

DECISION-MAKING IN THE SINGULAR PRESIDENCY FAME, FIDELITY, AND LEARNING TO PIVOT♦

Terry Sullivan, *Executive Director, The White House Transition Project*
Political Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Abstract: This paper considers whether presidents control their routine or react to institutional burdens, a dynamic embedded in the constitutional choice of a singular presidency. It develops a theory of ambition (fame), constrained by duty (fidelity), producing seven empirical results about presidential engagement. It tests these utilizing logs of presidential daily activity during the first 100 days of Presidents Dwight Eisenhower through George H. W. Bush. The paper concludes that the patterns to their work suggest the influence of fidelity. The paper also tests whether learning can counter fidelity and discovers that in practice presidential learning leads to increased fidelity. Hence, fidelity represents a “proximate” goal, mirroring in the presidency what reelection does in the Congress. These findings suggest the importance of faster completion of appointments, concentration on pivoting in a crisis, and more emphasis on strategy. (abstract: 138)

Contact information:

Terry Sullivan, Associate Professor
Department of Political Science
CB#3265, Hamilton Hall
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3265
919-962-0413
919-962-0432 fax
sullivan@email.unc.edu

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[I]f you had said to us a year ago that the least of my problems would be Iraq,...I don't think anybody would have believed it. — President Barack Obama, *60 Minutes*, 4/22/2009

Every man is said to have his peculiar ambition. I have no other so great as that of being truly esteemed of my fellow men, by rendering myself worthy of their esteem. How far I shall succeed in gratifying this ambition, is yet to be developed.

— Abraham Lincoln, 1832 statement announcing his candidacy for the Illinois legislature

[In these early days, there] is a minimization of the...adversarial approach. [Y]ou don't have people on the other side attacking you. You're pretty free to name your people, make your choices, set your priorities and your objectives.

— James A. Baker III, in Kumar, *et al*

Just before completing his first 100 days, President Barack Obama told a TV audience that when he had campaigned for and then planned to assume the presidency, he had envisioned an agenda far different from the one that, each day, he had confronted. Other presidents have recounted similar experiences. The call of duty had quickly squeezed out what they had worked so hard to establish as an agenda and it had effortlessly contorted what they had thought so long would become their decision process. Before the end of *his* first 100 days, President Bill Clinton summarized his experience as, “We’ve lost track of why we ran” [Woodward 1994]. In *his* memoir, President Jimmy Carter [1982] described how he had expected his new White House would differ from his predecessors’ operations, and, then, how quickly he had discovered those expectations fell short. Even before his 100 days had ended, President Carter ordered a complete review of his already faltering operation.¹

That presidents bemoan a lack of control over their own operations seems anomalous, since the founders chose the “singular” presidency to strengthen just such control. Reacting to the common advocacy in the Virginia and the New Jersey plans for a committee to manage the new Executive, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and James Wilson all argued instead for an Executive unified by a single actor [Madison, esp. June 1, 1787]. Wilson, the convention’s strongest advocate for what he called “singularity,” argued that adopting that form would fuse ambition with the necessity for coordinating subordinated authority, in turn, producing what he called an Executive “unity of purpose.” In *Federalist* 72, Hamilton took up Wilson’s argument saying that in combination with ambition (“the pursuit of fame”), singularity would promote distinctiveness because *that* would represent each president’s “best proof... of capacity and desert.” Pursuing fame, then, would produce an Executive tailored to each president’s ambitions and distinct from that of their predecessors’. It would also afford the American constitution its ideocratically *presidential* focus; a quality that, to this day, it still has.

That presidents so quickly come to this realization about their fate suggests both the centrality of their initial experiences and the opportunity the first 100 days affords them to adjust quickly to redress

¹ Memo, “Decision Analysis Report,” 6/28/77, Office of the Chief of Staff, Hamilton Jordan Confidential Files, “President's Reorganization Project — Decision Analysis Report, 03/28—06/28/1977,” Box 36, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library. Carl Rove’s detailed plans for George W. Bush’s first 100 days missed the mark in some cases by more than 300% [Sullivan 2004, chapter 9].

this imbalance. Singularity then would afford the presidency a special responsiveness it would need to match fidelity to the ambitions of its presidents.

These presidential commentaries, borne of their earliest experiences and then juxtaposed with original intent, raise one of the central conundrums driving American politics — how *can* presidents chart their own paths? Understanding presidential operations, or “routine,” represents an important step in answering this question because a theory of routine especially highlights those elements characteristic of the singular presidency. First, it identifies the balance between the individualistic demands of ambition (fame) and the common demands of duty (fidelity). Second, routine describes the working balance of authority between those responsible and those who execute — between presidents and their subordinates. Together these two elements of routine constitute the foundation of Wilson’s unity of purpose. And, third, a theory of routine provides a well-defined metric for assessing how presidents “learn on the job.”²

In addition to a theory of presidential routine, this paper demonstrates an empirical methodology appropriate for assessing routine — providing it a “compositional treatment.” Utilizing data covering President Eisenhower through G.H.W. Bush, the empirical results suggest that what presidents do reflects a balance between fame and fidelity commonly tilted towards fidelity. Even the opportunity to learn on the job (and thereby appreciate and correct that imbalance) reinforces, rather than redirects, this focus on fidelity. Together these results suggest that presidential fidelity constitutes an institutional burden like the electoral constraint on members of Congress [Mayhew 1974]: something presidents must overcome to realize their own ambitions.

A THEORY OF FAME AND FIDELITY

As it has troubled practitioners, this juxtaposition of ambition and duty has also interested presidency scholars [Hecklo 1977]. At one time, Fred Greenstein [1977: 94] felt so confident about a scholarly consensus around the tendency for Hamilton’s distinctiveness that he asserted, “the White House operation is a reflection of the personal qualities and needs of the president.” A literature that presumes this distinctiveness appears in biography, of course, and its derivative studies, e.g., in James David Barber’s [1972] focus on presidential personalities, political cognitions, and professionalism [cf. Greenstein 1982]. Fundamentally, these studies presume a president *occupies* the presidency, using ambition to define and shape the institution, treating the presidency as a *tabula rasa* [Buchanan 1990; George and George] — much like what presidents-elect have always imagined as their opportunities.

A separate literature has abandoned this consensus on distinctiveness and has concentrated, instead, on institutional processes [Hecklo 1977; Rockman 1986]. Using this concentration, scholars have focused on presidential outputs, e.g., press conferences, minor speeches [Hager and Sullivan], vetoes [Cameron 2000], executive orders [Mayer; Cohen and Krause 2000; Krause and Cohen 2000; Howell 2003; Fine and Warber 2012], appointments [McCarty and Ragahian; Bond *et al*], legislative proposals and successes [Eshbaugh-Soha; Krause 2009], and the like. These separate models all presume the presidency *molds* presidents in inexorable ways — much like what new presidents have always learned to their frustration.

