



2009-04

**PRESIDENTIAL WORK DURING
THE FIRST HUNDRED DAYS**

WhiteHouseTransitionProject.org

A non-partisan consortium of public and private universities and other research organizations, the White House Transition Project focuses on smoothing the transition of power in the American Presidency. Its “Reports” series applies scholarship to specific problems identified by those who have borne the responsibilities for governing. Its “Briefing” series uses extensive interviews with practitioners from the past seven White Houses to produce institutional memories for most of the primary offices in the West Wing operation of the presidency.

Find the two publication series of the White House Transition Project, *WHTP Reports* and *Institutional Memory Series Briefing Books* on its website: WhiteHouseTransitionProject.org.

THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSITION PROJECT



#2009-04

PRESIDENTIAL WORK DURING THE FIRST HUNDRED DAYS

Terry Sullivan, *Executive Director, The White House Transition Project*
Political Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Director, Presidential Transition Program, James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy

Executive Summary

This report analyzes the work schedules of Presidents Dwight Eisenhower through George H. W. Bush during their first 100 days in office. With 50,000 observations of 20,000 events over nearly four decades, the analytic results are statistically valid, precise, and reliable.

The report takes on two tasks: describing the president's workday and drawing conclusions about commitment, engagement, isolation, organizational choices, and effectiveness.

Anatomy of the President's workday:

- Modern era (post Nixon) presidential workdays vary slightly around a mean of 13.5 hours
- Pre-modern workdays averaged around 9.5 hours
- Workdays get more efficient and longer over the hundred days
- Representative highlights of specific findings:
 - President Nixon was not the most isolated president, President Reagan was
 - President Bush did not spend the most time on diplomacy, President Nixon did
 - President Eisenhower had the most engaged presidency, President Reagan the least
 - Presidents Carter and Nixon worked alone the most and to the same degree
 - Presidents Eisenhower and Carter spent the most time on legislative affairs

Commitment, Engagement, Isolation, Organization, and Effectiveness:

- While presidents make choices about their decision-making, their choices reflect institutional imperatives and hence generate unique but very similar operations
 - Presidential workdays are unique as statistical events but similar in operational reality
 - Many have common patterns of engagement and commitment to responsibilities
- Popular perceptions of previous presidencies, particularly with respect to decision-making, appear inaccurate and lead to false reactions by successors in an apparent attempt to underscore distinctiveness.
- Adopting a hierarchical White House organizational structure, one commanded by a White House Chief of Staff, does not sacrifice engagement for efficiency as presumed
 - It improves the president's workday
 - It lessens the impetus to lengthen the president's day over the hundred days
 - It locates more opportunities for discretion, though not by limiting ceremonial events
 - It widens the president's "inner circle" and increases the range of engagement
- Increasing engagement with advisors outside of the White House (especially among the cabinet) speeds up consideration of the president's agenda by improving administration unity of purpose

Contact information

Terry Sullivan
Sullivan@email.unc.edu
919/962-0413

Department of Political Science
CB# 3265, Hamilton Hall
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3265

whitehousetransitionproject.org

THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSITION PROJECT



#2009-04

PRESIDENTIAL WORK DURING THE FIRST HUNDRED DAYS DISTINCTIVENESS, ENGAGEMENT, OPERATIONS, AND EFFECTIVENESS

Terry Sullivan

Executive Director, The White House Transition Project

Political Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Director, Presidential Transition Program, James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy

In 1991, a reporter for the *Wall Street Journal* called around to verify that then President George H. W. Bush “spent more time on foreign policy than any previous president.” Although both Franklin Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson had each managed separate global wars and likely spent more time on foreign policy than anything else or anyone else, the reporter’s question really spoke to the “modern presidency,” those administrations after mid-20th Century and therefore his question implicitly exempted comparisons with the likes of Wilson or FDR. To his surprise, however, even on this more circumscribed question, no one could speak authoritatively to his inquiry, though, of course, he gathered responses and he wrote a story.

At that time and outside the National Archives Records Unit, the Secret Service, and the White House Appointments Secretary, no one actually knew what any president did all day, let alone how they worked out the balance between national security, diplomacy, budget management, or domestic leadership. Indeed, this reporter learned only that the myriad of questions involving presidential comparisons, especially those about advisory systems, decision-making — about process, all had but one factual answer: “we have no earthly idea.”

By 1991, on the other hand, comparisons about presidential output had enjoyed a long tradition with precise answers, especially where those comparisons invoked the vaunted “100 days” comparison. Presidents live inescapably in FDR’s shadow, partly because of that extraordinary performance, but mostly, as Richard Neustadt (2001) has noted, because modern presidents invariably embrace and then inexplicably encourage others to consider such comparisons.¹

The lack of systematic observations on presidential decision processes during the hundred days (or any other time for that matter) has serious repercussions both for understanding how presidents work and how they use their newly acquired executive institution. The absence of scholarly knowledge about the president’s activities does not leave a hole in public understanding, of course, because popular misconception and misinformation rush in to fill the void. Chris Matthews, a popular television commentator with a respectable background in national political affairs, wrote in his book *Hard Ball* that at the national level, a politician’s detailed knowledge of others plays an important role in shaping success. As an example, Matthews described how once President Lyndon

¹ Richard Neustadt, “The Presidential ‘Hundred Days’: An Overview,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, March, 2001: 121-125.

