

Patronage Appointments in the Modern Presidency: Evidence from a Survey of Federal Executives*

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Abstract

This paper analyzes how modern presidents make patronage decisions. It explains where less qualified but essential-to-place persons want to go and where presidents find it easiest to place them. It uses new survey data from the George W. Bush Administration to provide some of the first systematic evidence we have on where presidents place patronage appointees in the federal government. It finds that presidents are most likely to place patronage appointees in agencies that share the president's views about policy and in positions where appointees have less visible impact on agency outputs or performance. The effects of agency ideology and tasks on patronage choices, however, are mediated by whether or not an agency is implementing a policy central to the president's agenda. I conclude that patronage factors play an important and underappreciated role in presidential administrative strategies.

Charges of cronyism were among the most biting leveled against the George W. Bush Administration. Critics charged that the president populated the government with personnel based primarily upon political connections rather than competence. This was epitomized in the publicity surrounding the appointments of Michael Brown (FEMA) and Julie Myers (DHS) and the replacement of several U.S. attorneys with protégés of key Republican officials.¹ The issue of patronage in the Bush Administration arguably had greater currency than previous administrations because it was publicly connected to key management failures including FEMA's problematic response to Hurricane Katrina (Lewis 2008; Roberts 2006; Schimmel 2006; U.S. Senate 2006). All presidents, however, face demands to repay campaign debts, assuage key constituencies, or build legislative support through the shrewd distribution of jobs. President Obama garnered negative publicity early in his tenure by appointing prominent Democratic donors to plum ambassadorial posts.² Critics charged that President Clinton's Arkansas friends got special treatment and lambasted the president for selecting politically

¹ Fonda, Daren, and Rita Healy. 2005. "How Reliable is Brown's Resume?" *Time Magazine*, September 8, 2005 (<http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1103003,00.html>, last accessed May 19, 2009); Eggen, Dan, and Spencer S. Hsu. 2005. "Immigration Nominee's Credential Questioned." *Washington Post*, September 20, 2005, A1; Eggen, Dan, and Amy Goldstein. 2007. "U.S. Attorney Was Fired to Make Room for Rove Protégé." *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 23, 2007, A4 (<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2007/03/23/MNGE3OQI1N1.DTL>, last accessed November 12, 2009).

² Krlev, Nicholas. 2009. "Career Diplomats Protest Obama Appointments." *Washington Times*, July 10, 2009, (<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jul/10/career-diplomats-save-share-of-postings/>, last accessed July 17, 2009).

connected campaign contributors as ambassadors.³ During the George H.W. Bush Administration, the Department of Commerce earned the nickname “Bush Gardens” for its reputation as a home for patronage appointees.⁴ Appointees selected more for political connections or expediency than competence partially populate all modern presidential administrations (Lewis 2008; Newland 1987).

Given the prevalence of presidential patronage and its purported relationship to management failures, it is an important topic for academic research. Yet, one recent review of the literature summarized, “Even now...we still know very little about the functions of patronage” and called it a great irony that one of the core phenomena in the development of public administration (and, thus, political science) had attracted so little attention (Bearfield 2009). Existing work on the politics of appointments in political science frequently assumes that appointed positions are used to enhance presidential control of the bureaucracy rather than satisfy patronage demands when surely appointed positions are used for both purposes (Lewis 2009).

³ Gerth, Jeff, Stephen Labaton, and Tim Weiner. 1997. “Clinton and Friends: Strong Ties, Few Questions.” *New York Times*, February 14, 1997, (<http://www.nytimes.com/1997/02/14/us/clinton-and-friends-strong-ties-few-questions.html>), last accessed May 19, 2009).

⁴ In the Clinton Administration Commerce Secretary Daley ultimately pledged to cut the number of appointees in the agency after the ranks of appointees swelled to unprecedented levels. See Barr, Stephen. 1997. “Daley Pledge on Patronage is Applauded.” *Washington Post*, January 24, 1997, A21. (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/govt/admin/stories/daley012497.htm>, last accessed November 12, 2009.)

This paper analyzes how modern presidents make patronage decisions. It explains where less qualified but essential-to-place persons want to go and where presidents find it easiest to place them. It uses new survey data from the George W. Bush Administration to provide some of the first systematic evidence on where presidents place patronage appointees in the federal government. It finds that presidents are most likely to place appointees selected on the basis of campaign experience and political connections in agencies that share the president's views about policy and in positions where appointees have less visible impact on agency outputs or performance. The effects of agency ideology and tasks on patronage choices, however, are mediated by whether or not an agency is implementing a policy central to the president's agenda. It concludes that patronage factors play an important and underappreciated role in presidential administrative strategies.

Patronage and the Modern Presidency

In political science the term patronage generally refers to the distribution of public employment in exchange for electoral or political support (Bearfield 2009, 66; Feeney and Kingsley 2008, 167; Weingrod 1968, 379).⁵ Despite the importance of the topic and its historical

⁵ In political science patronage can refer more generally to the distribution of a whole host of scarce resources in exchange for political support (Bearfield 2009, 69). Some scholars argue for a broader definition of patronage to include a whole class of patron-client interactions between persons of unequal power in a reciprocal relationship (Bearfield 2009, 68). Jobs offered can provide immediate benefits associated with the job offered (i.e., salary, perks, policy influence) or later benefits associated with increased opportunities now available because of the job (e.g., revolving door opportunities).

role in early writings by political scientists, there is very little systematic research on modern patronage practices, particularly at the federal level. Sorauf (1960, 28) wrote almost 50 years ago that, “Very few studies exist of the actual operation of patronage systems across the country... In the absence of specific reports and data, one can only proceed uneasily on a mixture of political folklore, scattered scholarship, professional consensus, and personal judgment.” According to one recent assessment, not much has changed in the intervening years (Bearfield 2009, 64).

While less work has focused on patronage specifically, a number of works have highlighted key developments in appointment politics. First, there has been an increase in the number of appointed positions. Whereas, Price (1944, 362) wrote at the end of the Roosevelt Administration that “Partisan appointments have become nearly obsolete in the United States Government”, this is no longer true. Since that time the number of appointed positions has increased substantially through law and administrative action (Lewis 2008; National Commission on the Public Service 1989, 2003). Between 1960 and 2004 the number and percentage of appointed positions more than doubled.

Second, scholars have described the many factors that influence appointment decisions, including loyalty to the president, factional representativeness, interest group connections, and socio-economic and demographic diversity (see e.g., Edwards 2001; Hecl 1977; Mackenzie 1981). This work particularly emphasizes the increased importance of presidential loyalty and ideology in personnel selection (Moe 1985; Weko 1995). Presidents have professionalized their personnel operation, asserted control of appointed positions down to the lowest levels, and used appointed positions to influence public policy administratively (Nathan 1975). To a lesser extent this literature describes the role that interest group pressure plays in administrative politics and the ways appointed jobs can be used as a form of spoils to satisfy key interest groups or

constituencies (Heclo 1977; Light 1995; Newland 1987). With the weakening of the national parties, interest groups have played a larger role in electoral politics. These groups ask for and receive recognition and access in presidential administrations through visible presidential appointments.

Finally, scholars have connected the increase in appointees, particularly less qualified appointees, to poor management performance. The increased weight placed upon loyalty means less weight is placed on competence or substantive expertise in appointment decisions (Newland 1987). So, while there is a significant amount of work showing how appointees change agency outputs (Moe 1982; Stewart and Cromartie 1982; Wood 1990; Wood and Anderson 1993; Wood and Waterman 1991, 1994), there is an equal amount describing the influence of appointees on management performance (Heclo 1975; Lewis 2007, 2008; National Commission on the Public Service 1989, 2003). These developments in appointment politics, coupled with a growth in privatization, have led some scholars to argue that unchecked the United States risks a return to an earlier age of spoils and patronage (Feeney and Kingsley 2008).