Each of these approaches has something to offer and weaknesses [Pika 1988]. Emphasizing ambitions and distinctiveness asserts each president’s place in a broader, historical narrative, lending perspective. Modeling that perspective proves difficult, however, producing few observations

² In organizational economics, expertise comes in two varieties. Called “overlapping,” one relies on experience, breaching formal disciplines and typically providing broad but shallow expertise. Another, called “external,” relies on training and certification yielding depth of knowledge but not breadth of experience [Williamson 1975, 1996]. As exemplars, one might imagine the differences between experienced line officers emerging from the ranks in the early American navy versus the newly minted graduates of a U. S. Naval Academy.

(undermining precision) [King 1993]. And this lack of useful data encourages instead using “congruence-within-narrative” as both a description *of* and evidence *for* distinctiveness, though obviously, it ought not to serve as both.

By contrast, research on those isolated outputs generates precision, but sacrifices perspective. Of necessity, modeling the alternative states to a single output assumes either that the presidential process leading to this particular output *mirrors* all the other presidential processes or that, generally, presidential governance, itself, constitutes just the *sum* of these separable outputs, reducing the presidency and its governance to what Herbert Simon [1962] has called an “easily decomposable” institution.

If governance includes presidential decisions specifically focused on influencing *others’* decisions (i.e., on persuasion) or on choosing between various strategies (i.e., on leadership), then that governance does not resemble settling among alternatives on a single output. Hence, the methods for studying easily decomposable institutions cannot adequately apply to the presidential singularity. And, because every decision about any output must compete with every other similar decision for the president’s necessarily limited attention, then each component process in governance must necessarily stand in a dependent relationship with every other: both *hardly* decomposable and “routine-rationalized.”

While both these views could play a role, lending perspective *and* precision, instead, they have come to epistemological loggerheads highlighting disparities rather than confluence (e.g., consider the exchange between Terry Moe [2009], Stephen Skowronek [2009], and B. Dan Wood [2009]). Concentrating on presidential governance as routine-rationalized under singularity can break this logjam,³ so scholars can concentrate on understanding the founders’ consequential decision to fuse ambition and fidelity.

Defining the Pursuit of Fame

Assume all office-holders, including presidents, desire accomplishment (Hamilton’s “pursuit of fame”)⁴ measured against their preferences and against prior expectations based in the challenges presented by circumstances, the expected impositions of others’ decisions, and the operational realities of their offices and organizations. In coming to grips with these forces, presidents would place a premium on succeeding where their predecessors have failed, especially on issues of paramount importance and projecting objectively daunting prospects. Such favorable comparisons to their predecessors constitute the essence of Hamilton’s fame — positive proof of one’s capacity and desert.⁵ Hence, ambition and fame encourage presidents to pursue *distinctive* patterns of engagement.

While it can find articulation in the president’s agenda, the pursuit of fame has an even clearer connection to a president’s sense of productive decision-making. A policy agenda necessarily reflects a range of prior, crosscutting commitments, e.g., those made to party, to cabinet nominees, to congressional collaborators, and to electoral constituencies.⁶ These commitments necessarily dilute or distort distinctiveness. Presidential engagement, its routines and dynamics, on the other hand, rarely derive from any such compromises. Beyond authorizing its size and salaries, for example, the Congress hardly ever ventures into shaping presidential operations.⁷ Even less so does the Judiciary. In addition,

³ Separate papers (Sullivan 2010a, 2010b) take up *how* they do what they do (initiative) and with whom they engage (counsel).

⁴ Hamilton [#72] characterized it as, “the ruling passion of the noblest minds, which would prompt a man to plan and undertake extensive and arduous enterprises for the public...”

⁵ Any sample of presidential memoirs or of senior staff recollections suggests Hamilton’s insight into the passions of politicians, e.g., Carter; Sorensen 1963, 1965; Clinton; Nixon. See Skowronek’s [1993] description of the presidency’s “disruptive” force, something he attributes to the institution but which clearly rests with the individual’s motives instead.

⁶ Most analyses of presidential agendas do not focus on the balance of pressures setting its content, rather they concentrate on the ideas’ origins, e.g., Edwards and Barret; Esbaugh-Soha and Peake; Yates and Whitford.

⁷ See Sullivan and De Marchi for a perspective on the few instances of congressional interference, especially the 22nd Amendment and the institutionalization of the NSC (see also Burke).

few party or electoral differences turn on a president's operation. The absence of these other influences, therefore, leaves only a few forces to shape routine: the draw of circumstances, the structure of deployed authority, a president's own ambitions.

And duty's call.

Singularity and the Draw of Fidelity

Singularity invokes an inevitable hierarchy, defining primary and derivative authority — a necessary part of Wilson's unity and a common topic in public administration (cf. Weber; Parsons; Holmström; Hammond; Sullivan 2010a). But singularity also connects that hierarchy with presidential engagement. Suppose that for every presidential responsibility, a function (call it "license") could map the feasible policy issues onto Executive personnel, beginning with the president and identifying who among subordinates could execute derivative authority *in the president's stead* and thereby describing a "chain of command." It would also describe how high up the Executive an issue must rise (i.e., "that's above my pay grade") before it reaches someone with sufficient authority to act in the president's stead.⁸ Of course, singularity requires that license places the president at the apex of these chains.

Call a chain of command "shallow" (viewed from the president's perspective) whenever license assigns derivative authority to only a few subordinates and "deep" when derivative discretion sinks far down into an administration. Hence, license also clarifies presidential accountability: the shallower the chain, the clearer the president's role. Of course, presidents can choose to forego decisions presented to them through any chain, but the accountability for such non-decisions would still rest on their shoulders in direct relationship to license's dictates. Therefore, license suggests likely presidential attention follows shallower chains, operationalizing the draw of "fidelity to duty."

Linking engagement to fidelity in this way reflects a long tradition in political science, dating at least to Woodrow Wilson's [1911] commentaries on presidential responsibilities. In effect, Wilson suggested that license would range across duties in direct proportion to each duty's point of origin: "core" constitutional responsibilities (those explicit in Article II) clearly place the president's authority at the center of attention. Hence, presidents would spend more time on those responsibilities, followed by those implicit to the executive function, then, those from congressional delegations, and, finally, responsibilities that only have historical roots, like head of party. Enumerating these duties, of course, also has a long tradition [Corwin 1957] — the wearing of presidential "hats."

The Impact of Circumstances

To assay the balance between fame and fidelity, consider the possible presidential reactions to changing circumstances, i.e., to those forces that often populate the standard models of presidential decisions represented by outputs. The exclusive pursuit of fame would dictate that changes in "contextual" variables, like presidential job approval, which parallel presidential ambition would alter routine. Changes in "situational" variables, like the unemployment rate, would only attract presidential attention from those few presidents whose predecessor had overseen a substantial economic downturn. Hence, guided by fame, changing contexts would drive presidential engagement while changing situations would not.

The exclusive pursuit of fidelity to duty, on the other hand, would imply a different relationship. Because a changing general context would not have a direct connection to particular duties, engagement under fidelity would not follow alterations in context. However, engagement would respond positively to those changing situations that raise a related duty. For example, as an archetype, hostilities would increase engagement in "commander in chief" or in "chief diplomat" duties, because these situations would accentuate those core responsibilities.

⁸ This depth in every chain of command also shapes the potential oversight costs associated with subordinate decisions and delegations. The deeper the chain, the less lower level decisions will impact the president, filtered out or absorbed by other subordinates superior to the previous subordinate.