Johnson had learned that his Attorney General Robert Kennedy, a potential competitor for the 1964 Democratic Party presidential nomination, regularly stayed up very late discussing policy with his entourage, LBJ made a point of always calling on or meeting with Kennedy *early* in the morning. An examination of the 96 encounters between Johnson and Kennedy (either in phone calls or in meetings) from the time LBJ took office until Kennedy's resignation as AG reveals, to the contrary, that only one of these occurred before 10:00 AM.² Although attractive as an anecdote, Matthews' story about Johnson turns out to have not the least basis in fact.

And though Matthews might still have a point, the application of such lessons to practical politics really ought to reflect evidence of what politicians actually do rather than what they (or we) wished they had done. One can hardly blame Matthews for producing such a *reasonable*-sounding story because, in the absence of real evidence, a good story surely will do.

That political actors have available only such inferior information to guide their activities represents something far more troubling than an epistemological affront, however. Given the absence of facts, practicing politicians regularly turn for guidance to whatever *sounds* good. For example, for both the 1980 Ronald Reagan and the 2000 George W. Bush presidential transitions, the respective presidential campaigns undertook a serious effort to estimate previous presidential activities during the first hundred days. Other campaigns have carried out similar planning efforts. These planners use their efforts to guide operational decisions during the transition period and up through the first 100 days. Both the two campaigns specifically mentioned relied on public records for their studies and, in turn, used those studies to develop extensive plans for what their respective, new presidents would attempt. As Sullivan 2004 points out, these estimates often missed the mark by substantial margins. Both the Reagan and Bush studies, to take one example, wildly underestimated (by hundreds of percentage points) the amount of contact President Carter had had with congressional leaders.

Given the role of these apocrypha in misshaping preconceptions, projections, and plans, missing the mark on the historical records of previous administrations has significant operational consequences. Consider just the case of unexpected requests. Having relied on these studies, a new administration would likely underestimate the demands for their president's time, and when they finally arrive in office, they would get caught off-guard by the growing tidal surge of unexpected and legitimate requests for presidential attention. Karl Rove called such circumstances the uncomfortable feeling of "being a fire hydrant in a world of dogs."³ These requests come from interest groups and others trying to gain recognition on the president's policy agenda. They might turn away many of these kinds of requests, though many will come from their political allies. However, many will come from organizational and institutional actors that the new president would have a hard time ignoring. The latter, in particular, would include the congressional leadership so pathologically and badly underestimated by these previous campaign studies. Faced with unexpected demands for time from such legitimate sources and presumably not wanting simply to refuse them, what can a president's staff do but either bump from the president's schedule those already granted presidential time or make room by extending the president's workday? Regardless of how they resolve this conundrum, just having to face it means that the president's staff has already failed. From the beginning, then, the president and the president's team must catch-up in an institutional setting and factory town milieu not conducive to or tolerant of such operational gaffs.

Absent accurate information about what other transitions have faced, a president-elect's staff must turn to other decidedly limited resources, like previous White House staffs, for information. In a conversation with incoming Chief of Staff James Baker, for example, then recent White House Chief of Staff Donald Rumsfeld suggested it would help the new president if Baker could limit the president's circle of contacts to those who would normally see the president three or four times a

² Data derived from the presidential daily diary log, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, Texas.

³ Interview with author, 2002.

week.⁴ And while this advice might seem learned, no one presently knows how wide a circle that advice would draw, and hence, no one knows whether Rumsfeld's advice constituted useful guidance or not. Rumsfeld's own personal observations, after all, derived from his work in President Gerald Ford's White House and while those experiences represent one of but a handful of similar experiences, they hardly derive from what would constitute a robust test-bed likely to produce observations of "normal" patterns to presidential behavior. Yet, without available information on "normal" patterns, practitioners will rely on whatever previous experience they can acquire through the partisan channels available to them. And, rationally, why shouldn't they rely on what they can get when knowing something surely would seem better than knowing nothing at all?

Of course, seeming to know something may *in fact* provide worse guidance than knowing nothing at all. The mistaken statistical summary of Carter's contacts with congressional leaders, for example, reinforced the widely held notion that Carter treated the House and Senate like state legislatures and generally botched opportunities to mobilize his own congressional supporters. Taking that view of Carter's plight suggested to the Reagan planners that their president could adopt a dramatic strategy of outreach to the congressional leadership and thereby reap significant rewards. Knowing instead that Carter met very often with congressional leaders and started each day with a congressional briefing might require rethinking an explanation for Carter's congressional ineffectiveness and by implication whether they really had identified a useful strategy for their own principal.

Finally, not knowing the correct distribution of activities across presidential responsibilities (like diplomacy and budget management) provides misinformation on how to shape the president's "discretionary time." Presidents surely do not come to office to find their responsibilities swamping their discretion. Yet, no one really knows how much of the president's time gets absorbed by just such legitimate responsibilities.

In his own evaluation of the hundred days phenomenon, Richard Neustadt focused on what he saw as the inevitable lack of opportunity to meet FDR's vaunted standard of output given the hand dealt modern presidents. One particularly important element, Neustadt noted, involved three kinds of "ignorance:" of policy circumstances, of organizational processes, and of colleagues. The first two, Paul Light has noted make up his "cycle" of "declining inexperience."⁵ In this cycle, increasing experience with the internal workings of government and the president's role and the presidency's operations finally affords the new president an opportunity for effectiveness just about the time that the window of early opportunity generated by the election's result begins to close tight. Having a more thorough appreciation for the realities of the institutional processes they must engage improves presidential prospects. According to most observers, this kind of explanation accounts for why President Carter failed, for lack of congressional contact, while President Reagan succeeded because of his exemplary pattern of early contact and visible comity.

