agency appointees may promote another individual within the agency who is more supportive of the president's agenda.

Over the course of an administration, career executives that reveal themselves as unable to work with a presidential administration are less likely to rise to key positions and more likely to be reassigned or to exit. Therefore, we expect that when an administration leaves office, the executives that remain in key positions are those that can work effectively with the current administration. If a new president of the opposing party assumes office, the incoming administration is likely to have conflict with those bureaucrats promoted to key positions under the previous administration. We expect that following a transition presidents are more likely to target individuals in important positions, particularly if she has responsibility for setting agency policy priorities. These individuals were likely chosen by the previous administration and have the ability to substantially influence policy in their agency.

H1 Choke Points: Departure in a civil service position is more likely if the individual held an important policy position under the previous administration.

Although civil servants are presumed to be neutral, many possess political and policy views that affect their ability to work with certain administrations. The views of civil servants commonly conflict with those of the presidential administration in power (see e.g., Aberbach and Rockman 2000; Golden 1992, 2000; Clinton, et al 2012). Bureaucrats vary in the strength and visibility of these commitments to political supervisors. Given limitations on time and information, a new president will likely focus their efforts on those career executives who they expect will be most damaging to the implementation of their agenda.

If a career bureaucrat occupies a key position, the benefits of controlling this position increase as the policy preferences of the career bureaucrat and the presidential administration diverge. There is little incentive to exert effort to marginalize bureaucrats supportive of the presidential agenda except for reasons of incompetence. Presidential appointees may identify individuals whose beliefs and partisan identity make it likely that they will undermine the president's agenda and prefer to entrust their responsibilities to a civil servant more supportive of the president's preferred policies. While presidents are constrained by the need for a degree of competence, all else equal, individual civil servants whose views diverge from those of the administration are more likely to be targeted for removal. Presidents cannot replace civil servants in troublesome agencies wholesale. Rather, presidents must target specific key individuals within the agency to bring divergent agencies in line. Individual level targeting also allows presidents to gain control over otherwise sympathetic agencies where careerists with divergent preferences may have risen to key positions under the previous administration. We assess preference

divergence between the president and a career executive with individual level measures of party and ideology.

H2 Ideology: Departure in a civil service position is more likely as the preferences of the civil servant diverge from the president.

Strategic Exit

The choices of incumbent civil servants themselves also affect departure decisions because of the protections that civil service rules provide. Departure decisions in the civil service are complex choices shaped by a number of factors, including external electoral and political forces. Existing research explores many factors that shape the career choices of government workers, including the transferability of skills, policy discretion, recruitment, opportunities for professional advancement, and the economic climate, among others (see, e.g., Gailmard and Patty 2012; Bertelli and Lewis 2013; Adolph 2013; Golden 1992, 2000; Teodoro 2011). The complexity of exit decisions suggested by this research reflects the diversity of individuals serving in the federal government. Yet, the election of new presidents importantly shapes the career decisions of these key policymaking officials in the midst of this diversity.

As Downs (1967) observed, the motivations of federal employees are not uniform. For *some* career executives, the value they derive from their position is related to their ability to influence policy or advance their understanding of the agency's mission while others weigh other factors such as compensation or advancement more (Downs 1967; Gailmard and Patty 2007, 2012; Prendergast 2007). Political conflict influences career executive's ability to influence policy, alters policy in ways they prefer (or not), and can influence the value of career opportunities inside and outside of government. As a result, conflict should affect the departure rate of career executives in top level positions overall.

A presidential transition can profoundly affect the direction of policy in an agency. New leadership in the White House as well as appointed positions at the top of executive agencies typically triggers a reevaluation of agency policy, which may affect the opportunities of career executives (Sunstein 2017). Federal executives can use experience with past presidential behavior to inform exit decisions. They understand the impact of presidential elections, perhaps serving through earlier transitions, and can predict with varying degrees of accuracy the effect of a newly elected administration on their own work and policymaking in their agency generally. If an individual was ideologically aligned or worked closely with the previous administration on important policies, she can assess the potential for conflict with the new president. If she believes a loss of policy influence is imminent, it may be preferable to independently exit her position rather than remain in the agency under a new administration.

Conflict over the content of policy and direction of policymaking in the agency is more likely as the ideological distance between the career executive and incoming administration increases. Following an election, individuals with preferences ideologically distant from the president elect are more likely to assess outside job opportunities and strategically exit their position before the new president takes office. We acknowledge that some individuals will weigh the anticipated loss of influence more heavily in their decisions, depending on the importance policy influence to the individual (Downs 1967; Gailmard and Patty 2012). Of course, the decision to depart will also be conditioned by the attractiveness of outside opportunities relative to remaining in their position under the new administration (Bertelli and Lewis 2013; Bolton et al. 2017; Gailmard and Patty 2007; Golden 1992, 2000; Teodoro 2011; Lee and Whitford 2008).

The timing of strategic exit is affected by key dates in the electoral calendar. In the months leading up to an election, there is typically some degree of uncertainty about the results

of a presidential election. After the election, the identity of the new president is known and the names of key players in a new administration become public. Therefore, exit decisions should become more ideological after an election. Career executives who anticipate conflict or the loss of influence under the incoming administration are likely to depart before having to experience the disruption of a transition and conflict with a new administration. If anticipation drives at least some departures, it should occur in the period between the election and inauguration.⁹ While ideological conflict predicts presidential marginalization and strategic exit, the key difference is the timing of departure. This leads to a final hypothesis:

H3 Strategic Exit: The anticipation of ideological distance between a civil servant and incoming president increases between the election and inauguration.

Strategic exit highlights a form of presidential influence that does not require overt presidential action. If civil service managers voluntarily depart rather than work with a new administration, new presidents may gain influence without having to actively marginalize any career executives. New administrations may have the opportunity to fill vacancies with career executives that more closely align with their preferences. At minimum, presidents get a new person in the job less connected to the executives and policymaking of the last administration.