While significant progress has been made explaining how presidents use political appointments to help them shape public policy administratively, less attention has been given to how appointed positions are given out to incentivize work for the president, his campaign, or party (Lewis 2009). Very little work attempts to explain *when* patronage considerations dominate personnel selection to the detriment of competence. As a result, we cannot answer simple questions such as which agencies are most likely to be populated with patronage appointees? In the next section I explain where presidents are most likely to place patronage appointees, focusing on the incentives and skills of the pool of patronage appointees and the president's own calculus.

Explaining Presidential Patronage

The job confronting presidential personnel operations is comprised of two general tasks. First, presidents need to fill key policy making positions essential to their agenda and achieving their policy and political goals. Presidents have to fill positions as prominent as the Secretary of Defense, chair of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve, or head of the Environmental Protection Agency. Also important, but less visible, are positions such as head of the Patent and Trademark Office, chief of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and head of the Border Patrol and Customs portion of the Department of Homeland Security. The problem for presidents is that, as President Kennedy reportedly said, “I thought I knew everybody and it turned out I only knew a few politicians.”⁶ Ultimately, Kennedy developed a “talent hunt” operation targeted toward finding appropriate people for key positions in government (Weko 1995; Pfiffner 1996). In the period following the Kennedy Administration the White House personnel operation has grown in size and now regularly relies on professional recruiters to help staff key positions in government. Clay Johnson, President Bush’s first personnel director, explained,

This is not a beauty contest. The goal is pick the person who has the greatest chance of accomplishing what the principal wants done...After the strongest candidate (s) has been identified, assess the political wisdom of the selection, and adjust accordingly.⁷

Johnson’s quote suggests that the ability of the appointee to implement the president’s agenda is the most important consideration for these positions. Only after this consideration is satisfied does the personnel office evaluate the political wisdom of the choice evaluated. Of course, the

⁶ Gelb, Leslie. 1976. “Carter Finding Few Outsiders.” *New York Times*, December 16, 1976, 21.

⁷ As quoted in Lewis 2008, p. 27.

extent to which presidents conflate loyalty and competence and the extent to which politics intervenes in these selections varies across positions and administrations, but the larger point is that for a subset of key positions, loyalty and competence are the most important factors in personnel selection.

The second task for presidents is to find jobs for party officials, interest group representatives, and campaign workers who have priority due to past work for the campaign or political necessity. The pool of potential patronage appointees is often unqualified for the positions described above. Many of the persons who have to be placed in jobs in the new administration for political reasons lack substantial qualifications or experience.⁸

Where Do Presidents Want to Put Patronage Appointees?

The question confronting presidents is where to put these “priority placements,” selected for campaign experience or connections rather than expertise or competence. To answer this question it is useful to understand where people aspiring to government jobs want to go and where presidents can easily place them.

The pool of aspiring appointees with a claim on the administration is comprised largely of young campaign workers, congressional staffers, and party officials who are frequently short on federal executive experience. They are dedicated partisans and prefer work in the

⁸ Of course, many personnel who receive jobs in a presidential administration because of campaign experience or political connections turn out to be excellent leaders. Appointees selected more for campaign experience or political connections than management acumen are, however, only excellent managers by accident and can be the source of indifferent agency performance.

administration that will advance their career within the party or the constellation of groups or businesses with close connections to the party's core policy commitments or personalities. They are motivated by a mixture of career goals and ideology. Since, the core constituencies of the two parties are different, however, potential Democratic and Republican patronage appointees tend to have different job aspirations. For example, one Republican presidential personnel official explained, "Most people [Republicans] do not see Labor in their long term future... You are not going to be able to make a living from that pattern of relationships."⁹ Democratic aspirants are more likely to prefer jobs in traditionally liberal agencies such as social welfare and regulatory agencies and Republican aspirants congregate in traditionally conservative agencies such as those involved in national security and business.

The president's concern is to satisfy these patronage demands in a way that does the least damage to their public reputation or their policy agenda. Presidents ultimately prefer to place potential appointees into jobs they are best qualified to perform. To avoid bad publicity, the president's personnel staff is looking to make appointments that are publicly defensible based upon demonstrated qualifications. If potential appointees have skills primarily related to politics, they are most likely to be placed in staff roles, public relations positions, or legislative liaison jobs. If job seekers have resumes that list experience in business, education, or housing, personnel officials prefer to place them into jobs in the departments like Commerce, Education, or Housing and Urban Development, respectively. Job aspirants across Democratic and Republican administrations are similar in their basic profile (e.g., strong partisans, campaign work, political experience) but their resumes differ in the types of job experience they describe. Democrats are more likely to have worked for a union, housing non-profit, or environmental

⁹ As quoted in Lewis 2008, p. 64.

organization and Republicans are more likely to have worked for the Chamber of Commerce, the National Rifle Association, or a veterans organization. Presidential personnel officials use these qualifications to push patronage appointees into jobs for which they are most qualified on paper. Not only do potential patronage appointees tend to prefer jobs in agencies close to the core commitments of their party, they are also often best qualified to take these jobs.

To avoid stalling their agenda, presidents also have strong incentives to place patronage appointees in agencies where less policy change is required--agencies that are likely to do what the president wants with or without direct presidential intervention. These agencies do not need competent appointee leadership to accomplish the goals they share with the president. The career professionals in that agency are capable and willing to do what the president wants without having to be directed attentively. This is another reason why patronage appointees, while peppered throughout the government, tend to cluster in agencies with policy views similar to those of the president. This is usually a satisfactory outcome for both the president and potential appointees since potential appointees are better qualified for and have more desire to work in agencies whose policy views are similar to those of the president.

H1: Patronage appointees are more likely to be placed in agencies whose policy views are similar to those of the president.

More generally, however, presidents prefer to put patronage appointees where they can do the least visible damage for performance. Presidents respond by placing patronage-type appointees in jobs where competence is less important such as lower level appointed positions, agencies whose performance is less sensitive to appointee competence such as those whose tasks are simple, or agencies where it is hard to observe a connection between performance and outcomes. Agencies with these characteristics often become patronage havens (or “turkey

farms”), populated with party officials, campaign staff, and key group representatives across administrations.

H2: Patronage appointees are more likely to be placed in agencies where their appointment will have the least visible influence on agency outputs.

Whether or not an agency’s performance is visible to the media and important to the president depends on whether or not it is responsible for implementing a key portion of the president’s agenda. Agencies on the president’s agenda are likely to be staffed differently than other agencies. They should receive more attention from the White House since they are a key to evaluations of the president’s success or failure. Whether or not the agency is liberal or conservative will matter less if the agency is essential to the president’s agenda. Presidents are more concerned for performance in agencies on their agenda than agencies less central to their agenda. This difference between agencies on the president’s agenda and those that are off the president’s agenda suggests that the influence of agency ideology and performance needs on patronage choices may be mediated by the presence or absence of an agency on the president’s agenda.

H3: Agencies that implement policies on the president’s agenda are less likely to employ patronage appointees.