CALIBRATING ROUTINE

In the end, then, a theory of fame and fidelity might not simply suggest the distinctiveness Hamilton expected, for the very reason that James Wilson recommended singularity: *duty will draw fame to it*. Fame and fidelity *do* suggest different empirical dynamics though. For example, pursuing fame implies a “weak” distinctiveness among immediate predecessors and, so, engagement should follow changing contexts. Fidelity, on the other hand, centers engagement in core presidential duties and, so, alterations should follow those lines of core responsibility, drawing from the presidency’s periphery towards its core duties.

This section models these empirical hypotheses about presidential governance. It begins by describing a method necessary to assess routine-rationalized engagement, including a necessary adjustment to accommodate “resilience,” itself a regularity of such rationalized operations. It suggests three separate empirical measures of distinctiveness. The section then describes and assesses the two sets of conflicting expectations about context and situation.

A Methodology for Singularity

Singularity and its routine-rational theory requires a more complex methodology than that used to model isolated presidential outputs. This complexity includes alternative analytical techniques and additional standards for significance.

The Treatment of Routine. Because of singularity, studying governance necessarily involves emphasizing proportions of the president’s daily routine committed to each of those responsibilities described by Corwin and Wilson. Because singularity has a number of effects beyond its effect on operations and authority, it also requires some extraordinary statistical treatment. For example, because the proportions that result from singularity will lie on the closed interval $[0,1]$, the basic empirical data violate the assumption underlying most standard statistical techniques — that the data exhibit no natural constraints [Aitchison 1986, 2005; Katz and King 1999; Honaker *et al.* 2002].

Secondly, singularity requires that alterations in one area of engagement typically come at the expense of others. Because no analysis has ever described the whole of presidential engagement, no clear expectations exist about any particular distribution of the whole of routine, particularly nothing suggesting the typical, unimodal, normal distribution. Instead, that presidents might make an extraordinary commitment implies that some components of routine would have a bimodal distribution (low kurtosis, low and negative skewness) as that president pursues an extraordinary engagement while the others adhere to (or form) some baseline. Moreover, because each component of routine has a natural connection (through singularity) with every other, then a bimodal distribution in one form of engagement would naturally produce a greater likelihood of a similar distribution in others.

To address these two characteristics of singularity’s routine-rationalization, a compositional approach fits proportions of daily engagement by simultaneously solving multivariate models of all those proportions, thus making each choice of engagement a constraint on the others [Aitchison 2005]. To limit the effects of assuming a specific distribution, the multivariate approach used here assumes the data distributions result only from a Dirichlet process [Ferrari and Cribari-Neto 2004; Gelman, *et al.*], a treatment consistent with a variety of distributions.⁹

⁹ A Dirichlet process produces a probability distribution from a random distribution. It generalizes a beta distribution [Brehm and Gates 1997] and acts as the conjugate prior for the categorical distribution (generalizing a Bernoulli distribution) and the multinomial distribution (generalizing the binomial distribution).

Applying a routine-rationalized analysis in a multivariate setting requires transforming proportions into logarithms, “taking advantage of the fact that they are mathematically more tractable than proportions” [Aitchison 2005]. However, logs have no definition at zero while daily engagement does. Therefore, modeling requires perturbing those observations $x_{idj}=0$ with a miniscule value (τ_{aidj}) [Fry *et al.* 1996] and reducing the remaining observations, $x_{idj}>0$, by the value $x_{idj} \cdot \tau_{sidj}$ to preserve scale invariance [Fry *et al.* 2001]. Those adjustments equal

Thirdly, some of the reactions generated by alterations in routine merely dissipate the force of the original alteration, spreading “reactions” across statistically significant (reliable) but seemingly inconsequential effects in others. These small reactions do not capture a meaningful tradeoff but instead only echo and dissipate the force of the original alteration. Distinguishing these small dissipating reactions from more serious tradeoffs or dynamics linking the initial alteration and a potential substitute engagement implies emphasizing standard beyond some mere statistical significance — “strongly consequential” alterations involve not only statistically significant coefficients (and similar comparisons, e.g., “extraordinary” engagement) but also produce reasonably “large” changes.

Empirical Approaches to Distinctiveness

While it leads to distinctiveness, the pursuit of fame does not point to any specific form of distinctiveness, because no one knows how presidents define distinctive. Given this paucity of experience, the analysis will consider three versions. Reading their memoirs, presidents seem to adhere to a “weak” version of distinctiveness: an ambition to differ only from their immediate predecessor (e.g., such Hamiltonian testimonials appear in Sorensen 1965 on Kennedy; Nixon; Carter; Clinton; Bush). This version might suggest a simple barometer: one president’s routine differs statistically and at greater than $\pm 1/3$ of his predecessor’s engagement and *vice-versa*. This kind of difference will constitute a “weakly consequential” distinctiveness: reliable and observable.

Alternately, presidents might consider adopting a “stronger” version, concentrating on a “specialty.” For example, journalistic accounts regularly attribute to President Carter a management focus [Fallows; Hargrove] or to G.H.W. Bush a concentration on diplomacy [McQueen *et al*] or to Ronald Reagan a concentration on communications [Kernell 2004; Cohen 2010]. Such renditions suggest employing a standard that admits of an “extraordinary” engagement. Consider the Bay of Pigs invasion, the only international crisis occurring during a first 100 days. Beginning with the aerial bombardment on 15 April 1961, President Kennedy increased his average daily commitment to commander-in-chief duties from his normal 8.3% to 18.5% of his day. While this increased attention did not remotely approximate a majority of his time, the president’s brief increase in engagement did exceed the average commander-in-chief engagement of the two “hot war” presidents in the data analyzed here (Eisenhower and Nixon). It also doubled Kennedy’s own average engagement and exceeded by twice the average commitment of his lowest peers. So, in addition to statistical significance, a stronger version of distinctive engagement would equal to a doubling over a baseline average from the lowest presidents’ commitments in an area.

Lastly, presidents might pursue a more complex, or “strongly consequential” version of distinctiveness, making decisions by considering them a part of the whole’s complex — as routine-rationalized and, therefore, choosing distinctive tradeoffs. Assessing this last version requires using a multivariate model of presidential choices about routine. Using this complex of models to identify presidents as distinctive requires finding presidential effects statistically different and particularly consequential (see below) while controlling for the other effects common to them all.

Available Data

The analysis exploits a data resource that describes presidential engagement in detail. These data originate with a number of contemporaneous organizational logs eventually combined and corroborated by the staff of the National Archives for Presidents Dwight Eisenhower through George

$$\tau_{aidj} \equiv \left(\frac{.00000000 \ 00001}{\max \sum x_{idj}} \right), \text{ where } i=1\dots 12, d=1\dots 100, j=1\dots 8 \quad \text{And } \tau_{sidj} \equiv \left(\frac{\delta M(M+1)}{N^2} \right) \text{ where } \begin{cases} M \text{ equals the number of zero components in a case} \\ N \text{ equals total components (here, 12)} \\ \delta \text{ equals the maximum rounding error} \end{cases}$$

H. W. Bush.¹⁰ These composite logs detail presidential activities, minute-by-minute throughout each workday during these presidents' first 100 days. See the appendix for a more detailed description.