⁹ The inauguration imperfectly differentiates between exit in anticipation of conflict and marginalization. Prior to inauguration, departure is driven by anticipation of conflict with the new administration. After inauguration, some career executives may observe marginalization of other employees or know that her preferences are in conflict with the policies pressed by the new administration and depart prior to be actively marginalized.

Regardless of why career executives exit, their departure augments the new administration's ability to shape the career service personnel who occupy important positions.

In sum, the incentives of both presidential administrations and career bureaucrats affect turnover in key policymaking positions. Presidents should initiate turnover pressure more often in key positions and when policy conflict between the career bureaucrat and administration is high. The decisions of career executives also affect agency turnover as they anticipate their role in a new administration as well as the availability of other employment opportunities.

Data, Variables, and Methods

To examine presidentially-driven turnover among key civil servants, we need a means of identifying these officials as well as information about their ideological beliefs and exit decisions. The SES provides an important linkage between appointees and civil servants in the traditional merit system. Yet, these officials are often only observable to the administration and attentive congressional staff or interest groups and their ideology is not public information. We use survey data to identify a sample of career SES officials and their beliefs. Then we match survey respondents to personnel records to track departures over time. We include full step-by-step details of the data collection below in Appendix A.

The 2014 Survey on the Future of Government Service surveyed all career members of the SES (Richardson 2016).¹⁰ The survey was fielded between August and December of 2014.

¹⁰ For a description of the survey and methodology, see Richardson 2016 and the survey webpage (<https://www.mrichardson.info/2014-sfgs>, last accessed September 25, 2017).

Importantly, the survey included questions that allow us to identify choke-point positions as well as the ideology and partisanship of officials filling these positions.¹¹

Of key interest to this study are the departures of career SES members. We use actual exit rather than intended exit.¹² To determine which career executives left public service in the period before and after the 2016 election, we use data from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the *Federal Yellow Book* (a directory of government officials).¹³ These two sources allow us to identify which survey respondents remained in government in the periods before and after the survey. In 2016, OPM released data on federal employees by name and quarter from 1973 to September of 2016.¹⁴ The release of specific names allowed us to connect personnel records to the survey response records. To trace exits *after* September 2016, we matched survey respondents to data downloaded each month after the election from the on-line version of the *Federal Yellow Book*.

¹¹ The response rate for career executives was 26 percent and the sample of SES respondents looks similar to the population of executives (Richardson 2016).

¹² Intention is an imperfect measure of exit and different factors predict actual versus intended exit (Cohen, et al, 2016).

¹³ The *Federal Yellow Book* is published in paper and online version by Leadership Directories, Inc. (<http://www.leadershipdirectories.com/>, last accessed September 25, 2017).

¹⁴ See Singer-Vine, Jeremy. 2017. “We’re Sharing a Vast Trove of Federal Payroll Records.” *BuzzFeed News*, May 24, 2017 (https://www.buzzfeed.com/jsvine/sharing-hundreds-of-millions-of-federal-payroll-records?utm_term=.hkAvYRgXqy#.rsXjR4vEyp, last accessed September 25, 2017).

After matching and cleaning the data, we are able to track the careers of 821 SES members who took the survey. We follow their careers from March 2015 to July 2017. Of the 821, 285 departed (35%), 77 during election season (September 1, 2016 to November 30, 2016) and 75 in the period after the election (December 1, 2016 to July 31, 2017). As these data suggest, for many members of the SES, a presidential election is an important career event (Bolton et al. 2017). Career executives leave during election season rather than work with an incoming administration.¹⁵ Some anticipate marginalization and others prefer simply not to have to bring another team of appointees up to speed.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

| Variable | N | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min | Max |
|---------------------------|------|-------|-----------|-------|--------|
| Leave government | 9473 | 0.03 | 0.17 | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| # Responsibilities | 752 | 5.22 | 1.93 | 1.00 | 9.00 |
| Budget/Fiscal/Contracting | 775 | 0.77 | 0.36 | -0.01 | 1.17 |
| Rulemaking/Enforcement | 775 | 0.70 | 0.30 | -0.05 | 1.32 |
| Ideology (L-C) | 692 | 2.63 | 1.27 | 0.00 | 6.00 |
| Party (D-R) | 683 | 1.28 | 1.45 | 0.00 | 4.00 |
| Agency Ideology (L-C) | 777 | -0.30 | 0.76 | -1.85 | 1.66 |
| Trump Priority | 821 | 0.64 | 0.48 | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| Executive Department | 821 | 0.68 | 0.47 | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| Regulatory Commission | 821 | 0.11 | 0.32 | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| Employment (Thousands) | 798 | 41.41 | 75.47 | 0.02 | 348.72 |
| Salary level | 720 | 15.44 | 1.38 | 12.00 | 18.00 |
| Retirement Eligible | 743 | 0.49 | 0.50 | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| Years in Government | 739 | 18.13 | 11.42 | 0.00 | 46.00 |

¹⁵ Some career executives are asked to serve in an acting role in a position designated for a political appointee. Serving in an acting capacity may increase the likelihood of being targeted for removal, but may also increase a sense of obligation to stay. We must rely on job titles to identify acting officials in the data. To be conservative, we exclude these cases in the models below, but we also estimated models including them with a control (See the online appendix).

The substantive conclusions are the same.

| | | | | | |
|-----|-----|------|------|------|-------|
| Age | 740 | 7.75 | 1.44 | 3.00 | 10.00 |
|-----|-----|------|------|------|-------|

Note: All summary statistics are per-person from March 2015 except variable for leaving government. Salary and age are binned survey responses of salary (\$10,000 increments) and age groupings (5-year increments), respectively.