The third element, ignorance of each other, goes directly to the need for effective coordination within the singular executive establishment. The development of a unified executive effort constitutes both the goal and the advantages of the Presidency's constitutional form. The shift of the transition from four months to eighty days places a premium, therefore, on quickly establishing and employing that unified position.⁶ Yet, the rapidly accumulating record of presidential dissatisfaction with such executive branch coordination, whether in the guise of failed "Cabinet Government" or stymied sub-cabinet working groups or abandoned cabinet coordinating councils, suggests the need for better approaches to realizing this projected institutional advantage.⁷

⁴ Baker handwritten notes of conversation with Rumsfeld on White House operations and staffing. Papers of James A. Baker III at Rice University Archives, (used by permission).

⁵ See Paul Light, *The President's Agenda*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 3rd edition, 1999

⁶ For some confirmation of Neustadt's point about how the Twentieth Amendment made congressional support less likely, see John Frendreis, Raymond Tatalovich, and Jon Schaff, "Predicting Legislative Output in the First One-Hundred Days, 1897-1995," *Political Research Quarterly*, 54,4(December 2001):853-70.

⁷ See Terry Sullivan, 2008, *The Organizational Dynamics of "Unity of Purpose" in the Presidential Institution*, manuscript, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

OBSERVATION, PRECISION, AND RELIABILITY

Evaluating these kinds of speculation on presidential circumstances and their relationship to the practice of governing depends upon understanding what presidents actually do. And, in turn, that assessment initially requires grasping the basic patterns to presidential work time. This paper explores three basic questions: about levels of activity, about patterns to access, and about whether process affects outcomes. It relies on a unique resource derived from the National Archives' Presidential Daily Diaries for the six elected presidents from Dwight Eisenhower through George H. W. Bush. These data record one observation for each person noted in the diary, along with all the information provided by the diary and any additional information on standard controls. Some administrations provide incomplete records. During his hospitalization at George Washington Hospital, for example, the Reagan Diary reported very few details. And some diaries redact information from national security briefings or the names of Secret Service personnel. The dataset excludes these incomplete days or redacted data, but without apparent impact on the findings.

Questions about presidential work styles suffer the same problems as understanding other aspects of this institution: limited access often means a limited range among and a small number of useful observations. These difficulties typically undermine the *precision* of any specific observation and reduce the opportunities for separating subjects into *reliable* comparisons. Table 1 presents the basic data for the first 100 days. As it makes apparent, this dataset includes a useful number of daily observations from the hundred days, ranging from a minimum of 76 days to the maximum of 100. Thus, these data allow for precise estimates for each president and, in turn, reliable comparisons between presidents.

In addition to reliability across presidencies, the large number of observations *within* each presidency also makes it possible to draw conclusions with an exceptionally high degree of confidence. The dataset ranges from a low of 4,653 individual observations (for President Eisenhower) to a high of 9,118 (for President G.H.W. Bush), yielding 49,553 individual observations. These aggregate into some 20,350 unique events ranging from the president working alone through grandiose public events.⁸

The current dataset, however, does not employ the entire range of 100 day observations. The president's logs did not always completely record days spent at Camp David or at one of the other presidential retreats. In addition, the week President Reagan spent at George Washington University Hospital experienced spotty reporting. The data excludes these days without serious effect on the estimates. The data presented here represent 88% of the total and do not appear to present any adverse pattern of selection despite these differences. To compensate for differences in reporting among the presidents, tables will display information in three formats, average percentages based on daily observations, daily averages, and weekly averages.

ANATOMY OF PRESIDENTIAL WORKDAYS

This section covers the most basic details of presidential workdays, including their distinctiveness, i.e., whether presidential choices or the presidential institution matter, and whether administrations learn during this formative period. Table 1 presents the first set of this factual information by summarizing the average workday and the trends as the transition period progresses.

⁸ The log of public events, like attending a performance at the Kennedy Center, obviously does not record all in attendance though the logs for many events, e.g., bill signings, often do record all in attendance.

Table 1. Descriptors of the President’s Day during First 100 Days

President	Observations ^a		Workday Averages ^b			Trend over 100 Days				
	days	cases	Begins	Ends	Length	Starting Point	Slope	Cumulative Effect	Difference ^c	
Dwight Eisenhower	89	4,653	8:37:33	18:20:04	9:42:21 (3:15:06)	9:09:22	.05	10:21:22	1:12:00	8.1%
John Kennedy	98	5,809	9:34:57	19:40:07	10:00:17 (3:11:07)	9:26:12	.05	10:38:12	1:12:00	8.2%
Richard Nixon	100	7,796	8:28:28	22:40:19	14:11:51 (2:28:57)	15:20:27	-.09	13:10:51	-2:09:36	-24.9%
Jimmy Carter	100	7,123	6:37:15	23:37:11	17:04:40 (1:41:12)	16:40:13	.03	17:23:25	0:43:12	9.8%
Ronald Reagan	87	8,168	8:44:12	22:10:44	13:26:32 (2:34:46)	13:26:33	.00	13:26:36	0:00:03	0.0%
George H. W. Bush	76	9,118	6:54:54	21:34:48	14:39:54 (2:16:39)	14:28:54	.02	14:57:42	0:28:48	5.0%
<i>Dispersion</i>			1:08:53	1:58:40						

Source: Compiled by author.