Of course, presidential efforts to politicize the bureaucracy hinge upon the implicit or explicit approval of Congress. What the president and his personnel officials view as patronage can benefit members of Congress in two ways. First, these positions provide members of Congress a means of influencing policy directly, provided members have influence over who is

selected.¹⁰ Second, appointed positions also help members by advancing their party or individual election prospects. Members of Congress, particularly those from the president's party, are actively involved in recommending persons for appointed positions. To the extent they are successful, this can provide electoral benefits for the member. Appreciative constituents or groups express their gratitude through electoral support. Members also benefit when presidential patronage benefits their party more generally. The expansion of patronage by the other party's president is opposed, however, since it provides no benefit to the member and hurts performance. During the bulk of the Bush presidency which is the focus of this study, however, Congress itself was relatively conservative and sympathetic to the president's patronage efforts.

In total, all presidents have to satisfy patronage demands and they do so in predictable ways with an eye toward policy and performance. The president wants to put patronage appointees in agencies that share the president's views about policy and potential patronage appointees are a good fit for these agencies by desire and qualifications. Presidents also try to minimize the direct influence these appointees can have on performance by putting them in positions and agencies where their appointment makes little visible difference for the president's public reputation and agenda.

¹⁰ See, e.g., "Postmasters to Continue as Political Appointees." (UPI) *Washington Post*, June 19, 1952, 1. This article details how "local people can hold their local representative to account" by maintaining the patronage system for regional appointments.

Data, Variables, and Methods

To evaluate these predictions, I use new unique data from a 2007-8 survey of close to 7,000 federal administrators and program managers (Bertelli et al. 2008).¹¹ The survey includes responses from 2,225 career (1,953) and appointed (266) federal program managers and administrators across the various departments and agencies of the federal government and I rely on responses from the former for this analysis.¹² The survey is comprised of a variety of

¹¹ The survey was conducted by the Princeton Survey Research Center and was sent to 7,448 federal executives. The survey excludes executives that are not administrators or program managers. The survey's principal investigators purchased the names and contact information from Leadership Directories, Inc., the firm that publishes the *Federal Yellow Book*. The response rate from the original 7,448 names was 32%. Of the 7,448 names 297 potential respondents were excluded because they were not federal employees, had left office by the time the survey began, were duplicates, or otherwise not federal executives. The original list also included 461 potential respondents from the National Science Foundation because the firm incorrectly labeled NSF program officers as managers or executives.

¹² The number of career executives and appointees do not add up to 2,225 due to 6 cases where I could not determine the appointment authority under which a respondent was appointed. I rely on the responses of career professionals for the analysis here since I have more confidence in the representativeness of the sample of careerists relative to the population of career executives than for the political appointees. Models estimated including appointees are included in Model 1 in Appendix A and confirm what is reported in Table 1.

questions about the backgrounds, political views, and work experiences of these executives.¹³

Importantly, the survey included the following question:

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your work and job setting [strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree, don't know]: "*Political appointees in my agency tend to be selected more for competence and experience than campaign or political experience/connections.*" (mean 3.28; SD 0.77; Min 1; Max 4)

The question assesses the extent to which competence, as opposed to other factors influenced the selection of appointees in each agency. I specifically analyze whether the respondent strongly agrees (1; 3.35%), agrees (2; 11.34%), disagrees (3; 42.24%), or strongly disagrees (4; 43.07%)

¹³ While survey data has the advantage of allowing researchers to measure concepts that are otherwise hard to observe, they have drawbacks as well. First, while the overall number of respondents is large, the sample of respondents could differ in important ways from the population as a whole. Of particular concern is the possibility that the sample of respondents is systematically more liberal or Democratic than the population as a whole since those opposed to the Bush Administration might be more inclined to respond to a survey about the state of public service. This concern was addressed in two ways. First, the survey's authors contracted with private firms to find home addresses and voter registration information for the survey population. They then compared party voter registration for those in the population to what respondents in the sample reported about their party ID. Second, early and late responders to the survey were compared on identifiable characteristics. In general, the respondents are very similar to non-respondents. If there is a difference between the sample and population it is that respondents are slightly more conservative and Republican than the population.

with the claim that appointees are selected more on the basis of competence as opposed to campaign experience or political connections. Since competence and patronage factors have been set up in opposition to each other in the question, it is reasonable to interpret “disagree” and “strongly disagree” answers as support for the claim that appointees are selected at least as much for campaign experience and political connections as competence and I interpret such answers in this manner.

As is clear from the mean, the vast majority of respondents believe that campaign experience or connections are more influential than competence. There remains significant variation across agencies in average responses, however. Among the agencies where competence is reported to be most important is the Department of the Interior (2.88) whereas appointees in the Department of the Navy (3.68) are reported to be selected more for campaign experience and connections. Figure 1 graphs the average answers to this question provided by career professionals in each agency. Answers are recoded so that higher values indicate that appointees were selected more for political experience and connections rather than competence. Agencies where campaign experience and connections are reported to be more important than competence include the defense agencies, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the National Labor Relations Board, and the departments of Commerce and Treasury. Three of these four agencies are generally considered to be conservative by followers of administrative politics (Clinton and Lewis 2008, 6). The agencies where competence is reported to be relatively more influential include the Department of the Interior, the Federal Trade Commission, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Two of these agencies, the departments of Labor and Housing and Urban Development, are large social welfare agencies generally considered among the most liberal in government (Clinton and Lewis 2008, 6).

[Insert Figure 1 here.]

Key Independent Variables

Perhaps the key expectation is that presidents will be more likely to place patronage appointees in agencies that share the president's policy views. Since this survey was taken during the Bush Administration, this implies that patronage appointees should be more likely to be placed in *conservative agencies*. To measure agency ideology I use estimates from Clinton and Lewis (2008). They fielded an expert survey to get data on agency liberalism-conservatism and used an item-response model to generate estimates in a way that accounted for rater heterogeneity. Higher values indicate more conservative agencies (mean 0.08; SD 0.96; min -1.72; max 2.21).¹⁴ Among the most conservative agencies are the Department of Defense (2.21), the Department of Commerce (1.25), and the Department of the Treasury (1.07). Among the most liberal agencies are the Peace Corps (-1.72), the Consumer Product Safety Commission (-1.69), and the Department of Labor (-1.43). If the agencies are separated into those with

¹⁴ Measuring agency ideology is notoriously difficult. I use the Clinton-Lewis estimates here because they tap into long term characteristics of agencies across presidencies. I have also measured agency ideology using average estimated respondent ideal points by agency. Ideal points were estimated via the method described by Clinton et al. (2004) for each respondent using answers to 14 survey questions about how respondents would have voted on specific votes in Congress and averaged by agency (Bertelli et al., 2008). A model estimated with this measure is included in Model 2 in Appendix A and is consistent with what is reported in the text. When models are estimated with the agency average of respondent self-reported ideology (standard 7-point scale) estimates are in the correct direction but I cannot reject the null that the coefficients are zero. These results are included in Models 3 in Appendix A.

estimates above (conservative) and below (liberal) 0, the average value of the dependent variable (4 max) is 3.32 for conservative agencies and 3.21 for liberal agencies ($p < 0.00$). This indicates that career professionals in conservative agencies are significantly more likely to report that appointees in their agencies are selected more for political experience and connections than competence. This is true even when only self-identified Republican respondents are analyzed. This is consistent with the expectations expressed above and suggests that presidents are more likely to place patronage appointees in agencies that generally share their views about policy.