Key Independent Variables

We expect that members of the SES with key policymaking power are more likely to depart after the election. Generally, all members of the SES have some management responsibility and so most SES members are in “choke point” type positions. But, within the SES there is still variation in roles and responsibilities and certain kinds of positions are more important for policymaking than others. A choke point position could be one where the *scope* of policymaking authority is broad.¹⁶ The survey asked respondents to identify their job responsibilities from a list of 9 managerial responsibilities. The survey asked:

¹⁶ Alternatively, a choke point position could be one with a particular *kind* of policymaking authority (e.g., budget/fiscal vs. rulemaking/enforcement). We use data from the survey to measure this concept also. We conducted exploratory factor analysis on responses to these 9 questions. The Cronbach’s Alpha for the count of managerial responsibilities is 0.57. Unrotated loadings suggest a single factor while rotated loadings suggest two factors. Analysis suggests a budget, fiscal, and contract management dimension and a policy, rulemaking, and enforcement dimension. We estimate models that include factor scores for these two dimensions as measures of different kinds of management positions. Results indicate that increase in policy, rulemaking

Does your job deal directly with decisions about [Yes, No]:

- Information management (e.g., Information Technology, Database Management)
- Managing completion of agency priorities once priorities are set
- Grants to state and local governments, other organizations, or individuals
- Deciding what enforcement responsibilities to prioritize
- Allocation of personnel to different jobs or offices
- Budget formulation/proposals
- Setting overall priorities in [agency name]
- Procurement and contract management
- Developing Notices of Proposed Rulemaking, summarizing related comments, writing final rules

To measure the breadth of responsibility, we include a count of the number of “Yes” answers to the options above. Respondents answered “Yes” to an average of 5.07 responsibilities (Median 5; SD 2.10; Min 0, Max 9). Most of our executives report being involved in management of the completion of agency priorities (90%), formulating budgets (75%), managing personnel (75%), and setting agency priorities (67%). Fewer report being directly involved with grants to state and local government (30%), rulemaking (36%), or setting enforcement priorities (37%). There were 24 respondents that answered “No” to all of the questions. We exclude them from the sample, concluding either they were in the sample by mistake or they did not read the question

and enforcement responsibilities is associated with a higher probability of departure. Results are reported in the online appendix.

carefully.¹⁷ Our expectation is that positions with a broader scope of responsibilities will have higher departure probabilities.

Of course, the risks of departure for persons in key positions may also be influenced by the preferences of the careerist as predicted by H2 and H3.¹⁸ We evaluate the possibility that careerist ideology influences turnover using the executive's self-reported ideology. Ideology is measured on the standard seven-point scale (Very liberal—5.8%; Liberal—14.5%; Somewhat liberal—18.1%; Moderate—38.5%; Somewhat conservative—13.7%; conservative—6.5%; Very conservative—0.6%; Don't know—2.3%). We exclude "Don't know" respondents and 120 respondents that do not answer the ideology question. We note, however, that coding these responses differently (i.e., coding missing responses as "Moderate") does not influence the results. (See the online appendix for results.) Our expectation is that liberal career executives will be more likely to leave after the 2016 election since they are more likely to expect that President Trump will be hostile their preferences (H2). Liberal career executives will find the work less

¹⁷ We have also estimated models including the respondents that claimed no significant managerial responsibility. The estimates are substantively similar but smaller and estimated less precisely ($p < 0.32$).

¹⁸ If ideology is associated with job opportunities, results could be biased. We test whether ideology is correlated with having been approached with an outside job offer in the last year and find that ideology is *not* correlated with opportunities (corr -0.01 in estimation sample).

satisfying and are more likely to experience marginalization under the new administration. By contrast, conservatives should be more likely to stay.¹⁹

To further assess the effect of preference divergence on departure, we estimate models using either individual partisanship or agency ideology. We measure partisanship on the standard 5-point scale (Democrat—46.3%; Lean Democrat—13.3%; Independent—20.4%; Lean Republican—5.9%; Republican—14.2%). To measure agency ideology, we use measures developed by Richardson et al. (2018) based upon expert ratings. We expect that after the election Democrats will depart at higher rates than Republicans. We also expect that employees in liberal agencies will depart at greater rates than those in conservative agencies.

Controls

Of course, other agency-specific and individual factors may influence the probability a person departs. Models also include controls for whether a respondent works in an agency central to President Trump's agenda. To determine agencies central to Trump's agenda, one of the authors worked with two research assistants to code agencies that carry out policies

¹⁹ We have also estimated models with an interaction between ideology and the scope of responsibility because the effect of ideology may be influenced by a civil servant's position in the hierarchy. These models reveal that conservatives and persons with significant authority are more likely to stay after the election. However, the greater the scope of your responsibility, the less ideology matters.

mentioned in the Trump Campaign's *Contract with the American Voter*.²⁰ The document—released by Trump Campaign in October of 2016—laid out the President's agenda for his first 100 days. So, for example, the document mentions a hiring freeze and immigration so we code all respondents working in the Office of Personnel Management (hiring freeze) and the Department of Homeland Security (immigration enforcement) with a 1. Across agencies, 64% are responsible for implementing some component of President Trump's agenda.²¹ In the cases where coders disagreed, they discussed coding with one of the authors and came to a resolution. Some policies, like the hiring freeze, involve most all agencies. In such cases, we code only the agencies most central to stated policy. All agencies coded as priorities are listed in online appendix. Given that large agencies are also priority agencies and positions in large agencies may be more important than those in small agencies, we also control for agency employment (in thousands).²² The variable is skewed and so we use a logarithmic transformation of the variable.

Insulated agencies are less vulnerable to presidential control and their leaders subject to less direct pressure from the administration because of limits on the presidents' ability to appoint and remove agency leaders in insulated agencies. Accordingly, we also consider whether

²⁰ See <https://assets.donaldjtrump.com/landings/contract/O-TRU-102316-Contractv02.pdf>, accessed October 7, 2017.