- Notes: ^a observations exclude some 7,000 from the Johnson administration
^b data in parentheses represent sample standard deviations as a measure of precision
^c percentages in this column represent Kruskal-λ calculations.

This section also considers whether the 100 days provides a test-bed for presidential learning. If, as Neustadt has suggested, ignorance characterizes presidential transitions, then administrations presumably adjust to their circumstances. In the past decade, political scientists have played an increasingly important role in presidential transitions.⁹ The developing secondary analysis resulting from this practical contact has underscored the difficulties of reacting. Whether with a scramble to put in place routines to protect the president's time or to structure more closely the materials destined for the president's attention, or to focus more narrowly the president's agenda, White Houses try to improve the use of its operations and president's time. So, do these White Houses get better, more efficient at supporting what the president does thereby affording presidential work a growing efficiency over time? Or do White House operations adopt an alternative pattern responding to circumstances not with innovation but instead with just doing more of what they do. These two responses would suggest alternative patterns to dealing with the president's day: one making activities more efficient and the other extending the length of the president's day.

DISTINCTIVENESS: PRESIDENTS VS PRESIDENCY

In his *Federalist Paper #72*, Alexander Hamilton explained the founders' position on the necessity for recurring tenure in the presidential institution created by their proposed constitution. And while the 22nd Amendment has made moot much his disquisition, Hamilton's arguments still underscore an important presidential dynamic — the need to appear distinctive. He says:

To reverse and undo what has been done by a predecessor, is very often considered by a successor as the best proof he can give of his own capacity and desert; and in addition to this propensity, where the alteration has been the result of public choice, the person substituted is warranted in supposing that the dismissal of his predecessor has proceeded from a dislike to his measures; and that the less he resembles him, the more he will recommend himself to the favor of his constituents.

The absolute authority of the president to construct a “new” administration resides in the core of the singular presidency. The necessity to validate the choice of the electorate and the individual drive for “fame,” Hamilton suggests, makes manifest the need to shape the president's decision-making organization in a personal way, one particularly distinctive from the previous administration, or at least one distinctive from *accepted impressions* of predecessors. Clearly, some of the standard descriptions of the presidencies considered in this database emphasize a difference from one administration to another, as if successors prefer especially to distinguish themselves from their predecessors.

Yet, some observers would suggest that the so-called presidential “clerkship,” with its array of congressional delegations and the increased duties associated with a global diplomatic, military, and economic presence, have constrained any (or every) president's choices, making it all but impossible for individual presidents to control much of their time. These two views of the job and its characteristics define a “president-centered” and a “presidency-centered” vision, respectively, of presidential distinctiveness.

This section focuses on the nature of the presidential workday keeping in mind this fundamental dynamic of change and distinctiveness.

Table 1 makes clear that on overall length, individual presidents have precise but similar work schedules. Eisenhower's day, for example, clearly differs from his immediate successor's, but only by twenty minutes. The next decade saw a step increase in the average length of the president's day beginning with President Johnson's administration. The range across presidencies over the next twenty years stabilized around 13.5 hours. Presidents Nixon, Reagan, and Bush, again, have specific differences in their workday, but overall similarities in length (around thirty minutes each way). At 17 hours, only President Carter's first hundred days differs substantially from his immediate

⁹ See Martha J. Kumar and Terry Sullivan, *The White House World: Transitions, Organization, and Office Operations*, College Station: Texas A&M University Press.

predecessors and successors and this two-decade long change. Since any workday has a more or less fixed length (presidents have to sleep), Carter's increase in length over the others constitutes a genuinely significant difference: a 30% lengthening of the workday. Carter's successors, however, returned to the average. So, while presidents clearly make their own choices, in broad outline, much of their day seems the same: each distinctive but each similar.

Table 1 suggests a further institutional effect. The data on average length suggest the popular observation that since the end of World War II, the president's activities have increased substantially. As an approximation of this pattern, consider the average day for the first two and the last two presidents. These two averages differ by four hours and twelve minutes. Assuming a limit of 24 hours, this difference represents a substantial, 30% increase in the president's workday.¹⁰

Noting the beginning and end of presidential days and the dispersion across these estimates affords some idea as to what affects length. More of the length of the workday depends on when the day ends than when it begins. The variation between the presidents on when their day ended represents a little less than twice the variation between them on starting their days. When the president's day ends probably results more from the demands of the day or the efficiency with which the White House organization addresses these challenges than the president's preferences. The impact of the end time, again, suggests that the president's day reflects more the demands of the presidency than of the president.

As another way to evaluate this balance between presidents and presidency-centered pressures, consider the importance of specific personal preferences. If presidential choices matter in presidential work, then to the extent that presidential memoirs or memoirs of the president's associates suggest individual predilections, then an assessment of *those* differences ought to reflect the strongest possible of all personal effects. Since reasonable expectations suggest that especially contemporaneous memoirs will emphasize perceived differences between the subject president and his predecessor, the retelling of these predilections should highlight particularly stark differences. This retelling, then, would bias an examination towards overstating presidential differences. Hence, identifying even slight differences supporting these purported differences constitutes weak data supporting the presumption of president-centered differences, while any evidence countering these purported predilections would constitute extremely strong evidence to the contrary.