Of course, presidents look not only to the policies of agencies. They also consider the importance of the job for performance. A second expectation was that patronage appointees would be more likely to be placed in agencies where their appointment would have the least visible influence on agency outputs, including jobs in agencies with easier tasks, fewer specific expertise requirements, and less visible agencies. To measure the complexity of agency tasks, I use the percentage of an agency's employees that are scientists, engineers, architects, mathematicians, and statisticians (mean 0.18; SD 0.18, min 0, max 0.64).¹⁵ My assumption is that the proportion of such employees is a measure of agency task complexity and my expectation is that agencies with a higher proportion of such employees have fewer appointees selected for patronage reasons relative to competence.¹⁶ Agencies that have high proportions of

¹⁵ Source: fedscope.opm.gov. Specifically I count the number of employees in September 2008 in the following categories in the White Collar Group classification (under the *Occupation* pull down menu): natural resources management and biological sciences, engineering and architecture, physical sciences, mathematics and statistics.

¹⁶ I have also estimated models using a measure derived from the Bush Administration's Program Assessment Rating Tool. This tool, devised as part of the budgeting process to evaluate

such employees include the Department of Agriculture (0.47), the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (0.57), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (0.65) while those that have low proportions include the Federal Trade Commission (0.00), the Peace Corps (0.00) and the Social Security Administration (0.001).

To measure which agencies are important to achieving President Bush's policy goals, I rely on the president's 2007 State of the Union Speech and a 2006 evaluation of his agenda by the *New York Times*.¹⁷ I coded all agencies mentioned in the *Times* article or were responsible for

federal programs, classifies all federal programs according to their type (e.g., regulatory, credit, grant, etc.). I code each observation according to the proportion of each agency's programs that are research and development programs with the expectation that fewer patronage appointees should be located in agencies with a high proportion of research and development programs since the presence of such programs is a rough measure of agency task complexity (Mean 0.12; SD 0.14; Min 0; Max 0.56). The results confirm what is reported here and are included in Model 4 of Appendix A. Agencies with a greater number of research and development programs are estimated to be more likely to have appointees selected for competence versus. campaign experience or connections.

¹⁷ The agencies coded as being on the president's agenda as the Department of Defense, the military services, the intelligence agencies, Department of Homeland Security (War on Terror, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan); the Office of Management and Budget (balanced budget); Millennium Challenge Corporation (mentioned in speech); Social Security Administration (longevity of program); the Department of Education (No Child Left Behind, Vouchers); Department of Energy (new sources of energy, energy independence); Food and Drug Administration; Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (Medicaid); National Highway

a policy or issue raised in the speech with a 1 and all other agencies with a 0 (0,1; 51.49% of cases). This measure of presence on the agenda is interacted with agency ideology and measures of influence on agency performance with the expectation that presence on the president's agenda will lessen the influence of these factors on patronage choices.

Agency and Respondent-Specific Controls

Of course, the apparent relationship between the factors influencing appointee selection and agency preferences, task complexity, and visibility could be spurious, caused instead by factors such as the size of the agency or the ideology of the respondent that are correlated with the key variables of interest. To account for this, I estimate models that control for a host of agency-specific and respondent-specific factors. Models include a control for the natural log of agency employment since agency size is correlated with liberalism-conservatism (mean 9.96; SD 1.94; Min 1.79; Max 13.41).¹⁸ The largest agencies, the departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security, are all relatively conservative. The log of agency employment is also interacted with agency presence on the agenda since many large agencies may, by virtue of their size, be on the president's agenda. The models also include an indicator for whether or not an agency is an independent commission since presidents arguably have more control over appointments in the executive branch departments (0,1; 6.8%). By history or culture some agencies may be more sensitive to patronage-type appointments even if the real extent of

Traffic Safety Administration (CAFE Standards); State Department (Middle East, foreign aid); Bureau of Land Management (oil exploration); Department of the Treasury (tax cuts); Environmental Protection Agency (mentioned).

¹⁸ Source: Office of Personnel Management (fedscope.opm.gov) data for September 2007.

patronage is equivalent across agencies. In particular, respondents in agencies with strong professional identities or agencies involved in judicial or adjudicatory activities may be more sensitive to patronage-type appointments or the penetration of politics in any form. To account for this, models include the percentage of agency employees that are professionals (mean 0.30, SD 16; min 0.04; max 0.68) and the percentage that are law judges, respectively.¹⁹ Higher percentages should lead to higher reported influence of patronage considerations relative to competence.²⁰

Apart from the true influence of campaign experience or political connections on appointee selection, a respondent's perception of the influence of patronage factors may be influenced by their own ideology or position in the bureaucracy. To account for this, models include respondent-specific controls. One possible confounding factor is respondent ideology. Civil servants are more liberal than appointees in the Bush Administration, perhaps particularly appointees in conservative agencies, and may conflate ideology and competence or lack of

¹⁹ Since the number of law judges is so small, the proportions have been multiplied by 100 so that the mean is 0.10; SD 0.35; min 0; max 1.77).

²⁰ I have also estimated models that account for differences among agencies in what they do (i.e., block/formula grant, capital-assets acquisition, competitive grant, credit, direct federal, and regulatory programs). Using the PART data, I calculated the proportion of the agency's programs that were of each type and included these proportions as controls. The results confirm what is reported here and are included in Model 5 in Appendix A. I have also estimate models that include controls for the proportion of agency programs that involve regulation, foreign affairs, and national security. The results confirm what is reported here and are included in Model 6 in Appendix A.

competence.²¹ If true, this would lead me to overestimate the extent to which patronage influences the selection of appointees in conservative agencies. To account for this I include respondent ideal point estimates from Bertelli et al. (2008). These estimates were calculated using respondents' stated responses to fourteen questions about how they would have voted on actual bills considered in Congress.²² Higher values indicate more conservative views and this coefficient should be negative under the belief that liberals are more likely to voice concerns about patronage.

Respondent perceptions are also influenced by their access to appointees. To account for this the models control for the frequency of contact with appointees, respondent experience in the agency, and whether respondents work in Washington, D.C. or a regional office. Some respondents have much more direct contact with appointees than others and this should give them better information about appointees than other respondents. To control for this, I include an ordinal variable indicating a respondent's self-reported frequency of contact with agency appointees (Never (1)-5.0%; Rarely (2)-16.1%; Monthly (3)-16.3%; Weekly (4)-19.4%; Daily (5)-43.3%; mean 3.77; SD 1.31). The majority of career executives have contact with their agency's appointees daily or weekly. The survey also asks respondents how many years they have worked in their current position (mean 7.1; SD 6.27; min 0; max 45) and whether they work

²¹ I have also estimated models that control for the absolute value of the difference in ideal points between the respondent and the average appointee ideal point in their agency. The results confirm the key results reported here and are included in Model 7 in Appendix A. The coefficient on this variable is negative but I could not reject the null of no relationship ($p < 0.27$).

²² Estimates were generated from a two-parameter item response model of votes as described in Clinton et al. 2004.

in Washington, DC or a regional office (0,1; 22.22%). Respondents with more experience and contact should also be able to give a better evaluation of the factors influencing appointment.