²¹ Coders identified department and bureau-level agencies to code. Models using different levels of coding produce substantively similar estimates and are included in the online appendix.

²² Source: Office of Personnel Management Fedscope database (www.fedscope.opm.gov) for September 2014. Data for agencies not included in Fedscope comes from different sources and years as close to 2014 as possible. See the online appendix for greater detail on specific agencies.

turnover is less frequent in agencies structurally insulated from the president. We account for structural differences among agencies with indicators for executive departments (0,1; 69%) and independent commissions (0,1; 11%).²³ The base category is agencies outside the executive departments that are not commissions (e.g., Environmental Protection Agency, National Aeronautics and Space Administration). Our expectation is that career executives in independent commissions will depart at lower rates than executives in less insulated agencies.

We also control for individual factors that are likely to affect departure, including the career managers' salary, eligibility for retirement, years of experience, and age. The survey asked respondents to report their salary as one of 26 bins (\$10,000 per bin), but only 7 are relevant for the SES (12-18 or \$130,000 - \$199,000).²⁴ Our expectation is that the probability of departure will increase with lower salaries, assuming that outside market opportunities are available. Indeed, in the survey data, 36 percent reveal that they have been approached about a job in the private sector in the previous year. Higher salaries should induce executives to stay in government. We determine retirement eligibility with data from the survey. The survey asked respondents "Are you now or will you become eligible to retire in the next 12 months" (Yes—48.3%, No—50.3%, Don't know—1.3%). Eligibility for retirement should increase departure probabilities since it increases the value of outside options. Finally, most studies of departure

²³ Source: Lewis and Selin (2012). We also estimate models using the Selin (2015) measures of insulation. Results reported in the online appendix.

²⁴ We take self-reported salaries above and below the SES range and collapse them into the minimum and maximum values, respectively. We have also estimated models with the uncollapsed version of data and the results are similar and included in the online appendix.

find a non-linear relationship between experience and departure rates and age and departure rates. Specifically, age and experience are initially negatively correlated with departure but eventually switch to being positively related to departure as age and experience increases. To account for non-linearity, we include a squared term of experience and age in the models below.

Methods

To evaluate departure rates before and after the 2016 election, we estimate probit models with duration indicators to account for the time dependence in the observations.²⁵ Given the non-independence of observations by person, we cluster errors by individual.²⁶

Results

In Table 2, we include model estimates from fully specified probit models of departure.²⁷ Model 1 is a control-only model. Model 2 is the baseline model while Model 3 and Model 4 include other measures of ideology. Importantly, the results provide suggestive evidence for H1

²⁵ We also estimate Cox proportional hazard models allowing the coefficient estimates on key independent variables to vary before and after the election. Results are substantively similar and reported in the online appendix.

²⁶ We have also estimated models with bootstrapped standard errors. The results, reported in the online appendix, are similar, but estimated with greater precision.

²⁷ We have also estimated simpler models without the full set of controls, which are reported in the online appendix. The results are similar.

and support for H2 and H3. The conditional probability of departure increases after the election for executives in choke-point positions and liberal executives.

Choke Points

Results provide suggestive evidence that individuals in high responsibility positions are more likely to depart than those in low responsibility positions (H1). The coefficient estimates for the post-election period are consistently positive across models and estimated modestly precisely, significant at the 0.05 or 0.10 level in one-tailed tests (Table 2). While one-tailed tests are appropriate for directional hypotheses, we note that some caution should be taken in rejecting the null hypothesis. Substantively, the estimates suggest that the executives with the greatest scope of responsibilities (i.e., “choke point” positions) are more likely to depart than executives with the narrowest scope.

Figure 1 compares the departure probability of executives who answered “Yes” to 3 or fewer of 9 questions related to managerial responsibilities (e.g., setting agency priorities, determining budgets, etc.) to those executives with 8 or more “Yes” answers (i.e., 10th vs. 90th percentile).²⁸ Notably, the estimates demonstrate an increase in departure probabilities for all career members of the SES during the election season. Elections, particularly after 8 years of one

²⁸ Estimates are based on Model 2 in Table 2. We calculated predicted values and confidence intervals via bootstrapping. Specifically, we estimated 200 models (stratified by scope of responsibility and period), generating predicted probabilities for all 200 models. This figure includes mean predicted probabilities and uses standard deviations to calculate 95% confidence intervals.

president, are an important career event (Bolton et al. 2017). While the estimates suggest higher departure rates for choke point positions generally, they particularly reveal higher departure probabilities after the election and after the inauguration. Persons serving in positions with a greater scope of responsibility are estimated to depart government at higher rates than those with a narrower scope. The cumulative departure probabilities for the first 6 months of the Trump Administration based upon bootstrapped predictions are 15% vs. 5% for those in the 90th vs. 10th percentile, respectively. This is evidence that those in key policymaking positions are more likely to depart government, because of both targeting by the new administration and anticipation of a new administration assuming office.

Collectively, this is important suggestive evidence that new administrations may marginalize career executives or the anticipation of such a relationship may induce career executives to leave before a new administration takes office as predicted by H1. Model coefficients likely underestimate the importance of high responsibility positions throughout the government since the analysis is performed on the important positions members of the SES occupy. These results are consistent with existing research that discusses a cycle of distrust between new administrations and careerists (Pfiffner 1987; Resh 2015).