Consider some of these purported predilections. Following the perception that President Eisenhower had a penchant for "orderly" processes and a hierarchal staff organization, Kennedy staffers and historians have emphasized that President Kennedy preferred free-floating, open staff relationships. President Kennedy, they suggest in their memoirs and analyses, eschewed regularized hierarchy and disdained formal meetings in favor of more one-on-one interactions, especially when gathering information or making decisions.¹¹ Memoirs about President Carter's commitment to an open staff, itself a reaction to the perception of an "isolated" Nixon presidency, generated descriptions of a reaction by President Reagan, purported to prefer larger more formal meetings and an hierarchal staff controlled not by a single individual but by a committee.¹²

Table 2 reports on the both the average number and length of different work events and the long run historical trend in presidential workdays. The main element of the table allocates the number of work events, by type, for an average day in each of the surveyed presidents. Table 2 reports on the average number of events. From that table, it seems clear that at least for the first 100 days, President Kennedy did have more individual meetings (by one) per day than his peers but about the same number of large group meetings, especially when compared to his predecessor. This pattern hardly constitutes a distinct preference for individual or small groups versus larger, more formal

¹⁰ With the measure employed (Kruskal's lambda), a difference greater than 10% constitutes a "significant" difference. Since Eisenhower's and Reagan's ages approximated each other, these differences in length do not result from age.

¹¹ Fredrick Dutton quoted in John Burke, *The Institutional Presidency*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992. This appraisal repeated in Patricia Witherspoon, *Within These Walls: A Study of Communication Between Presidents and Their Senior Staffs*, New York: Praeger, 1991.

¹² John Burke, 2000, *The Institutional Presidency: Organizing and Managing the White House from FDR to Clinton*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP.

group meetings. The only real difference between presidents on this score underscores President Reagan's clear preference for the opposite relationship: a relative balance *away from* individual meetings, but not necessarily a preference for more formal meetings. Instead, President Reagan simply eschewed meetings altogether.

Table 2. Distribution of Work per Administration Day

President	Days	Amount of Work by Type on Average Day (number of meetings and average length)							
		On the Phone ¹³	Working Alone	Meetings with...			Public Event	Personal	Travel
				One Person	Small Group	Large Group			
Eisenhower	89	—	.7	4.6	2.2	1.6	1.8	2.4	.6
			0:46:41	0:22:51	0:32:25	1:11:34	0:37:52	1:13:56	0:31:10
Kennedy	98	—	5.4	5.5	3.6	1.4	2.3	1.4	1.9
			0:20:37	0:18:06	0:25:32	0:54:22	0:24:46	1:19:09	0:20:29
Nixon	100	4.75	12.1	4.5	3.9	1.5	2.1	3.2	2.5
		0:04:42	0:20:28	0:18:59	0:27:22	1:09:05	0:40:48	0:39:53	0:22:08
Carter	100	7.2	12.0	4.2	4.0	1.9	4.2	4.0	1.3
		0:03:19	0:20:29	0:16:50	0:23:50	0:46:47	0:25:49	0:44:00	0:16:15
Reagan	87	4.5	7.0	1.4	2.7	1.5	3.0	3.2	1.2
		0:03:28	0:16:18	0:18:45	0:24:40	0:46:00	0:24:58	1:02:37	0:17:42
G.H.W. Bush	76	9.0	6.8	4.3	5.0	2.7	4.1	4.5	2.2
		0:03:51	0:14:26	0:10:12	0:21:27	0:32:02	0:25:49	0:30:19	0:19:54

Source: Compiled by author.

Since later sections will consider the question of presidential “isolation,” just note here that President Nixon's White House had very standard numbers for meetings (one-on-one, small group, and large group) suggesting little in the way of the isolation so often attributed to his administration. Later sections will consider the question of isolation. Indeed, President Carter's numbers differed only slightly from his predecessor's numbers. President Nixon did spend a great deal of time working alone. He averaged more than twice as many events during the day working alone than did Kennedy (12.1 vs. 5.4, respectively). Yet, Carter's “reaction” to this pattern ended up mirroring Nixon's work habits, with 12.0 events of working alone. The amount of time spent by a president working alone reached a high mark during these administrations. Hence, President Carter's reaction to President Nixon's self-imposed seclusion also seems mostly a myth, *on both scores*. In effect, then, if these presidents (Kennedy, Carter, and Reagan) tried to react to their predecessors, either they could not find much in the way of opportunity to draw clear distinctions. Hence, these relative patterns in work events seem to suggest strongly that presidential preferences hold less relative sway over work patterns than the institutional imperatives of managing a massive executive and global role.

TEST-BED FOR LEARNING

To this point, the analysis has presented each president's hundred days experience as a static and aggregated thing. Obviously, the president's operation has an opportunity to learn from its experiences and modify its operations. Indeed, as noted earlier, because planning operations often underestimate what to expect, administrations must learn, at least in dealing with those demands that surprise them in their earliest experiences. This section considers whether these organizations develop an observable response over time. Do White Houses learn?