Methods

Data are organized by respondent. Since the dependent variable is ordered and categorical and the distances between categories may not be equal, I estimate a series of ordered probit models of whether the respondent indicated strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree to the question about competence in appointee selection. I report robust standard errors clustered by agency since the observations are not independent because groups of respondents work in the same agencies.²³

Results

The models fit the data well and largely confirm the expectations set out above. It is easy to reject the null of no improvement over a cut-point only model ($p < 0.00$). More generally, agency ideology plays an important role in explaining the distribution of patronage appointees

²³ I have also estimated models where the agency is the unit of analysis rather than the individual survey respondent. These estimates are less precise but confirm the findings about agency ideology. Estimates of coefficients on task complexity are in the expected direction but I cannot reject the null that the coefficient is equal to zero. The full results are included in Appendix B. Models estimated with fixed effects for department strongly confirm the findings about agency ideology. The coefficient is about 2X as large and significant ($p < 0.01$). Estimates of coefficients on task complexity and Bush Agenda are in the wrong direction and I cannot reject the null that the coefficient is equal to zero. The full results are included in Model 8 in Appendix A.

across the federal government. According to the model estimates of survey responses in Table 1, respondents in conservative agencies are more likely to report that their appointees were selected for campaign experience or political connections even when controlling for a host of other factors including the respondents' own ideology. The model results also provide evidence that agencies with more technical tasks are less likely to have appointees selected for political experience. The influence of each of these factors, however, is influenced by whether or not the respondent works in an agency that is on the president's agenda.

[Insert Table 1 here.]

Before delving into the results with regard to the hypotheses presented above, there are several notable findings among the agency-specific and respondent-specific controls in the models. Some of the structural differences across agencies modestly influence perceptions of the prevalence of patronage in different agencies. The coefficients on agency size and whether or not the agency is a commission are positive and significant in at least one of the models ($p < 0.05$). These estimates indicate that larger agencies, particularly agencies on the president's agenda are more likely to have appointees selected for connections rather than competence. This may be a function of the fact that the largest agencies on the president's agenda were the military agencies. Anecdotally, these agencies have historically been able to manage a large number of appointees with few disruptions in performance. The results also show that respondents in commissions were more likely to report that their appointees were selected due to campaign experience or connections. Substantively, respondents in commissions were estimated to be 11 percentage

points more likely to “strongly disagree” with the statement that appointees in their agencies were selected on the basis of competence.²⁴

Among the respondent characteristics, the respondent’s location and experience in the bureaucracy have a statistically distinguishable influence on the respondent’s perceptions of why appointees were selected. The closer respondents are to key agency appointees either through direct contact or location, the more likely they are to believe that these appointees have been selected on the basis of competence. Similarly, the longer an executive has worked in their job, the more likely they are to believe that appointees in their agency have been selected on the basis of competence. Substantively, a respondent who has daily contact with an appointee is 2 percentage points more likely to agree or strongly agree with the claim that appointees are selected on the basis of competence than a respondent who meets with their appointee weekly. The difference between executives working in Washington as opposed to a regional office is 8 percentage points. Compared to a new executive, an executive who has worked in their job as program manager or administrator for 10 years is 2 percentage points more to agree that their agency’s appointees were selected on the basis of competence. In the models in Table 1 the respondent’s own ideology was also significantly related to their views about the competence of appointees. Substantively, the coefficients suggest that conservative respondents are more likely to believe appointees were selected on the basis of connections rather than competence but the effects are modest. Increasing respondent conservatism from one standard deviation below the mean to one standard deviation above the mean increases the percentage of respondents answering in the highest category by a modest 1 percentage point.

²⁴ Substantive effects were estimated with all values held at their means or modal values unless otherwise specified.

Patronage and Agency Ideology

The most robust finding across the estimated models is the relationship between agency ideology and respondent perceptions that appointees were selected for campaign experience or political connections. The coefficients are consistently significant at the 0.05 level and the substantive effect is notable. Respondents in traditionally conservative agencies are significantly more likely to report that appointees in their agencies were selected on the basis of political factors even when controlling for the ideology of the respondent. Increasing agency ideology from one standard deviation below the mean (liberal) to one standard deviation above the mean (conservative) increases the likelihood that a respondent believes their appointee was selected for political reasons by 13 – 14 percentage points for agencies off the president’s agenda. The influence of agency ideology on the influence of competence versus campaign experience or connections across the range of agency ideologies is included in Figure 2. The figure graphs the influence of ideology on the probability a respondent will “strongly disagree” with the claim that their appointees are selected on the basis of competence.²⁵ One line is estimated for agencies on the president’s agenda and one for agencies not on the president’s agenda. The clear upward trend for both lines provides important evidence that presidents are more likely to place patronage appointees into agencies that share their own views. Higher values indicate that respondents believe that appointees are selected more for connections and campaign experience than competence. The line for agencies on the president’s agenda is flatter than the line for agencies off the president’s agenda. This suggests that agency ideology is a less influential determinant of patronage for agencies on the president’s agenda. In general, however, these

²⁵ I have also estimated models with squared terms to see if the effect is linear. I could not reject the null that the squared term did not improve the fit of the model.

results suggest that presidents treat agencies differently in the distribution of patronage depending upon agency ideologies. Presidents do not need appointees to get control of agencies that share their preferences and so find these agencies more attractive places to place patronage appointees. In the Bush Administration Republican appointees were also more likely to want to work in conservative agencies because of experience and career aspirations.

[Insert Figure 2 here.]

Patronage Appointments and Connection to Performance

Do presidents place patronage appointees into jobs where there is a less visible connection to performance? As expected, the answer appears to generally be yes. The coefficient estimates on the variable accounting for task complexity—the proportion of agency employees that are scientists, mathematicians, etc.—are significant or marginally significant in both models and negative. Respondents in agencies with a higher proportion of technical employees are more likely to report that their agency’s appointees are selected on the basis of competence. This is true even when controlling for a host of other agency-specific and respondent-specific factors. Substantively, the effects are modest as seen in Figure 3. Figure 3 graphs the influence of technical employees on respondent views about appointee selection. The downward slope across the range of values supports the general claim that agencies that perform tasks that are hard for generalists to manage are less likely to be populated with appointees selected on the basis of campaign experience or political connections. Increasing the proportion of technical employees from one standard deviation below the mean to one standard deviation above the mean influences the chances that a respondent believes an appointee was selected on the basis of competence as opposed to campaign experience or connections by 5 percentage points.

[Insert Figure 3 here.]

The presence of an agency on the president's agenda by itself had very little influence on respondent perceptions of the reasons for an appointee's selection. In the model without interaction terms I could not reject the null that being on the agenda had no influence on the probability that a respondent agreed or disagreed with the statement about competence vs. campaign experience. Indeed, if one looks at the average agency, the presence of the agency on or off the agenda had very little influence on the characteristics of agency appointees. If, however, one looks at an agency that normally would be a target for patronage such as an agency with few technical tasks (e.g., Education, FEMA, SSA) or a conservative reputation (DOD, Treasury, Commerce), the presence of this agency on or off the agenda can make a big difference. Presence on the president's agenda is estimated to decrease the chances that a respondent believes agency appointees are selected for campaign experience or connections by 5-7 percentage points. Conversely, if an agency would naturally be patronage immune in the Bush Administration because of a liberal ideology (e.g., Labor, HUD, HHS) or technical tasks (NASA, NRC, Energy), presence on the president's agenda actually makes it more likely that respondents believe that appointees were selected for connections or campaign experience. This is perhaps because an agency on the president's agenda becomes a more attractive place for patronage-type appointees to work.

Together, the cumulative evidence suggests that presidents are more likely to place patronage appointees in agencies that share their policy views. They are also more likely to place patronage appointees in agencies where their performance has less influence on outcomes relevant to the president. Specifically, appointees working in agencies with more complex tasks are less likely to be selected primarily on the basis of campaign or political experience. The presence of an agency on the president's agenda can also influence the likelihood that an agency

receives patronage appointees by accentuating or diminishing the influence of agency ideology and task complexity.