Table 2. Models of Career SES Departure, March 2015 to July 2017

| Post-Election Change | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| #Responsibilities | | 0.072* | 0.062 | 0.060 |
| | | 0.042 | 0.043 | 0.040 |
| Individual Ideology (L-C) | | -0.131** | | |
| | | 0.054 | | |
| Party (D-R) | | | -0.173** | |
| | | | 0.053 | |
| Agency Ideology (L-C) | | | | -0.225** |
| | | | | 0.100 |
| Trump Priority (0,1) | -0.352** | -0.374** | -0.329** | -0.417** |
| | 0.136 | 0.144 | 0.143 | 0.142 |
| Post-election (0,1) | -0.025 | -0.020 | -0.216 | -0.436 |
| | 0.205 | 0.341 | 0.324 | 0.322 |
| <hr/> | | | | |
| Pre-Election | | | | |
| #Responsibilities | | 0.003 | -0.001 | -0.003 |
| | | 0.021 | 0.021 | 0.020 |

| | | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Individual Ideology (L-C) | | 0.002 | | |
| | | 0.031 | | |
| Party (D-R) | | | 0.017 | |
| | | | 0.027 | |
| Agency Ideology (L-C) | | | | 0.112** |
| | | | | 0.052 |
| Trump Priority (0,1) | -0.050 | -0.014 | 0.018 | 0.008 |
| | 0.090 | 0.096 | 0.098 | 0.097 |
| Executive Department (0,1) | -0.004 | -0.012 | -0.083 | -0.072 |
| | 0.089 | 0.095 | 0.094 | 0.097 |
| Regulatory Commission (0,1) | -0.088 | -0.074 | -0.081 | -0.125 |
| | 0.121 | 0.132 | 0.131 | 0.132 |
| Ln Agency Employment (1,000s) | 0.020 | 0.012 | 0.021 | 0.015 |
| | 0.017 | 0.017 | 0.018 | 0.018 |
| Salary Level | -0.003 | -0.005 | -0.004 | -0.005 |
| | 0.024 | 0.025 | 0.025 | 0.025 |
| Eligible to Retire (0,1) | 0.295** | 0.368** | 0.352** | 0.305** |
| | 0.097 | 0.106 | 0.106 | 0.103 |
| Years in Federal Government | -0.044** | -0.044** | -0.043** | -0.038** |
| | 0.010 | 0.011 | 0.010 | 0.011 |
| Years in Federal Government^2 | 0.001** | 0.001** | 0.001** | 0.001** |
| | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Age | -0.421** | -0.383** | -0.385** | -0.437** |
| | 0.171 | 0.178 | 0.180 | 0.171 |
| Age^2 | 0.029** | 0.024* | 0.024* | 0.028** |
| | 0.012 | 0.012 | 0.012 | 0.012 |
| Constant | -0.192 | -0.219 | -0.221 | -0.002 |
| | 0.685 | 0.711 | 0.721 | 0.689 |
| Number of Individuals | 631 | 554 | 554 | 563 |
| Number of Observations | 6969 | 6097 | 6112 | 6186 |
| X ² (df 28, 30, 28, 28) | 170.38** | 153.89** | 151.03** | 163.45** |

Note: AIC=1881, 1678, 1670, 1710. Pseudo R²=0.094, 0.094, 0.092, 0.095. **significant at the 0.05 level; *significant at the 0.10 level in two-tailed test. Duration indicators omitted.

Ideology

The most robust finding across all of the models and specifications is that liberals are more likely to depart government after the election while conservatives are more likely to stay. In support of H2, the post-election coefficient estimates on ideology are consistently negative and estimated precisely, indicating that more conservative civil servants are less likely to depart. Figure 2 plots the monthly predicted probability of departure by ideology (Table 2, Model 1). The baseline estimates suggest that conservatives may have been slightly more likely to leave at the end of the Obama Administration before the election, but we cannot reject the null that ideology makes no difference before the election (H2). After the election, however, a clear split emerges in the departure probabilities of liberal and conservative members of the SES. Estimates suggest that cumulative departure probability over the first 6 months of the Trump Administration is 15% for liberals, compared to 6% for conservatives. Even with a relatively low monthly exit rate, conflict between the preferences of a new administration and a career executive substantially increases the probability of departure. This is important evidence that career executives' own ideology is an important component of their departure choices. Ideological conflict may make them more likely to be targeted and influences satisfaction with their job as a new administration comes into office.

To enhance confidence in this finding, Model 3 includes party affiliation rather than ideology as an independent variable. The effect of party on departures is consistent with the findings for ideology providing additional support for H2. Indeed, Democrats are more likely to leave than Republicans. The departure probability in any given month is 2-3% and a two unit change in the 5-point party self-identification (e.g., from lean Democrat to lean Republican) decreases the monthly departure probability by 1.6 percent.

Strategic Exit

The third hypothesis suggested that a civil servant is more likely to strategically exit in the months before a presidential transition if she anticipates conflict with the new president. The estimates indicate that liberals are estimated to depart at a higher rate in the period after the election and before the inauguration. This suggests that once the outcome of the election was known some liberals anticipated conditions under the Trump administration and preferred to depart rather than remain through the transition.

It is possible that actions taken by the Trump transition team provided liberals with information about likely targets of the new administration. President Trump's transition team actively sought the names of bureaucrats responsible for the implementation of particular policies, such as climate change. The transition team also amassed beachhead teams to enter and attempt to take control of agencies on inauguration day (Shaw and Kravitz 2017). Even when agencies rebuffed the transition teams' efforts to obtain lists of names, their efforts may have been a signal to some civil servants that she can expect marginalization under the new administration (Shepardson 2017).²⁹

One striking finding in all of the models and figures is that the probability of departure is higher for *all* civil servants in the several months before the election compared to after. Furthermore, departures during this period are unaffected by individual ideology. In the case of the 2016 election, most polls predicted that the Democratic candidate, Hillary Clinton, would

²⁹ Another explanation for the results is the timing of the survey relative to the election. The SFSGS went in the field six years into the Obama administration. Anyone with divergent preferences that remained could likely tolerate another Democratic administration.

win the election (Katz 2017). During the pre-election period, conservatives could have anticipated this outcome and then left government in expectation of a Clinton presidency, but evidence that they did so is limited. While the estimates reveal that career professionals in conservative *agencies* departed at higher rates (Model 4), we cannot reject the null that *individual* ideology had no influence on departure before the election.