That presidents would quickly discover how the presidency affects their operations suggests the importance of those first 100 days. Other reasons also suggest the importance of their early experiences. For example, in the Washington community, the early days constitute the period of highest uncertainty about an administration's "character," and, so, a presidency's earliest actions quickly reify expectations. Practitioners agree with historians that these earliest expectations and interpretations set how history eventually will characterize a presidency [Leuchtenburg 1983; Schlesinger 1958; Brace and Hinckley 1992; Frenreis *et al* 2001]. So, seasoned practitioners, like James A. Baker III (quoted earlier), believe that the first 100 days present the best opportunity for a president to establish a "personal mark" [Sullivan 2004], making the early period the best test bed for assessing routine and distinctiveness.

Those first days also present the steepest learning curves — the clearest disparity between what presidents intend to do and, then, what they learn they must do. That presidents might eventually alter their routines, creating starkly different operations, does not diminish the importance of observing this initial period common to all presidencies and surveyed across a wide swath of postwar history. Note further that their early routines become their most resilient routines, partly because routine itself does not result from externalized compromises with other actors (like agendas do). For example, having received a wide-ranging analysis and then recommendations on modifying his initial routine, *a report he commissioned*, President Carter still maintained those early routines another two years. Hence, this early period presents a significant opportunity for asking whether presidents can ever differentiate themselves after their common, initial experiences.

OBSERVING ROUTINE

This theory of fame and fidelity suggests two broad comparisons. One characterizes the balance between fame and fidelity generally using the weaker versions of distinctiveness and using the raw proportions of engagement. A second characterizes dynamics, the *workings* of fame and fidelity, describing how presidents adjust to variation in circumstances.

H1. *Routine Balance.*

- H1a. *Weakly Consequential Distinctiveness.* Raw proportions of engagement for predecessor presidents will appear statistically significant and consequential in comparison to their immediate successors across a large number of responsibilities.
- H1b. *Stronger Distinctiveness.* For several presidents, raw proportions of specific engagement will appear statistically significant and "extraordinary" compared against the baseline of the lowest four.
- H1c. *Fidelity Constrains Fame.* Using raw proportions, presidential engagement centers in core responsibilities, spending successively smaller proportions of the day among increasingly peripheral responsibilities.
- H1d. *Strongly Consequential Distinctiveness.* In a more complex, multivariate Dirichlet model of engagement, coefficients for individual presidents will appear statistically significant and consequential.

H2. *Singularity's Dynamics.*

- H2a. *Context.* In a more complex, multivariate Dirichlet model of engagement, changes in contextual variables generate changes in engagement, while changes in situational variables rooted in specific presidential responsibilities will not alter engagement.

¹⁰ Some previous research has utilized materials from diaries to produce summary statistics (e.g., for LBJ [Best 1988]; for JEC [Link and Kegley]; for DDE, GRF, and JEC [Thompson 1992]) or changes in means over time (for RWR [Weatherford and McDonnell]), but no research has covered such a long period or in as much detail or applied complex, causal models.

H2b. *Circumstance*. In a more complex, multivariate Dirichlet model of engagement, changes in context will have no statistically significant effect on routine, while changes in situations will have a significant effect when they match presidential responsibilities.

H2c. *Following Fidelity*. In a more complex, multivariate Dirichlet model of engagement, statistically significant, consequential changes in engagement draw from the periphery and shift routine towards the core.

Basic Observations

Table 1 reports the patterns to routine in data assessing weak distinctiveness (H1a); “extraordinary” engagement (H1b); and fidelity to core responsibilities (H1c). It reports average daily engagement across the various presidential responsibilities arrayed from core to the periphery. All proportions report statistically precise, reliable values at the 0.01 level or better. The table covers the six *elected* presidents, excluding the two “accidental” presidents (Johnson and Ford) because they specifically relied on their predecessors’ operations, hence invalidating any comparisons.

Table 1. Presidential Engagement for Elected Presidents, 1953-1989

Engagement	Average Daily Engagement (%)						Averages for		
	DDE	JFK	RMN	JEC	RWR	GHWB	All	Base	Origin
<i>Routine Outside of Duties</i>									
Personal	29.3	12.7	15.8	14.7	24.5	25.3	19.6	16.9	
Travel	3.2	6.9	7.6	2.4	3.1	4.8	5.3	3.4	
<i>Explicit, Constitutional Warrants</i>34.9									
1. Commander in Chief	11.9	9.9	12.7	8.1	6.5	11.0	10.0	8.9	
2. Chief Diplomat	11.8	20.3	18.8	11.1	7.9	13.9	14.1	11.2	
3. Exec Management	10.1	10.1	7.1	17.8 [†]	8.9	5.1	10.1	7.8	
4. Law Enforcement	2.1	0.6	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.7	0.4	
<i>Implicitly Executive Duties</i>16.4									
5. Legislative Leader	12.6	7.9	4.1	9.3	8.5	4.6	7.6	6.3	
6. Ceremonial	6.7	6.6	9.4	7.4	12.3	11.6	8.8	7.6	
<i>Congressional Delegations</i>14.9									
7. WH Process	3.2	12.5	17.4	11.9	17.4	14.1	12.7	10.4	
8. Econ Management	1.4	3.0	1.3	4.3	0.4	3.1	2.2	1.5	
<i>Historical Developments</i>8.6									
9. Communications	3.3	6.7	3.2	9.6 [†]	8.5	4.6	6.2	4.4	
10. Party Leader	4.4	2.9	1.9	2.9	1.5	1.7	2.6	2.2	
<i>n of Daily Observations</i> ^b	84	90	100	99	87	76			
<i>n of Individual Observations</i>	4,655	5,809	7,796	8,036	8,483	10,287			

Source: Compiled by author

Notes: [†]Extraordinary engagement ^aBottom four presidents ^bSee appendix

As Table 1 makes clear, presidents spent around 75% of their days engaged in these ten responsibilities, with the remainder committed to personal time or travel. The table also makes clear that these presidents spent very little time concentrating on any one duty. Even the two war presidents, commanding troops in battle and having campaigned on resolving these conflicts, found it difficult to commit more than a third of their first days to the commander-in-chief and diplomacy duties *combined*. In six of the ten responsibilities, the mean presidential engagement amounted to single digits. Every day, presidents engage in a variety of responsibilities, but none in particular.

Weakly Distinctive

Table 1 provides the first evidence regarding Hamilton's standard. The table provides 50 comparisons between paired predecessors-successors on the 10 forms of engagement. H1a requires a minimally consequential disparity (statistically different and a difference greater than a third in both directions). Of the 50-paired comparisons, half met this standard, but nearly half of those differences occurred among the historical responsibilities, which average less than 5% of the presidential day. These changes then could have reflected dampening effects, responding to alternations elsewhere in routine. Most presidents differed in only one or two of the categories with substantial averages, which then echoed with a reaction elsewhere. So, the final conclusion as to distinctions will have to wait for the more complex modeling later.

Extraordinary Distinctiveness

Now consider *extraordinary* engagement (H1b). Only one of these six presidents made an extraordinary commitment, but in two separate responsibilities: executive management and communications.