Discussion and Conclusion

Overall, the results from the 2007-8 survey of federal executives are generally consistent with expectations. Program managers and administrators in conservative agencies are more likely to report that appointees in their agencies are selected for campaign experience and political connections. Executives in agencies with more technical tasks, as measured by the proportion of employees in technical occupations, are more likely to report that competence was an important factor in the selection of appointees. These findings are broadly consistent both with the interests of presidents in satisfying patronage demands and the interests of prospective job seekers.

The question that remains is whether federal program managers and administrators at the top levels of government have reported something real in this survey. In other words, is it true that some appointees were selected more for competence and others more for patronage in the way the respondents report? One concern is that survey respondents exaggerate or otherwise unreliably report the importance of patronage in their agencies. This should not be a problem if the data analysis was conducted carefully. At the most basic level, an overall exaggeration in the influence of patronage on appointee selection will not interfere with relative comparisons across agencies. If some agencies' respondents exaggerate and others' do not, this is also should not be a problem provided the location of the exaggeration is uncorrelated with the key variables of interest. If the exaggeration is correlated with a feature of an agency or respondent such as the agency or respondent's ideology, this can be controlled for in statistical models.

More generally, however, is the evidence reported here about the differential influence of patronage factors across agency ideology and work environments reflective of reality? Are career executives getting it right? One factor that should give us some confidence is that the results are broadly consistent with other recent work on appointment politics. Lewis (2008) found that the number of schedule C appointees increased more in conservative agencies under Republicans and liberal agencies under Democrats. If these patronage-type appointees are being added systematically, they could be just the type of appointees survey respondents are referring to when answering the survey. Moreover, the reports of higher degrees of patronage in agencies where patronage appointees can do less damage is consistent with the conventional wisdom about appointment politics (Lewis 2008, 28). This analysis, however, provides the first quantitative evidence that presidents and their staffs make decisions with these considerations in mind.

Of course, if patronage appointees are placed into positions where they can do the least amount of damage, this arguably makes understanding patronage less important. To draw this conclusion, however, would be a mistake. Patronage politics is an important factor in political bargaining. The shrewd distribution of these jobs is an important political resource for presidents that must be understood to understand the presidency more generally. Presidential patronage choices can also have large consequences for the presidency and the nation. For example, the Federal Emergency Management Agency historically was populated with patronage appointees because it was obscure and appeared to function despite the fact that the agency's appointees had no specific skills or expertise (Lewis 2008; Roberts 2006; Schimmel 2006; U.S. Senate 2006). Understanding how agencies like FEMA get staffed helps us not only understand presidential politics but also agency performance more generally.

An ultimate goal of administrative presidency research is to understand not only the multiple factors that influence personnel decisions but *when* and *how* the different factors operate in different circumstances. This research helps us understand when patronage factors are likely to be influential and how they dictate where persons will be appointed. Most of the 3,500 presidential appointments available to a new president are lower level appointments or appointments to minor boards and commissions. These selections are obscure even to the most astute political observers. We cannot understand presidential administrative strategies or the politics of these different agencies and the policies they created without understanding how these positions get filled and the important role that patronage plays.

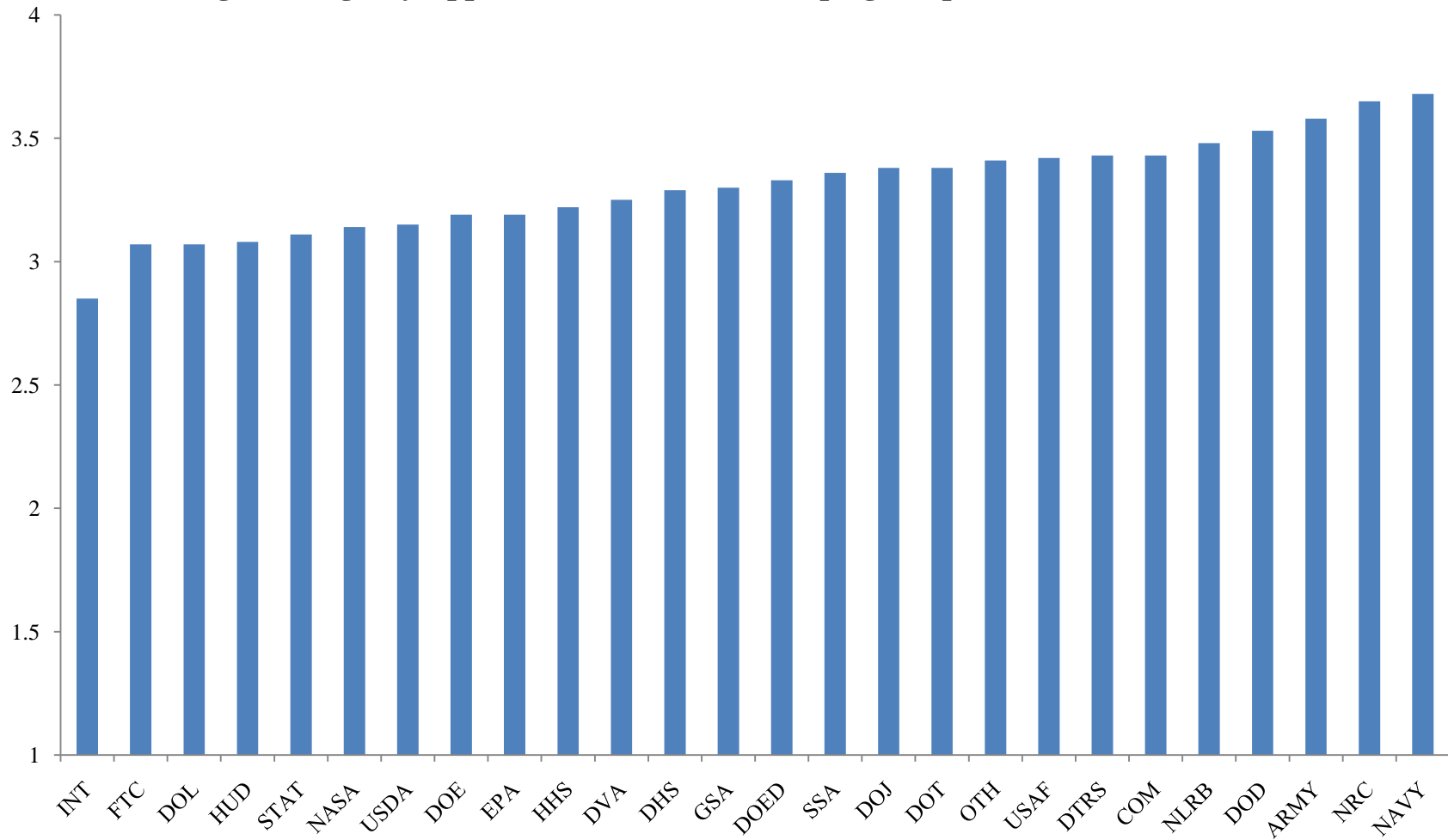
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Figure 1. Agency Appointees Selected for Campaign Experience or Connections



Note: Question wording is "Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your work and job setting: Political appointees in my agency tend to be selected more for competence and experience than campaign or political experience/connections" (4) Strongly disagree, (3) disagree, (2) agree, (1) strongly agree. Higher values indicate that appointees are more likely to be selected for campaign experience or connections than competence. Reported values are average responses by agency.