This indicates that the end of a president's term may serve as a natural break point where civil servants assess outside options and many leave government (Bolton et al. 2017). Regardless of the outcome of an election, most agency leaders depart with the outgoing administration. Civil servants who remain in the agency will necessarily have to adapt to the new president's agenda and re-establish working relationships with the new leadership teams in their agency. An incoming administration will endeavor to make their mark on agency policymaking and individuals in key policymaking positions may expect scrutiny even if the incoming president is a co-partisan. Some civil servants may determine that they prefer to exit rather than remain through a transition.

Controls

Among the model controls, a number of interesting results emerge. First, the structure of agencies has very little influence on the departure rates of career executives. While the coefficient estimate on regulatory commissions is large and negative, it is not estimated very precisely. Given the large number of vacancies on the commissions and the president's increased power since the 1950s to select chairs, the degree of insulation from the president in commissions may be less than in the past. Indeed, changes in the membership on the Federal Communications Commission led to immediate changes in net neutrality policy. While executives in conservative agencies were more likely to leave before the election and less likely

to depart after the election, executives in larger agencies were no more likely to depart than those in smaller agencies. As expected, those executives eligible to retire are estimated to have monthly departure probabilities about twice those of other executives. Age and more experience increases likelihood of staying but this effect reverses as age rises. Interestingly, there is no consistent effect of individual salary. Higher paid employees are estimated to stay longer but the estimates are not precise, arguably because pay is determined by specific markets and occupations.

Discussion and Conclusion

To effectively control the machinery of public policy, presidents need to control the key positions inside agencies. One of the most direct means of securing control is embedding personnel in those positions who are sympathetic to the president's agenda. This happens at the top levels when presidents name new appointees to agency positions. This also happens at lower levels when appointees make decisions about which civil servants they can work with and who might be better suited for another position. The evidence presented here suggests that presidents have substantial influence over key positions in the civil service both because of their own efforts to remove career executives and because career executives depart willingly, starting during the election season and continuing after the election. Future research could extend this study by interviewing respondents about their experience during the transition to better understand tools used by presidents to encourage departures.

After the election and prior to the President Trump's inauguration, liberal career executives were more likely to exit their positions in anticipation of conflict with the incoming administration and their anticipatory exit opened up positions without the new administration having to actively sideline troublesome individuals. This highlights an underappreciated second

face of presidential power. Even the threat of difficulty may induce career civil servants to leave and open up opportunities for presidential leadership. Presidents may not have to act to get their way.

Our analysis is limited to a single as well as unusual transition raising questions about the generalizability of the results to other transitions. Existing research demonstrates that under the four previous presidents the average departure rate of members of the SES in the *year* following a transition is 9.6% (Bolton, et al, 2017). Comparatively, the departure rate of SES members in our sample after only *six months* is nearly 7%. However, we do not expect that the incentive to drive ideologically distant bureaucrats from key positions will vary substantially across administrations. In fact, there are reasons to believe that the Trump Administration may be less effective in identifying and marginalizing career executives out of step with the administration's agenda. Presidents rely on appointees in agencies to identify and target career executives for marginalization, but the Trump Administration lags far behind previous presidential administrations in filling appointed positions.³⁰ Although the volume of departures may be greater under the Trump administration, we expect that career executives are more likely to remain in their position when a like-minded president is elected.

Of course, not all of this shuffling and reshuffling has a political component but some of it does. Exit by both liberals and conservatives was more likely in the months preceding the election, suggesting that a presidential transition is a break point where civil servants evaluate outside options and some decide to pursue other opportunities. Regardless of the reason for

³⁰ See the White House Transition Project:

<http://www.whitehousetransitionproject.org/appointments/>.

departure, new presidents are given opportunities control policymaking. Without these opportunities, presidential efforts to spur new policymaking or reconfigure ongoing efforts would be more difficult. New presidents inherit an active policymaking apparatus that will continue working and churning out policy decisions whether presidents give agencies direction or not. Personnel, particularly “choke point” type personnel, are the primary means by which presidents may stimulate or arrest government policymaking, which makes control of these positions vital for any presidential administration.

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Appendix A. Step-by-step Details of Data Collection

We use survey data to identify a sample of career SES officials and their beliefs and then we match survey data to personnel records to track departures over time. The 2014 Survey on the Future of Government Service conducted by David Lewis and Mark Richardson at Vanderbilt University helps us identify key figures by specifically including all career members of the SES in the sample to be surveyed. The survey was fielded between August-December 2014 and included questions that allow us to identify choke-point positions as well as the ideology of officials filling these positions. In total, 1,374 career members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) responded to the survey.

Connecting Survey Respondents to Data on Careers

To determine which career executives left public service in the period before and after the 2016 election, we use data from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the *Federal Yellow Book* (a directory of government officials published quarterly). These two sources allow us to identify which survey respondents remained in government. In 2016, OPM released data on federal employees by name and quarter from 1973 to September of 2016 (Singer-Vine 2017). To trace exits after September 2016, we matched survey respondents to the on-line version of the *Federal Yellow Book*.³¹ This resource provides contact and background information on all high-level federal officials, including their appointment authority (e.g, Senate confirmed appointee,

³¹ The *Federal Yellow Book* is published in paper and online version by Leadership Directories, Inc. (<http://www.leadershipdirectories.com/>, last accessed September 25, 2017).

member of the SES, etc.).³² We replicated the sampling procedure that Richardson and Lewis used to generate the 2014 sample for the SFGS and downloaded data each month beginning shortly after the election of President Trump. When employees are no longer listed in the OPM data or *Federal Yellow Book* data, we assume that they have departed government. Departure is verified by checking names against subsequent draws of the *Federal Yellow Book*.³³

We successfully matched 936 of the 1,374 survey respondents to 2014 OPM personnel records (the period of the survey).³⁴ We were unable to match survey respondents to personnel records in cases where OPM does not report these records (e.g., U.S. Postal Service, Federal Reserve, Central Intelligence Agency), where records were redacted (i.e., Department of Defense), or in cases where persons with identical names work in the same agency. After some cleaning, we started with 923 survey respondents and their OPM personnel records in 2014.³⁵

The study begins in March 2015 because the survey was in the field until December 2014 and the OPM data is quarterly. As of March 2015, there were 885 cases, down from 923. There were 20 people that left government during the period of the survey and there were 18 persons in our survey that were not listed in the March 2015 personnel data. We exclude these cases.