Jimmy Carter on Executive Management. The baseline for managing the executive stands at not quite 8%, fourth among the ten duties. True to lore, President Carter's commitment to management represented not only an extraordinary engagement but it almost doubled the second largest presidential commitment as well! He simply committed more time to management than anyone else.

Jimmy Carter on Communications. Many consider communications central to the presidency (cf. Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake; Kumar 2007; Edwards), particularly to influence (cf. Kernell 2004; Canes-Wrone 2001, 2006). Overall, presidents averaged around 6% of their time committed to communications, seventh among the ten. This engagement has grown only slightly despite numerous technological advances since the 1950s [Hager and Sullivan; Cohen 2010]. Apparently, upon assuming office, presidents (but maybe not their staffs) abandon a large part of their earlier campaigning. In this area of deep command chains, using staff adapts the presidency to rapidly changing technological conditions, while leaving presidential engagement steadily focused elsewhere (cf. Sullivan 2010b).

In communications, President Carter made a second extraordinary effort: 9.6% over a baseline of 4.4%. President Reagan, the purported communicator, followed on Carter's performance with the second highest at 8.5% (but just below the standard for extraordinary). Taken together, and especially to contemporary observers, these two patterns might have suggested that the presidency (not just individual presidents) had undergone a distinct transformation into a "plebiscitary presidency" [Kernell 2004; Barilleaux; Rose; or Cohen 2010]. Note, however, that while considered the last president in what some describe as the previous, "bargaining regime," President Carter's performance— actually outstripped that of both presidents in that new "plebiscitary regime," including President Reagan. Hence, the data suggest that the timing on this purported institutional development does not match the realities. Moreover, these patterns of change did not sustain themselves through the Bush administration, returning instead to the baseline [Hager and Sullivan], further undermining this plebiscitary notion at its most defining moment.

On '41. The popular rendition of the first Bush presidency did not fare any better than that of the plebiscitary presidency. Indeed, on diplomacy, H. W. Bush's routine engagement amounted to just the third highest, behind Presidents Kennedy and Nixon, neither of whom could muster an extraordinary commitment either.

Hence, the evidence on H1b seems especially mixed at best. Of course, this evidence about the validity of popular reputations does not speak to President Bush's or President Reagan's later routine. But these purely objective, systematic comparisons ought to weigh heavily against the entirely anecdotal, often secondhand, and almost always self-serving comparisons made to and by journalists and then repeated by scholars [Hager and Sullivan].

Fidelity Constrains Fame. The broader pattern to engagement follows fidelity, so only among the more peripheral areas of engagement can presidents find a freedom to explore. The broader pattern of engagement however merely asserts the draw of fidelity. Across the range of presidential duties, presidents spent twice as much time on their core constitutional duties with little variation than they did on those duties considered implicit to the executive function. And, they invested four times as much in their core duties as they did in the fourth category, with only historical origins. Overall, then, the evidence suggests that the balance between ambition and duty reflects a common experience, anchored in the presidential core, emphasizing fidelity over fame, making difficult any attempts at distinctiveness and, hence, undermining other anecdotal characterizations.

Routine-Rationalized Findings

Of course, the theory, the methodological demands of singularity, and its routine-rationalized processes require more complex, compositional analysis to establish clearly the balance between fame and fidelity. This section considers “strongly consequential” distinctiveness (H_{1d}) and the general expectations about its dynamics (H_2). The evidence derives from two Dirichlet treatments of engagement. The first model considers comparisons between presidents, using each presidency in turn as the base, and looking only for statistically significant differences between presidencies across routine. In a causal framework, this model mirrors the simple comparisons from Table 1. The second treatment incorporates into a “full” model any of these distinctive presidencies in modeling engagement.

Variables in Use. Both Dirichlet models solve simultaneously for daily commitment levels in the ten areas of engagement reported in Table 1, along with travel and personal time. Personal time represents the baseline comparison in both models. In addition to routine-rationalized constraints, the two models assess engagement using three other broad forces: context, learning, and situation. Two independent variables operationalize context: general public approval (*Weekly Job Approval*) and learning (*Days in Office*). Three variables operationalize situational forces calling on specific presidential duties: *In Hostilities?* (core), *Unemployment Rate* (delegated), and *Unified Party Control* [Mayhew 1991; Aldrich] (historical happenstance).

Strong Distinctiveness

When controlling for other effects and estimating responsibilities simultaneously, knowing the identity of presidents provided little useful information about routine: only 29 of the 165 (18%) president-to-president|duty comparisons met the standard. Moreover, only one predecessor-successor pair consistently appeared distinctive. Hence, the Hamiltonian distinctiveness found among the raw proportions (H_{1a}) disappears in a more controlled and rationalized specification, leaving only a single systematic contrast between Presidents Carter and Reagan and a much more sporadic contrast between Presidents Kennedy and Reagan.

A Routine-rationalized Model of Governance

By incorporating these results for Presidents Kennedy and Carter, Table 2 reports a complete, Dirichlet model of routine. Coefficients report changes of one standard error for continuous variables to better approximate the effects reported on dichotomous variables. The table also reports the expected value of each engagement, $E(\text{Duty})$, projecting the effects of all variables at their means.

General Results. Overall, only a few coefficients carried both statistically significant and strongly consequential values suggesting initially that with the bulk of their responsibilities, presidents engaged at reasonably similar patterns. Block F-tests confirmed these results. Only three of the ten areas of engagement reported consistent effects both in general and for the distinctive presidents: diplomacy, legislative leadership, and managing the White House decision-making process. Along with personal time (not an area of responsibility), these effects build an interesting picture.

The Balance between Context and Situation. The theory concluded that with fame alone as a motive, presidents would react to context and ignore changing situations (H2a). On the other hand, the impact of fidelity would suggest that presidents would not react to changing context but would react to changing situations when those changes had a direct mapping into specific responsibilities (H2b) and rationalizing (drawing) from the periphery inward (H2c). For H2b and H2c, the evidence from Table 2 therefore, will gage the balance in these two motivations.