Figure 2. Estimated Probability that Respondent Strongly Disagrees that Agency's Appointees Selected on Basis of Competence by Agency Conservatism, 2007-8

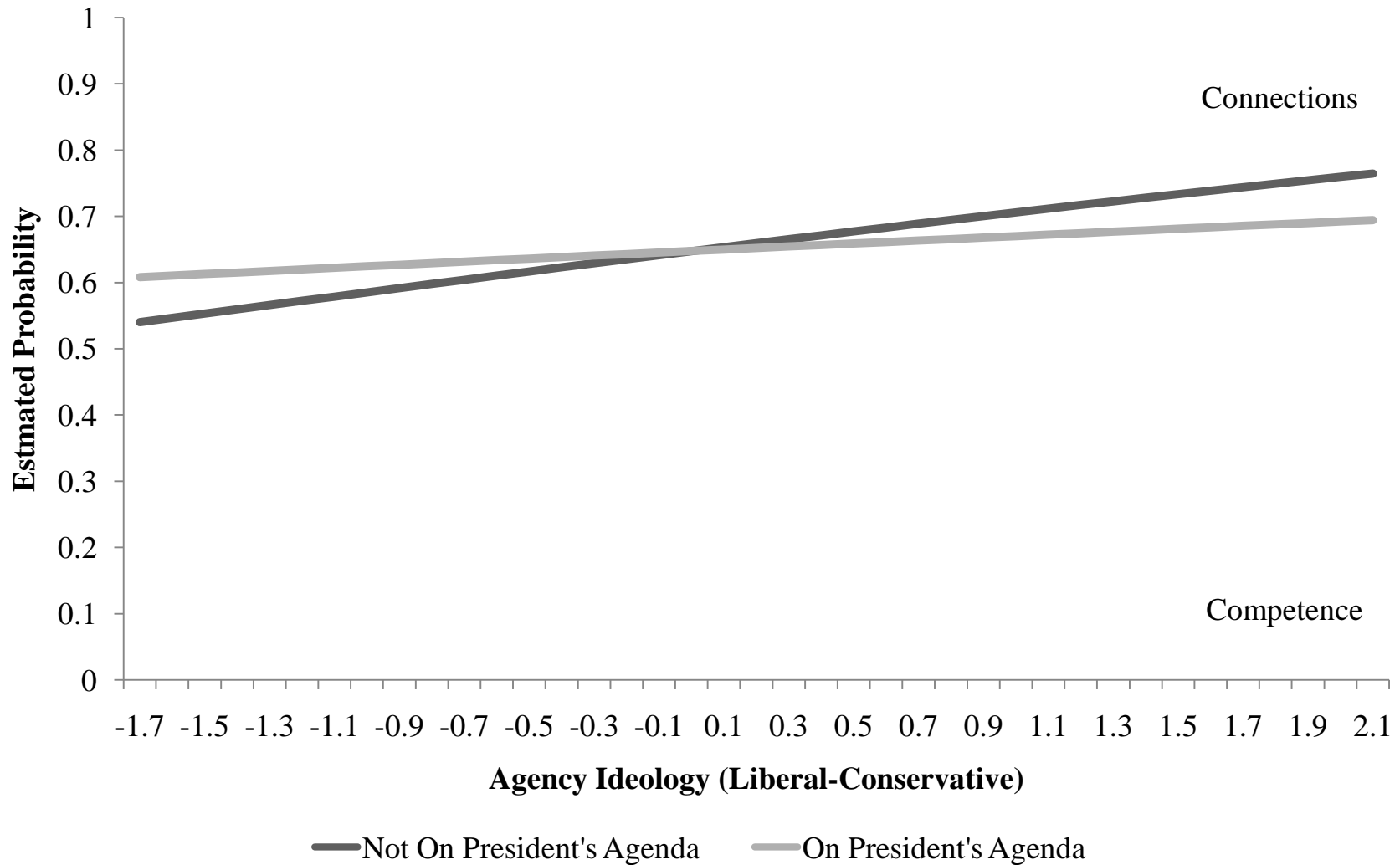


Figure 3. Probability Respondent Strongly Disagrees that Agency's Appointees Selected on Basis of Competence by Proportion of Technical Employees, 2007-8

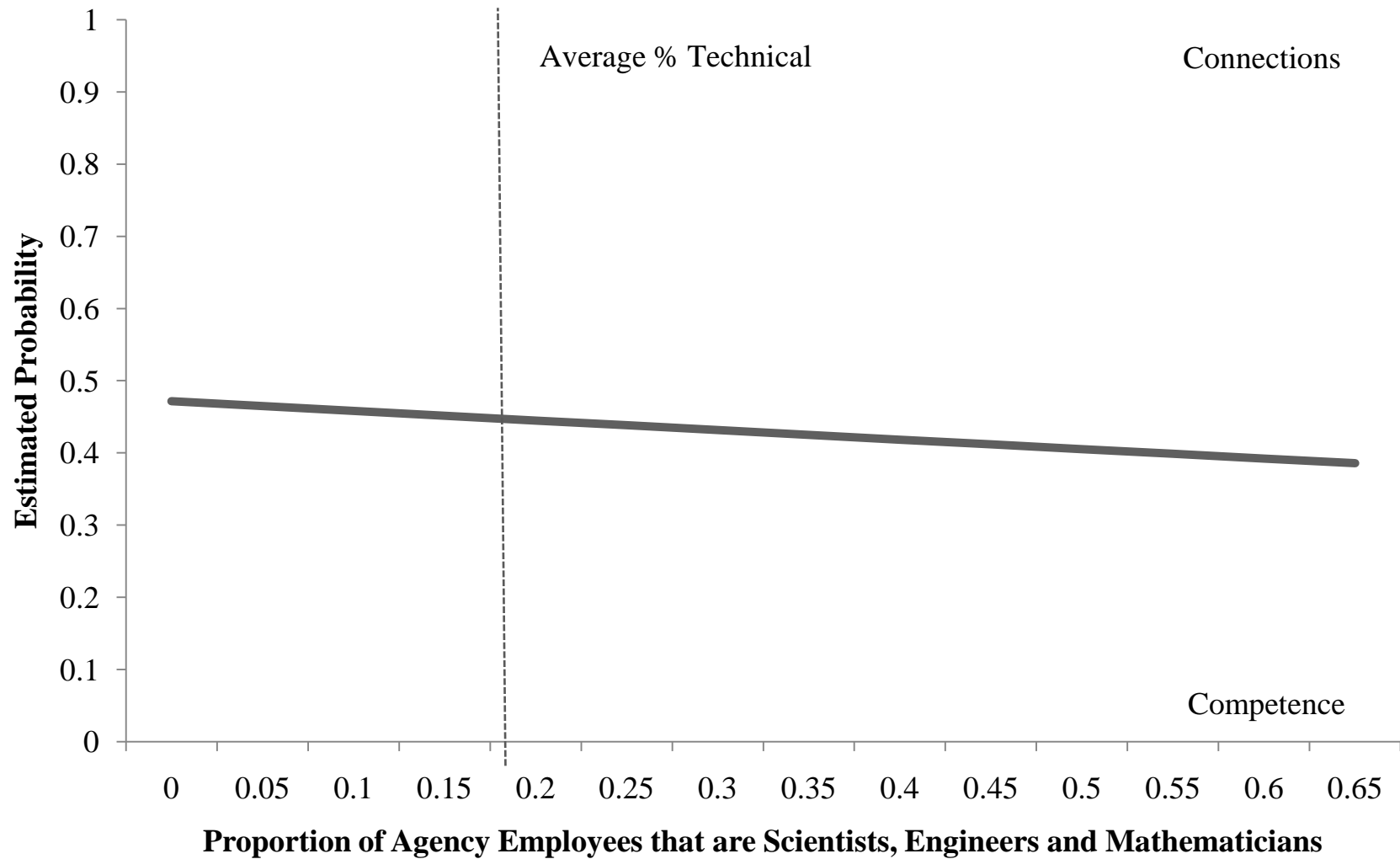


Table 1. ML Estimates of Ordered Probit Models of Respondent Perceptions of Whether Appointees are Selected for Competence or Campaign Experience or Political Connections