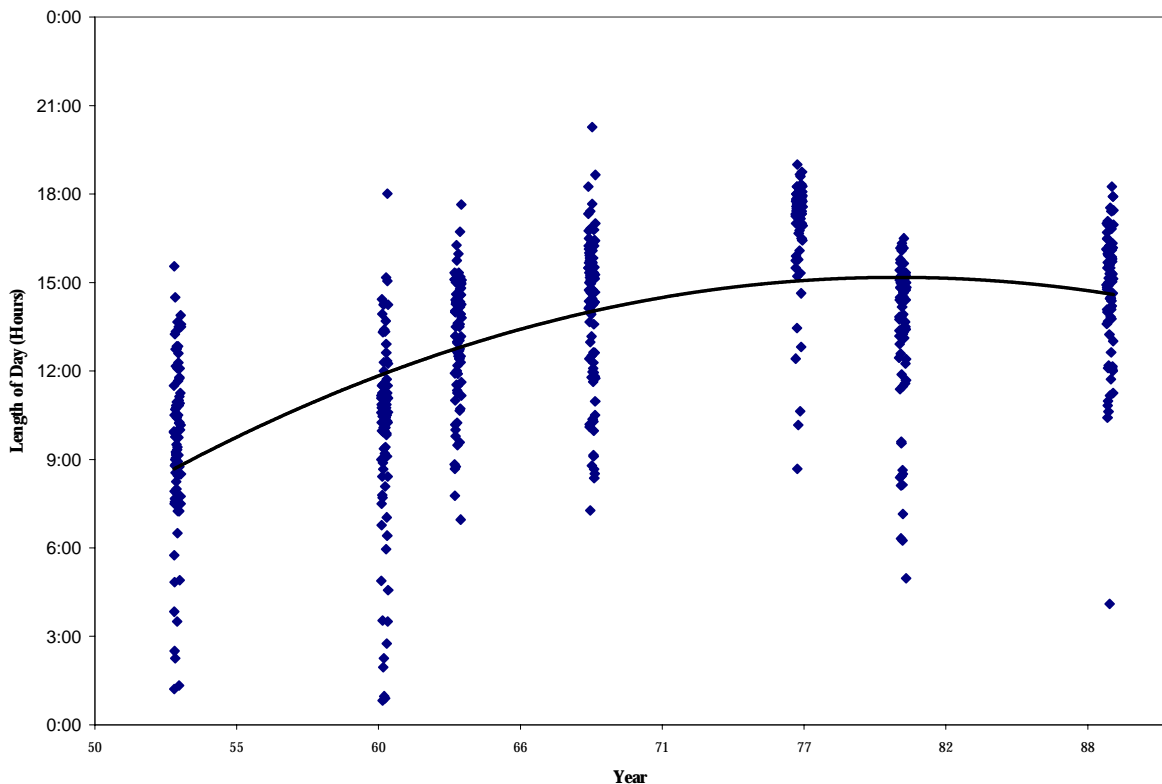
¹³ Presidential diaries for Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy did not note phone conversations.

The data presented in Table 1 also describe how the president’s work progresses as the first 100 days unfold. Almost without exception, the 100 days drives up the president’s workday. As the last column in the table indicates, all but Presidents Nixon and Reagan experienced an increase in their workday. Even President Carter, whose day already had pushed to what seemed like the limit, increased slightly as his administration matured. The table also suggests that later administrations may have handled the president’s pressures better than the first few administrations. Presidents Bush and Reagan increased their days less than 5% while the earlier administrations experience upwards of 8% increases and President Carter’s day actually increased by nearly 10%. Understanding this growth and its variation illustrates the impact of a White House operation on the president’s time.

The growth in the president’s workday has three components. The first component involves the specific starting points most appropriately associated with the individual choices of presidents. As noted earlier, while we can have confidence in the presumption that presidents set their own pace, only slight differences in work schedules separate them. These differences, however, have a small impact by affecting how much room they have to adapt. The earlier the day begins the more room the staff has to shape the president’s workday.

A second component involves the historical trend in presidential responsibilities also noted earlier that has continued through the end of the Twentieth Century. A growing list of responsibilities has pressured each successive White House, and these growing responsibilities have had a discernible impact on the president’s schedule regardless of the administration’s structure or agenda. The impact of these forces takes effect over a long period and has a small, though nevertheless real effect. Figure 1 illustrates the historical trend over the era, including data on President Johnson’s transition. The trend line indicates a steady upward force ameliorated by a second-order slowing effect. This second effect probably results from the more common use of a Chief of Staff organizational choice near the end of the dataset and a second effect associated with the ceiling placed on variation by the practical limit to a president’s day. The section on organizational choices will consider the effect of choosing a chief on the president’s workday.