Table 2. A Routine-rationalized Model of Presidential Engagement

Variables	1. Commander in Chief	2. Chief Diplomat	3. Executive Management	4. Law Enforcement
$E(\text{Duty} x_i = \bar{x}_i \forall i)$	9.47	10.83	8.38	4.33
<i>Individual Distinctiveness</i>				
President Kennedy	1.13***	10.10***	-2.39***	-1.66***
President Carter	3.19***	3.09***	-1.08***	-1.68***
<i>Contextual Effects</i>				
Job Approval, weekly	-0.42	-0.66	-0.54	0.34
Learning (Days in Office)	-0.01	0.72	-0.31	0.00
<i>Situational Effects</i>				
In Hostilities?	-2.16	4.90***	0.84**	0.77***
Unemployment rate	-2.31***	-1.16*	0.88***	0.45***
Unified Party Control	0.13	-1.49	3.97	1.01
Variables	5. Legislative Leader	6. Ceremonial	7. White House Decision Process	8. Economic Management
$E(\text{Duty})$	7.58	7.73	12.35	4.63
<i>Individual Distinctiveness</i>				
President Kennedy	-4.49***	-0.36***	8.68***	-0.16***
President Carter	-4.03	-0.87***	6.82***	1.66***
<i>Contextual Effects</i>				
Job Approval, weekly	-0.03	-0.98	1.16	0.46
Learning (Days in Office)	0.05	-0.22	-1.21	-0.06
<i>Situational Effects</i>				
In Hostilities?	-0.22	0.45*	1.76*	-2.17***
Unemployment rate	1.17	0.05	2.20***	-0.87***
Unified Party Control	5.65*	1.21	-11.71***	-0.10
Variables	9. Communicator	10. Party	Travel	Personal Time
$E(\text{Duty})$	7.43	4.63	5.91	16.74
<i>Individual Distinctiveness</i>				
President Kennedy	-0.11***	-1.18***	4.63***	-14.19***
President Carter	1.95***	-1.24***	0.67***	-8.48***
<i>Contextual Effects</i>				
Job Approval, weekly	0.42	0.36	-0.27	0.01
Learning (Days in Office)	0.18	-0.05	-0.08	0.93
<i>Situational Effects</i>				
In Hostilities?	-0.65	-1.16	0.66***	-3.02***
Unemployment rate	0.72***	-0.28	-0.14	-0.71***
Unified Party Control	-1.18***	0.90	-2.01***	3.62

Source: Compiled by author

n of cases: 532

Log Likelihood: 23801.3

Clustered, robust errors: * .05; ** .01; *** .001

The evidence on H2b seems clear. Changes in public standing had little effect on engagement: the coefficients on *Approval* routinely did not report statistically significant values. And *Learning* also did not seem to support any significant role in engagement.

By contrast, situational effects seemed more robust and in the expected directions to support fidelity. The presence of hostilities, for example, generated a strongly consequential effect, increasing presidential engagement in the core responsibility for diplomacy. New presidents facing inherited conflicts¹¹ significantly increased their engagement over their peers. Among delegated responsibilities, a worsening *Unemployment Rate* did not generate a clear fidelity response in economic management.¹² As seems apparent, presidents establish a routine commitment to economic management typically at a very low level and, then, that initial commitment alters very little even as situations change. Instead, presidents delegate to their ample staffs of subordinates in this area, preferring to use *that* expertise to buffer their own responsibilities (cf. Sullivan 2010b).¹³

The independent variable expected to affect responsibilities with historical roots, *Unified Party Control*, presents another interesting fidelity effect. Unified control, of course, can constitute a generalization of Wilson's "unity of purpose" (cf. Sullivan and De Marchi 2011). Among the post war presidents, unified government had a substantial effect on presidential routine, shifting engagement as a dynamic away from an inward operation (i.e., managing the White House decision making process) and towards an increased attention to orchestrating leadership, both in legislative affairs and improved executive management [cf. Beckmann]. This operational dynamic appeared regardless of the measure used, including how close the president's partisans came to a super-majority (*Close to F*) [Sullivan 2010b].

Engagement's Dynamics. The theory also suggested that when presidents respond to changes, they will do so only by adjusting inward, drawing from the periphery to their core (H2c). The dynamics reported in Table 2 for diplomacy clearly evidence this pattern, e.g., drawing significantly from personal time to reinforce diplomatic efforts. The pattern repeated itself for the two distinctive presidents, as well: they increased their core engagement by drafting heavily on their personal time. Because routine rationalization makes it difficult to shift engagement *given fidelity*, personal time becomes the logical part of the president's day available for any necessary drawdowns.

A general dynamic also appeared in the results on increasing unity of purpose. Having a unified government drew the president's commitment away from managing the White House (a statutory delegation), dropping a total of 12 points. That shift presidents then committed to coordinating a broader effort, splitting their attention between increasing legislative leadership (an implicit responsibility) nearly 6 points and increasing executive management (a core responsibility) nearly 4 points. Hence, and as suggested, presidential opportunities moved in the direction of fidelity — from periphery towards core, with but one interesting caveat.

The advent of unified government, considered as a generalization of unity, resulted in a net contribution to personal time. For presidents, unity of purpose then constitutes a significant asset with which to manage their own institution. While not completely prophetic, James Wilson's convention prophecies and Hamilton's *Federalists* tracts seem vindicated by the empirical pattern.

Summary. These results minimize the importance of H2a (fame), reinforce the earlier findings on H1c and H2b (emphasizing fidelity), and suggest H2c (dynamics follow fidelity). The balance, then, between these two primal forces tips decidedly towards fidelity — presidents do what they must before they do what they wish. Just the lesson they say they have learned from their earliest experiences in office.

¹¹ Kennedy's brief experience with the Bay of Pigs could also constitute an "inherited" conflict.

¹² The finding recurred across several operationalizations, e.g., inflation rate, misery index, current accounts balance, GDP growth, adjusted GDP growth.

¹³ Because they received advance notice of economic news from their own Labor Departments, presidents might react to changing circumstances in a way not completely captured by H2b.

Learning's Effects

Fidelity to duty might have more sway at an administration's beginning, however, when new presidents discover the harsh reality that governance does not match their plans (when they lose their way). How quickly they seem to come to this realization affords them the possibility to adjust their stance having found their feet beneath them. This section briefly considers whether presidents exhibit such a transitional pattern in their average daily engagements, drifting towards an average favoring distinctiveness and, therefore, the pursuit of fame in the short time that they have before their rendezvous with FDR. In a new Dirichlet model, the variables remain the same as earlier models with the addition of conditioning the learning variable with the identity of presidents, using President Reagan as the baseline.

Brambor *et al* suggest that the proper way to identify a conditioned effect similar to learning involves graphing the marginal effects on each conditioned variable along with its appropriate confidence intervals and looking for significant convergences. For these conditioned, daily compositional models, then, the day to day marginal effects model that learning. This conditional effect would exist even though the principal variable showed no significant general effect, as reported here. Now, the trend in marginal effects on these conditioned effects stand in for the more general trend in learning already assessed. So, if this kind of learning ameliorates fidelity, then the analysis would highlight how these individual marginal effects begin with respect to the core, whether they differ from each other and whether learning weakens fidelity (here having a negative marginal slope) and adjusting towards fame (a positive slope). The effects suggest three expectations.

- E3a. Fame requires that for those presidents who begin with learning moving towards the core (negative intercepts), that their marginal effects drift apart and away from the core (a steeply positive slope).
- E3b. Fame requires for those presidents with learning shifting away from the core (positive intercepts), that the marginal effects merely drift apart while generally upwards.
- E3c. Fidelity would suggest presidents have learning trending initially towards the core, with negative intercepts, and regardless of initial patterns (e.g., even having positive intercepts) reinforcing fidelity, slopes equal to or less than zero.

Following Brambor *et al*, Figure 1 illustrates the marginal effects of the learning variable now conditioned on each president along with their respective confidence intervals.¹⁴ This graphing technique allows for observing any effects that might occur in a shorter period, especially near the end of the 100 days when presidents presumably regain their balance.