Variable	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
<i>Key Variables</i>				
Agency liberalism-conservatism	0.15	0.03**	0.16	0.03**
% Scientists, Engineers, Mathematicians Mentioned in SOU (0,1)	-0.30	0.22*	-0.34	0.17**
	0.02	0.06	-1.15	0.50**
<i>Interactions</i>				
Agency liberalism-conservatism*Mention in SOU			-0.10	0.06*
% Scientists, Engineers, Mathem*Mention in SOU			0.23	0.38
<i>Agency-specific controls</i>				
Ln(2007 employment)	0.02	0.02	-0.00	0.02
Ln(2007 employment)*Mention in SOU	--	--	0.11	0.05**
Commission (0,1)	0.28	0.19*	0.20	0.20
% Professional employees	0.10	0.25	0.12	0.26
% Law judges	0.02	0.04	0.01	0.04
<i>Respondent-specific controls</i>				
Resp. Liberalism-conservatism	0.06	0.04*	0.06	0.04*
Frequency of Contact with Appointees	-0.10	0.03**	-0.10	0.03**
Years Worked in Agency	-0.01	0.00**	-0.01	0.00**
Work in Regional Office (0,1)	-0.30	0.06**	-0.30	0.06**
<i>Cut Points</i>				
1	-2.22	0.29	-2.46	0.31
2	-1.41	0.29	-1.66	0.30
3	-0.14	0.30	-0.38	0.29
<hr/>				
N	1458		1458	
Number of agencies	51		51	
X ² (11, 13)	117.2		138.0	

Note: Dependent variable is ordered and categorical based upon individual survey response. Question wording: "Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your work and job setting [strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree, don't know]: "Political appointees in my agency tend to be selected more for competence and experience than campaign or political experience/ connections." Answers are recoded so that higher values indicate that appointees were selected more for political experience and connections rather than competence *significant at the 0.10 level in one-tailed tests; **significant at the 0.05 level in one-tailed tests. Standard errors adjusted for clustering on agency.

Appendix A. ML Estimates of Ordered Probit Models of Respondent Perceptions of Whether Appointees are Selected for Competence or Campaign Experience or Political Connections—Alternate Specifications

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
<i>Key Variables</i>								
Agency liberalism-conservatism	0.14**	0.41**	0.07	0.15**	0.19**	0.16**	0.16**	0.28**
% Scientists, Engineers, Mathematicians [↑] Mentioned in SOU (0,1)	-0.31*	-0.29*	-0.18	-0.63**	-0.50**	-0.32**	-0.28*	0.08
	-1.29**	-1.56**	-0.93	-1.26**	-1.78**	-1.11**	-1.01**	1.06
<i>Interactions</i>								
Agency liberalism-conservatism*Mention in SOU	-0.10*	-0.21	0.09	-0.12*	-0.26**	-0.18**	-0.09*	-0.08
% Scientists, Engineers, Mathem*Mention in SOU	0.20	0.08	0.05	0.41	0.11	-0.53	0.16	-0.04
<i>Agency-specific controls</i>								
Ln(2007 employment)	-0.02	-0.03	-0.01	-0.02	-0.01	-0.03	0.01	0.02
Ln(2007 employment)*Mention in SOU	0.12**	0.15**	0.13**	0.12**	0.16**	0.11**	0.09**	-0.09**
Commission (0,1)	0.20	0.20	0.23	0.04	0.35	0.12	0.20	0.25
% Professional employees	0.06	0.27	0.12	0.22	-0.12	0.21	0.14	-0.30
% Law judges	-0.02	0.00	0.00	0.06	-0.02	-0.03	0.01	0.03
<i>Respondent-specific controls</i>								
Resp. Liberalism-conservatism	0.07**	0.04	0.07*	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.01	0.04
Frequency of Contact with Appointees	-0.10**	-0.11**	-0.10**	-0.10**	-0.09**	-0.10**	-0.10**	-0.09**
Years Worked in Agency	-0.01**	-0.01**	-0.01**	-0.01**	0.01**	0.01**	-0.01**	0.01**
Work in Regional Office (0,1)	-0.28**	-0.32**	-0.32**	-0.29**	-0.27**	-0.29**	-0.30**	-0.27**
Appointee (0,1)	0.42**	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Respondent Ideology-Appointee Ideology	--	--	--	--	--	--	-0.08	--
<i>Cut Points</i>								
1	-2.57	-2.70	-2.81	-2.53	-2.95	-2.69	-2.37	-2.33
2	-1.78	-1.89	-1.99	-1.73	-2.14	-1.89	-1.56	-1.52
3	-0.49	-0.62	-0.72	-0.47	-0.87	-0.62	-0.29	-0.13
N	1626	1475	1465	1327	1327	1327	1429	1458
Number of agencies	51	51	51	39	39	39	42	51
X ² (15, 14, 14, 20, 17, 15)	242.2	88.8	91.5	535.4	200.9	262.0	178.3	96.6

Note: DV : Question wording: “Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your work and job setting [strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree, don’t know]: “Political appointees in my agency tend to be selected more for competence and experience than campaign or political experience/ connections.” Answers are recoded so that higher values indicate that appointees were selected more for political experience and connections rather than competence *significant at the 0.10 level in one-tailed tests; **significant at the 0.05 level in one-tailed tests. Standard errors adjusted for clustering on agency. [↑] In Model 4 this variable is measured as the proportion of an agency’s programs that are research and development programs.

Appendix B. OLS Estimates of Regression Models of Respondent Perceptions of Whether Appointees are Selected for Competence or Campaign Experience or Political Connections—Agencies as Unit of Analysis

Variable	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
<i>Key Variables</i>				
Agency liberalism-conservatism	0.20	0.05**	0.25	0.08**
% Scientists, Engineers, Mathematicians Mentioned in SOU (0,1)	-0.10	0.38	-0.13	0.39
	0.06	0.09	-0.74	0.73
<i>Interactions</i>				
Agency liberalism-conservatism*Mention in SOU			-0.20	0.10**
% Scientists, Engineers, Mathem*Mention in SOU			0.20	0.40
<i>Agency-specific controls and Constant</i>				
Ln(2007 employment)	-0.04	0.03*	-0.04	0.04
Ln(2007 employment)* Mention in SOU			0.08	0.07
Commission (0,1)	0.03	0.18	0.03	0.19
% Professional employees	-0.06	0.46	-0.12	0.49
% Law judges	-0.01	0.01	-0.00	0.01
Constant	3.64	0.36**	3.66	0.39**
<hr/>				
N	51		51	
F (4,8 df)	5.19**		4.98**	

Note: Dependent variable is average of individual survey response by agency. Question wording: “Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your work and job setting [strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree, don’t know]: “Political appointees in my agency tend to be selected more for competence and experience than campaign or political experience/ connections.” Answers are recoded so that higher values indicate that appointees were selected more for political experience and connections rather than competence. **significant at the 0.05 level; *significant at the 0.10 level in one-tailed tests.