³² We downloaded data on all members of the Senior Executive Service in all months during between November 21, 2016 and July 21, 2017 except December 2016.

³³ In cases where someone looks as if they departed but appears again later, we exclude these cases from the main analysis.

³⁴ Matching procedure reporting in the online appendix.

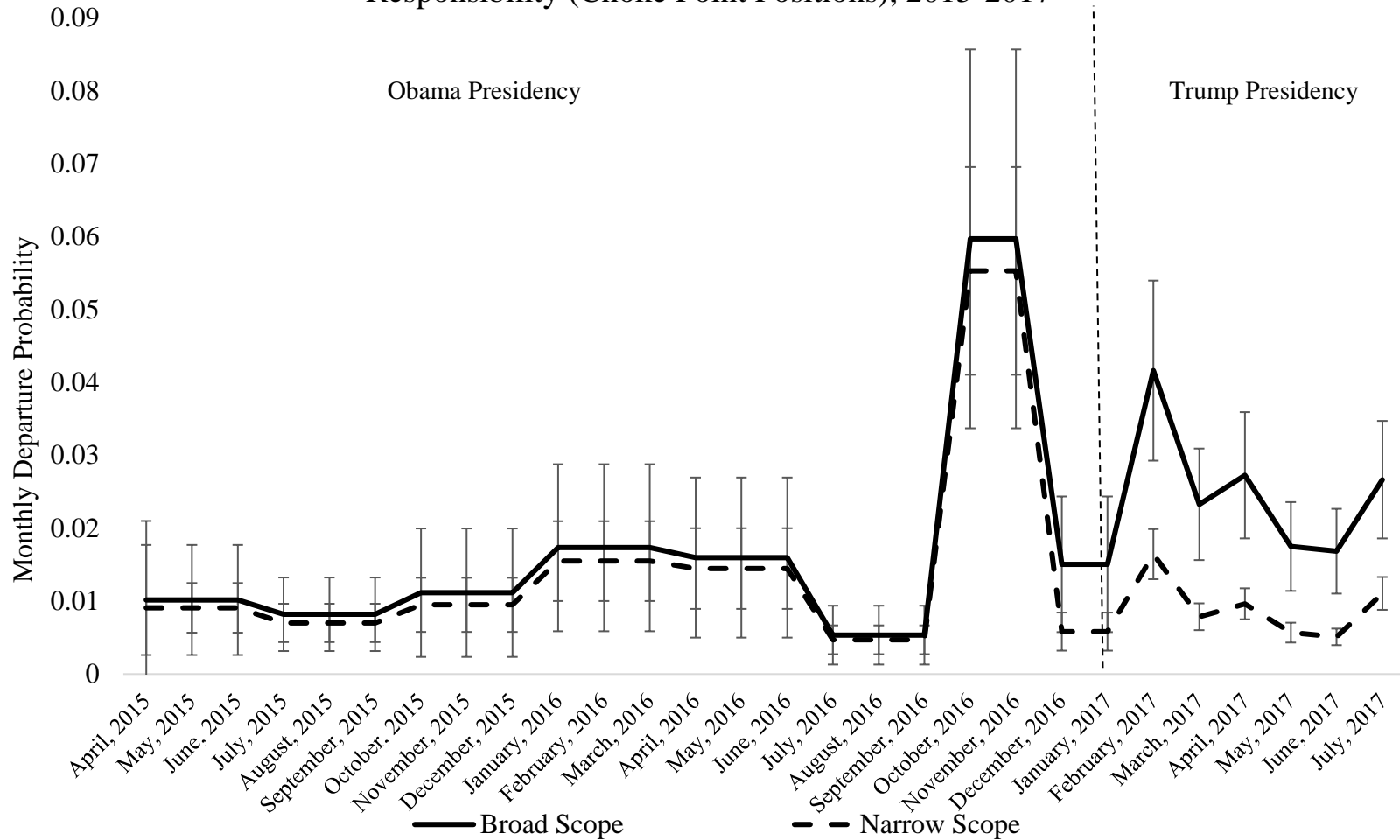
³⁵ Thirteen individuals were incorrectly listed as being in the SES in the survey, because they were serving in an acting role in a position previously held by a member of the SES.

Of the 885 executives in government in March 2015, 61 had subsequent breaks in service (but not clear departures). It is impossible to tell whether the breaks were errors in the BuzzFeed or *Federal Yellow Book* data or executives departed and returned. There are also 3 persons that look as if they departed in the *Federal Yellow Book* but that appears to be an error. We exclude these cases and begin with a sample of 821 executives and 275 departures.