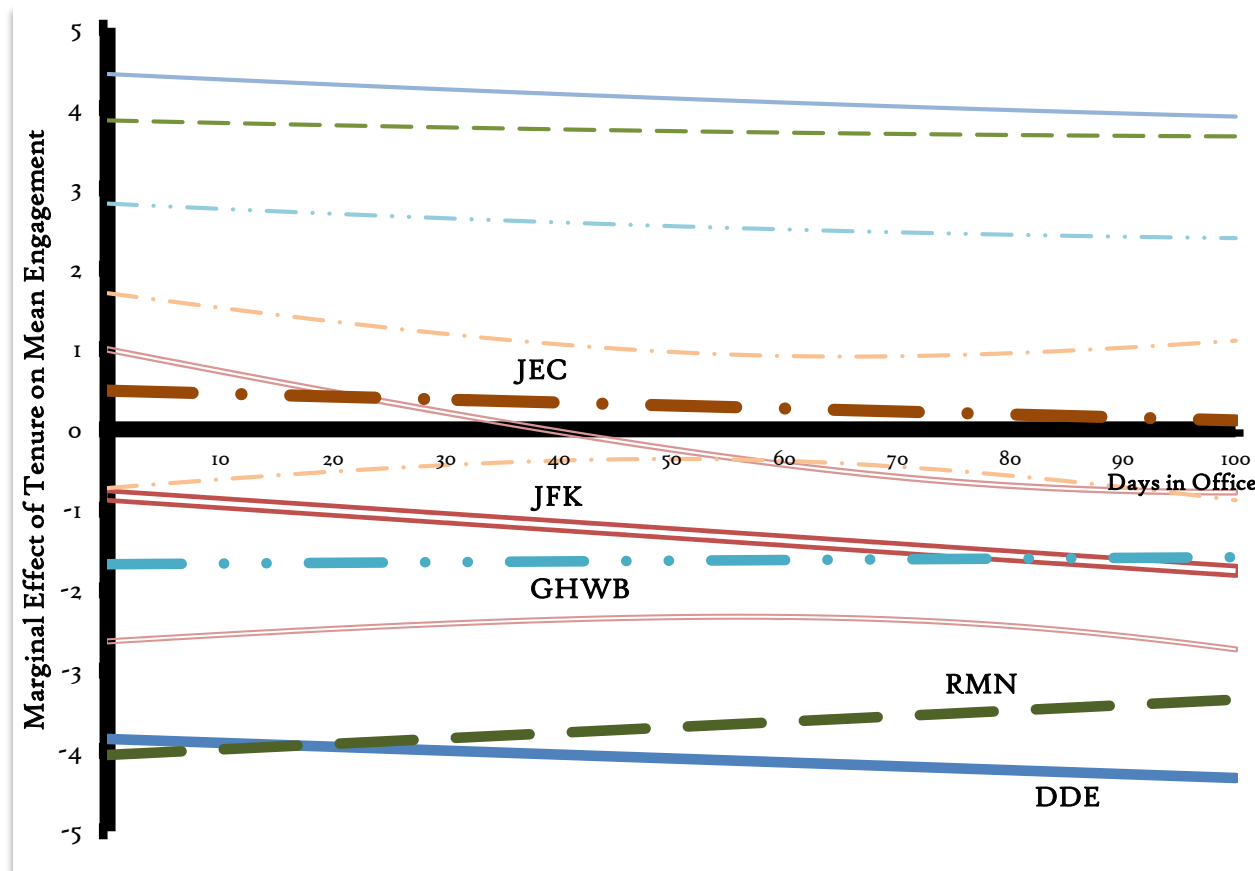
The Learning Effect

For the five elected presidents, this conditioned model identifies four presidents as feeling the effects of learning generally pushing them *towards* core engagement over time (initial negative intercepts) — Eisenhower, Kennedy, Nixon, and G.H.W. Bush. Among these four, the typical pattern to learning actually increased their engagement towards more concentration on core duties (negative intercepts and generally negative slopes). President Nixon presented a slight variation as his learning steeply slowed an already intensive concentration on core responsibilities. His deeply negative general trend (matching his mentor Eisenhower) contextualized a sharply positive adjustment over time. This pattern of learning could easily reflect his initial focus (like Eisenhower) on hostilities and a stronger diversification over time away from this (presumably frustrating) war effort. In all, these patterns do not comport with E3a and more clearly support E3c.

Only President Carter's initial learning focused outside the core — recall President Carter's extraordinary interest in communications. His seemingly constant commitment in that vein meant his learning distinguished him from the others, providing some evidence of a drifting apart.

¹⁴ Lower confidence bounds for Presidents Eisenhower, Nixon, and Bush extend well off the bottom of the figure.

Figure 1. Marginal Effect of President; and Learning as Tenure>0



The values of marginal effects, in general, though tell a story consistent with accepting fidelity (E3c) rather than adjusting away from it.

Summary. Already focusing on fidelity, a new president’s learning continues to concentrate attention on core duties. The call of duty preempts many of their opportunities to pursue any ambitions they may have set out before they took office.

CONCLUDING REMARKS WHEN PRESIDENTS DO WHAT THEY MUST

Whatever their ambitions, the longer they held the job the more these new presidents experienced fidelity’s draw. Their retrospectives and contemporary complaints, therefore, have a reasonable, empirical foundation. The shallowness of license in their core duties inevitably draws their attentions, squeezes their agendas, and contorts their routines.

In most instances, then, fidelity to duty and what they do with *that* becomes the talisman of their “capacity and desert.” This challenge then parallels the proximate goal of reelection for members of Congress — while not central to their motivation, if they wish to make a difference, they must find their own course within a context strongly shaped by this effect. During their first 100 days, these Presidents did not break free of fidelity. So, how to meet fidelity becomes synonymous with the original question — how presidents control their paths and maybe their fates?

The Importance of Pivoting

Obviously, the empirical findings should encourage presidents-elect *not* to believe they will *do things differently*.¹⁵ The evidence says they will not. But, these findings should encourage them to consider a new perspective on routine, *focus on managing fidelity*. Honoring their prior commitments and plans, rather than allowing situations to drown those out, requires that new presidents develop a strategy for “pivoting:” learning to take challenging circumstances and, in their midst, shift from duty to ambition (cf. Andrew Card and John Sununu’s comments in Sullivan 2004).

Based in the theory and evidence presented here, pivoting requires two operational changes. First, administrations must rely more on subordinates’ formalized expertise. Presidents and scholars often think the president’s circle of advisors needs to remain tight in a crisis (see Sigelman and McNeil’s [1980] review of this idea). Research on hierarchy’s effect on routine (cf. Sullivan 2010b), however, suggests that to weather fidelity’s demands while shifting to their own focus, presidents need to reach down into their own administrations (where external expertise resides) or outward into the non-governmental community. In other words, presidents react to crises better by expanding their councils.