Figure 1. Historical Trend in Length of Workday



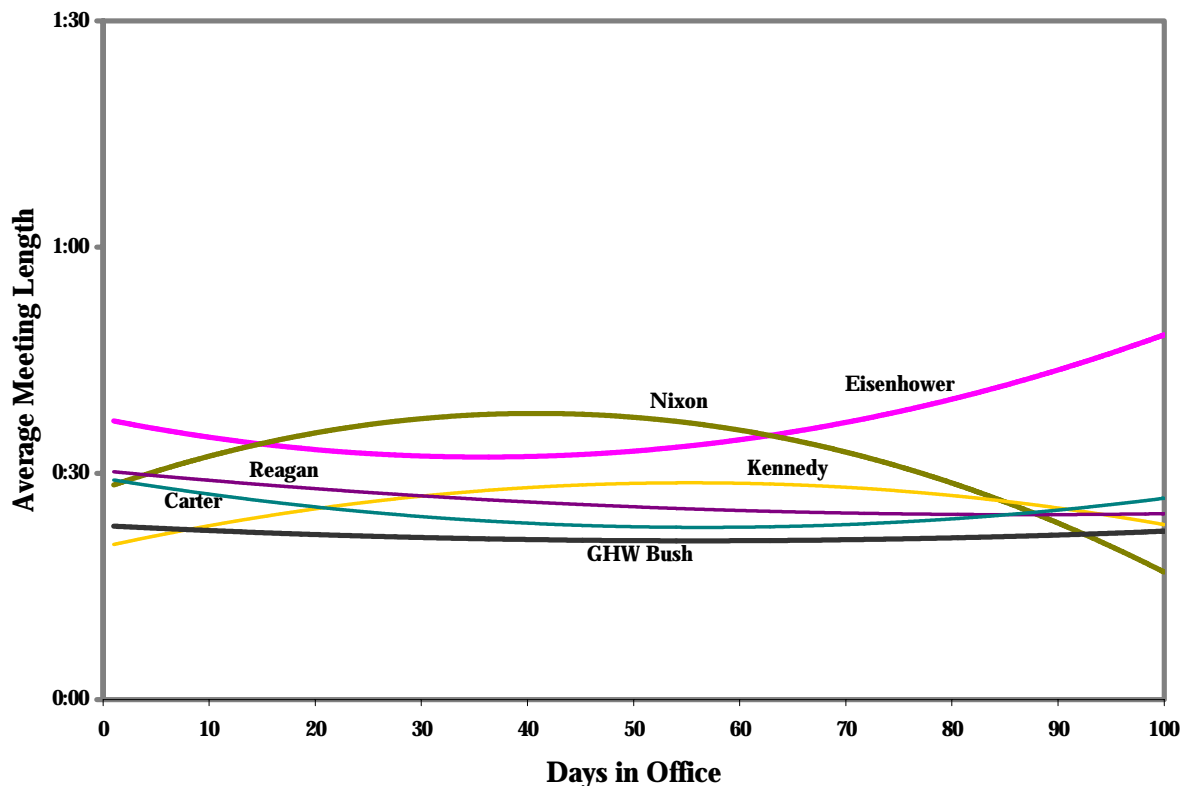
A third component involves a “within period” trend specific to each presidency and its own early organizational challenges. Compared to the historical effect, this within tenure effect appears less potent and more difficult to isolate. The next section will take up both the separate impact of organizational choices across tenure and whether organization impacts commitment and engagement while holding the others effects constant.

This section will consider the possibility of responding to pressures by learning better to manage the president’s time and by simply expanding the president’s day. For the purposes of this analysis, consider managing the president’s time better as involving making the president’s work more efficient. As summarized in Table 2, the president’s work style appears as a series of measures from working alone through large group meetings. To analyze efficiency, consider that changes in efficiency will likely appear more readily in these kinds of activities. As it turns out, working alone tends to become a catch-all for the time remaining after allocating the president’s time to these other three forms of meetings in work. Assume that we can observe the efficiency in these meetings by looking at their average length per day over the president’s hundred days and that increasing efficiency will resemble declining average times spent in one form of meetings. Over the hundred days, most presidents’ trends in these other categories resemble the efficiency patterns found in Figure 2 for the presidents’ small group meetings.

As the figure makes clear, most presidents have experienced efficiencies over the hundred days. Some presidents, like Presidents Nixon and Kennedy experienced dramatic improvements only after experiencing dramatic increases during the middle part of their 100 days. Presidents Carter, Reagan, and Bush experienced early improvements followed in some cases by retrenchments but generally, ended the 100 days with shorter meetings. Only President Eisenhower experienced a dramatic up-tick over his hundred days in the length of small group meetings.

Most administration’s, then, have made some room in their presidents’ schedules for additional demands by both improving their work efficiencies and extending their presidents’ days.

Figure 2. Average Length Over 100 Days, Small Meetings



PRESIDENTIAL COMMITMENT, ENGAGEMENT, AND ISOLATION

In a republic, governing involves both commitment to institutional responsibilities and engagement with others. These two characterizations describe the range of presidential activities. A president cannot care about diplomacy, the *WSJ* question, for example, without committing a fair amount of time to that responsibility, and, for many presidents, committing time to a responsibility also involves engaging the talents of others and from them obtaining useful information as well as considered opinion. This section explores the range of presidential commitment and engagement.

Critics and pundits regularly decry presidential policies with which they disagree as having suffered from a “closed” decision-making process. They presume that presidential choices would change in response to “better” information received from engaging different sources of advice.¹⁴ Insider accounts, for example, describe President Carter as fascinated with the details that contact with external policy experts developed. Others noted how Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy found outsider advice useful and regularly sought extra-institutional sources of advice from among associates in business and education.¹⁵ On the other hand, historians presume that President Nixon’s isolation led to the administration’s commitment to its disastrous course. This section also explores the range of presidential isolation from both external and internal advice.

The structure of its engagement also might suggest something of a balance between restructuring uncertainty by gathering advice and prolonging that uncertainty by extending consideration before a decision. When he became President Clinton’s second Chief of Staff, Leon Panetta made it clear that controlling the schedule would become an important aspect of renewing the administration’s momentum. In Panetta’s mind, the president took far too long to make decisions thereby putting in abeyance a host of other decisions floating up to the President’s agenda.¹⁶ Some presidents seem to put a high premium on this external expertise by stretching out a wide net of contacts, e.g., Eisenhower’s reported penchant for outside contacts¹⁷ and some presidents, like President Nixon, preferred to narrow that expertise by having subordinates screen heavily and digest fully policy disagreements and debates, thereby keeping such expertise at arm’s length.¹⁸ When he advised keeping a tight rein on the president’s contacts, Secretary Rumsfeld’s advice noted earlier would have had implications for the basic balance in President Reagan’s decision-making.