Table A1: Data Collection Process

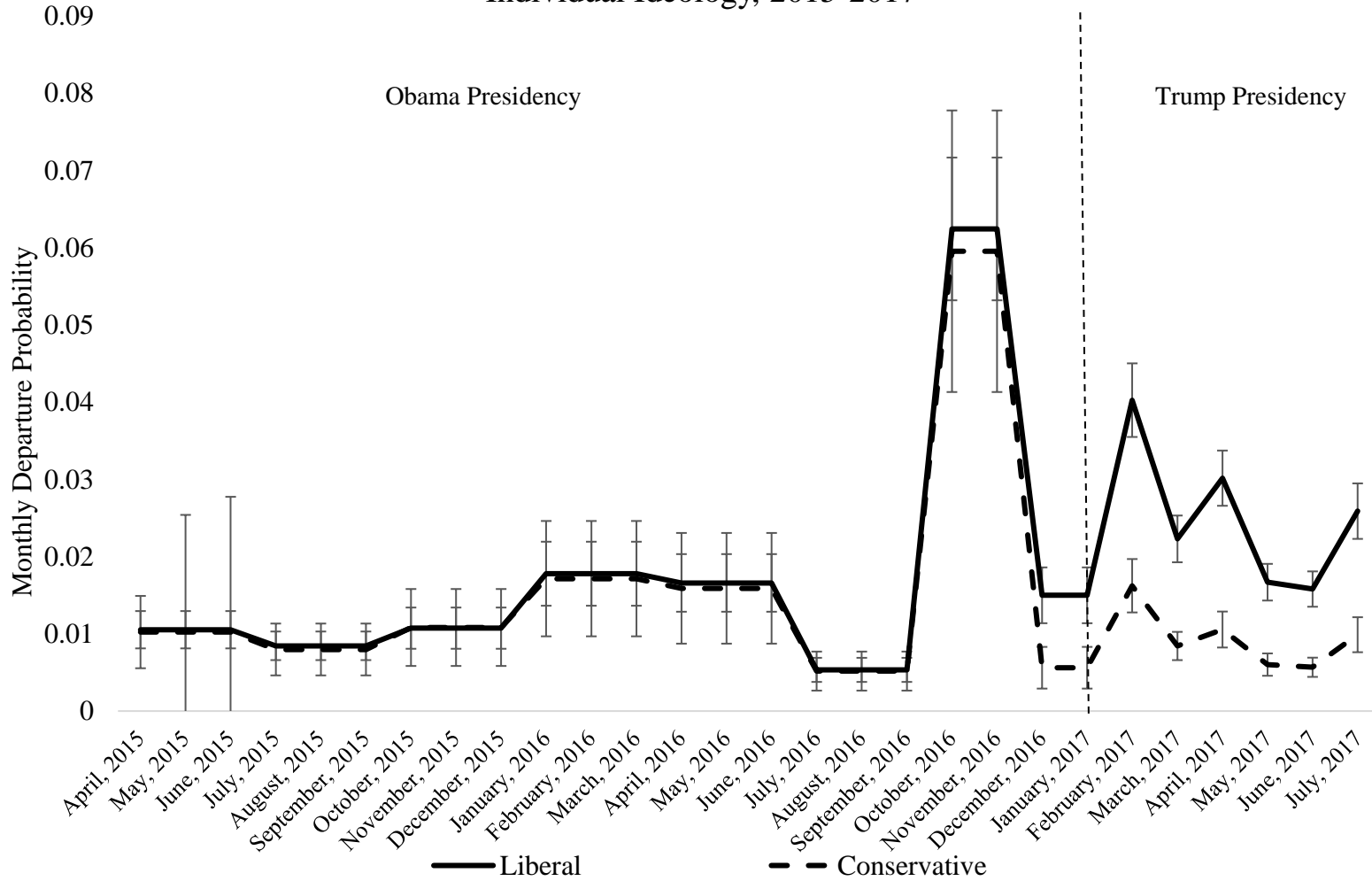
| Steps | Description | Source |
|--|--|--|
| Step 1: Identify key career officials | We used a survey of federal executives to identify a sample of 1,374 career SES officials in government as well as information about their position and ideology. | 2014 Survey on the Future of Government Service |
| Step 2: Merge survey data with OPM data | We matched 936/1,374 survey respondents with 2014 personnel records released by the OPM | Office of Personnel Management Personnel Records |
| Step 3: Clean matched survey data | There were 936 persons originally matched with the OPM data but 13 were incorrectly listed as being in the SES in the survey. This left us with 923 persons. | 2014 Survey on the Future of Government Service |
| Step 4: Track departures through employment records | We tracked the careers of 885/923 SES members still working in government in March 2015 (people departing drop out of the sample; we also drop a few with incomplete records). We track them through September 2016 from OPM personnel records. | Office of Personnel Management Personnel Records |
| Step 5: Track departures through Federal Yellow Book | We tracked careers of 748/885 SES members still in government in September 2016 using the <i>Federal Yellow Book</i> (people departing drop out of the sample). We track them monthly through July 2017. | <i>Federal Yellow Book</i> |
| Step 6: Exclude cases with incomplete or questionable records | Of these 885 executives, 61 had breaks in their service and it is impossible to tell whether the breaks were errors in the BuzzFeed data or the <i>Federal Yellow Book</i> or they departed and returned. There are also 3 persons that look as if they depart in the <i>Federal Yellow Book</i> but that appears to be an error. We exclude these cases and begin with a sample of 821 executives and 275 departures. | <i>Federal Yellow Book</i> |

Figure 1. Monthly Probability of Senior Executive Service Departure by Scope of Responsibility (Choke Point Positions), 2015-2017



Note: Predicted values and confidence intervals calculated via bootstrapping. We estimated 200 models (stratified by scope of responsibility and period), generating predicted probabilities for all 200 models. This figure includes mean predicted probabilities (subsetting by scope of responsibility and period) and uses standard deviations of estimates to calculate 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 2. Monthly Probability of Senior Executive Service Departure by Individual Ideology, 2015-2017



Note: Predicted values and confidence intervals calculated via bootstrapping. We estimated 200 models (stratified by ideology and period), generating predicted probabilities for all 200 models. This figure includes mean predicted probabilities (subsetting by ideology and period) and uses standard deviations of estimates to calculate 95% confidence intervals.