For nearly two decades, transition advisors, like the White House Transition Project, have encouraged standing up the government more quickly to handle daily administrative demands (cf. NCRFAP). Now, pivoting adds an additional reason for quickly filling the president’s bench. Presidents need formalized expertise to take up the slack in demands that only they will take up otherwise. Mistakenly, chiefs of staff concentrate on what they see as their biggest challenge — the lack of discipline in their immediate White House staffs, described poetically as everyone running to their president’s side “like a grade school soccer team” rather than holding to their positions (see Leon Panetta in Sullivan 2004). They characterize that problem as lacking “discipline” because, to them, it involves the draw of the individual’s ambition to become useful to their president. Instead, the real problem chiefs need to concentrate on involves finding the expertise needed to pivot away from fidelity, i.e., presidents need subordinates who can adequately handle a presidential “pass” to them. Presidents need subordinates with the formalized expertise necessary to structure the facts and delineate between the clear set of decisions only presidents can make while removing those many, typically technical, decisions that *should* properly drift downward. Elsewhere, Sullivan [2010b] calls this kind of pivoting a specialized example of “buffering.”

Second, as the theory and evidence suggests, the shallower chains of command in the core constitutes the chief mechanism for undermining any administration’s initial focus. The unique responsibilities of the national security team, its access to intelligence sources similar to the President’s, and its claims to the kinds of formalized expertise just described represent a prime example of how shallow chains can trump the management functions vested in the modern chiefs of staff [Cohen *et al.*]. To reduce these unchecked claims on the president’s time, the control operations managed by the chief of staff (including the staff secretary and the cabinet secretary) should increase the numbers of their own staffs receiving the highest security clearances. This step would return these staffs to the unified (and thereby routine-rationalized) decision process about balancing their president’s engagement. Transition planners have advocated using the National Security Reform Act of 2004 to increase the number of campaign staff granted security clearances to speed up staff acquisition after the election. Now, these advocates have another, democratic justification — supporting a new president’s focus on *the* agenda decided by the election.

¹⁵ See, for example, how Theodore Sorensen’s [1966] recounts Kennedy’s operational assumptions. They presumed they would do things differently, though the data suggest they clearly had a mistaken idea as to how the Eisenhower operation worked. Hence, only slightly ironically, Kennedy’s engagement ended up mirroring Eisenhower’s.

The Burdens of Ignorance

In the end, then, maintaining a presidency's path requires that new presidents and their staffs understand how to use Wilson's unity of purpose. As a substitute for pivoting to formalized expertise, White Houses instead have developed a common organizational response to fidelity's powerful draw: they stretch their presidents' workdays. In this dataset covering nearly fifty years in the latter half of the twentieth century, each president saw his days lengthened an average of around 10% over the 100 days. Even President Carter's already, extraordinarily long day (averaging 17.4 hours) stretched an additional 8%!

The theory here suggests this response takes the wrong path because the staff knows so little of their president's work. In earlier reports on the 100 days [Sullivan 2009], those presumed to know their presidents best, e.g., chiefs of staff, only actually encounter *those presidents* (including phone conversations) during about 6% of the president's day. Moreover, this low percentage represents the apex among all subordinate interactions.¹⁶ As one consequence of a singular presidency, then, only presidents bear the costs evoked by fidelity because of misguided staff responses. When presidents bemoan the irony of their first 100 days, *their* complaints carry a double entendre: work they didn't choose and costs only they bore. As a second and equally problematic consequence of this subordinate ignorance, pivoting under current operations must originate with the president's directive, the only person who sees the whole, burdening the president too much and relying too little on unity of purpose.

Hence, new scholarly research like this can play a role in shaping better presidential operations by better describing their outlines and dynamics. But these results also require incorporation into a new administration's routine. One model for incorporation comes from the early Bush '43 presidency. The President's Chief of Staff, Andy Card, instituted a weekly planning exercise among the senior staff. His "strategery group" concentrated on long-term planning, considering scenarios to pursue. While they adopted this process to push out their own thinking from one week to six months, it resulted in what they saw as a strengthened ability to pivot back to that agenda in times of challenge [cf. Sullivan 2004]. By running through scenarios and their alternative agendas, many they would eventually abandon, the group became familiar with what they believed constituted their own agenda. Such an exercise, repeated often and early and then carried on throughout, makes pivoting more likely when fidelity comes to call.

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¹⁶ See Sullivan 2009. The president's "inner circle" (those who encountered their president on average at least once a day) invariably includes only five people: the Vice-President, National Security Advisor, Secretary of State, Chief of Staff, and either the domestic policy advisor or the Press Secretary.

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APPENDIX: THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY DIARY

As one of the advantages of the American presidency, a number of organizations log the president's activities. Chief among these the U. S. Secret Service, the appointments staff in the White House Office, and the White House Ushers keep their own logs, though they purposively overlap. The Secret Service log primarily covers movement outside the Oval Office, into the Residence, and transit outside the presidential compounds. The White House Ushers, the residential domestic staff, cover the president primarily within the Mansion and Residence of the President's House along with the other official residences. And the Appointments staff cover the president's activities within the West Wing, in transit, and over the phone. Each contributes to a composite log built by the National Archives and Records Administration's Diarist staff, part of the NARA White House Records Unit lodged in the basement. Their composite, called the *President's Daily Diary*,¹⁷ also includes notations made in the logs as to activity and content. NARA stores additional materials (e.g., contemporaneous staff and presidential notes) in a separate collection called the "daily diary backup" along with appendices to various logs provided by the president's staff (especially from the advance staff). The daily diary differs substantially from the "public schedule," often posted by the White House and prominently placed at many of the National Archives Presidential Libraries prior to releasing the actual daily diary. The daily diary often takes considerable time to release, having to clear national security, secret service, and various "deeds of gift" concerns. At this writing, the last available daily diary covers the presidency of George H. W. Bush, the Bill Clinton Library having only recently released its version of the President's public schedules.

Most citations in the diary record beginning and ending times although the diary might not record the latter. While some redaction originally occurs, most of those restrictions lapse before release of the diaries (except for identifying CIA briefers and the Secret Service protection detail). In addition to the diary, these data include the additions from several verification steps, including matching the data against the NARA *Presidential Papers Series*, and additional validation against logs of presidential recordings (for Eisenhower through Nixon).

The observations cover between 76 and 100 of each president's first days. That variation results from record keeping differences, mostly poorly documented weekends at Camp David, but the data still include 88% of the historical time and do not suggest any selection bias for the remainder. One potential exception to the likely innocuous gaps occurs in the period following the attempted assassination of President Reagan. For eight days, the Secret Service and the Appointments Office, did not record their logs. Otherwise, the activities logged range from 4,655 for President Eisenhower to 17,980 for President Ford, totaling 70,558. These individual observations aggregate into well over 23,000 unique events ranging from a presidential nap to grandiose public occasions, generating for each president a high degree of statistical precision.

Travel activities occur only outside the White House and typically involve a motorcade or air lift. Travel time does not become an extension of the event the travel occurs to accomplish, but meetings that occur during travel do count as specific activities. So, travel to a joint military command meeting in Honolulu does not count as time as commander in chief, but meetings with the joint chiefs of staff during the flight does. Personal time involves time with family or personal friends, though it becomes a working activity if the event includes a predominance of presidential staff.

In some instances the original logs reported only the president as at work (e.g., in the Oval Office) or engaged in an amorphous activity (e.g., "night reading"). The data reallocates those less specific times in proportion to each responsibility's portion as described in and validated against the presidential "handwriting file," a comprehensive collection of everything the President made marks on (including just doodles) as proof the President actually saw the document.

¹⁷ The application of the term "diary" comes from the name for the British monarch's appointments schedule.