Some in organizational theory and public administration, for example Richard Daft and Robert Lengel, suggest a different way of viewing advice: that the structure of the underlying decision uncertainties greatly affect the president’s advice taking. In their model, resolving uncertainty lends itself more to face-to-face contact and less to structured interactions, e.g., reading memoranda. Hence, to meet such uncertainties, they suppose that presidents would adjust the work balance between contacts with others and working alone.¹⁹ So, President Reagan’s and President Nixon’s lack

¹⁴ For example, see the range of academic analysis regarding “competitive advocacy” which presumes that wide-ranging engagement yields better decisions. See Alexander George, *Presidential Decision-making in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1980 or John P. Burke and Fred I. Greenstein with collaboration of Larry Berman and Richard Immerman, *How Presidents Test Reality: Decisions on Vietnam, 1954 and 1965*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1989.

¹⁵ President Eisenhower purportedly relied heavily on his brother, Milton’s access to academia.

¹⁶ See Leon Panetta in Terry Sullivan, *Nerve Center: Lessons on Governing from the White House Chiefs of Staff*, College Station: Texas A&M UP, 2004.

¹⁷ Phillip Henderson, *Managing the Presidency*, Boulder: Westview, 1988. Fred Greenstein, *The Hidden Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader*, New York: Basic Books, 1982. Sherman Adams, *First Hand Report*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961.

¹⁸ H. R. Haldeman, with Joseph DiMona, *The Ends of Power*, New York: New York Times Books, 1978. Stephen Hess, *Organizing the Presidency*, 2nd edition, Washington: Brookings Institution, 1988. Kenneth W. Thompson, *Nixon Presidency*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1988.

¹⁹ Richard L. Daft and Robert H. Lengel, “Organizational Information Requirements, Media Richness, and Structural Design,” *Management Science*, 32,5 (May, 1986): 554-71.

of interest in face-to-face encounters, for example, might reflect less a decision-making style as a contextual variable about the level of uncertainty facing the administration. Both presidents, they suggest, had specific policy mandates that insulated them from needing these interactions.

Finally, a crisis often casts a bright light on the balance between breadth and control of information. Few such opportunities present themselves during the hundred days. However, President Kennedy's Bay of Pigs fiasco, in which a CIA backed invasion of Cuba turned into a major foreign policy disaster, constitutes one such opportunity to observe presidential commitment and engagement in stark contrast. Theodore Sorensen's memoir of President Kennedy suggests that the disaster spoiled the president's confidence in Executive branch expertise and drove the President to pursue a separate national security advisory apparatus within the NSC and exclusive of the Departments of Defense and State.²⁰ Having depended on career officials for their expertise, Kennedy became suspicious and distrustful of such foreign policy guidance in favor of that supplied by those he had brought with him. This pattern of distrust, then, should generate a pattern of less reliance and contact with these kinds of sub-cabinet expertise following the Bay of Pigs fiasco.

ASSUMING COMMITMENTS

While governing and leadership go hand in hand, they inevitably invoke choices about priorities. Those who have carried out presidential transitions often comment on the challenging Washington environment of policy advocates, all looking to hijack the new president's agenda. Gaining the president's attention requires occupying the president's schedule. How the president's day divides between responsibilities, then, becomes the subject of and mechanism for finding the administration's own course.

This section addresses the range of responsibilities found on the president's schedule. The record of what the president takes up, of course, does not approximate the demands made on the White House, the range of requests from which they choose. But an examination of what duties presidents carry out will afford at least a reasonable expectation of what other president-elects have done and what a new one can expect. And to some extent, it can capture a level of presidential commitment. The *Wall Street Journal* question on diplomacy represents one variant on this question: does the president have a significant commitment to foreign policy, and by "significant," we mean "greater than the other's commitment." Analysts, both reporters and academics, regularly rely on triangulating insider memoirs or comments, in order to describe how presidents differ in their commitments by assaying how different presidents engage advisors and responsibilities. For example, many have quoted the claim that while as his Secretary of Treasury, Donald Regan observed that President Reagan cared so little about economic management that the two of them never had a single one-on-one discussion, this despite the centrality of Reagan's budget reordering and supply-side tax cut as the center-pieces of his initial policy agenda. Secretary Regan made two specific claims to support this description; both received enormous coverage and have since constituted a mainstay of describing President Reagan's work habits. First, Secretary Regan claimed that the only conversation the two had ever had occurred at the cabinet swearing-in ceremony during the first week and that conversation focused on the similarities of their last names. Second, and more importantly, Secretary Regan claimed that he only learned about President Reagan's economic views by reading about them in the newspapers.²¹ Similarly, when asked after assuming office what had he learned, President Kennedy told reporters he had found it surprising that in fact the economy had deteriorated as much as he had suggested during the campaign and that the missile gap between the United States and its rival the Soviet Union seemed as great as he had suggested. Both these statements suggested that Kennedy's focus would fall on his responsibilities for defense policy and economic management.²²

²⁰ Theodore Sorensen, *Kennedy*, New York: Harper & Row., 1965. See also Theodore Sorensen, *Decision-making in the White House: the olive branch or the arrow*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1963.

²¹ Donald Regan, *For the Record, From Wall Street to Washington*, New York: Harcourt, 1999, referred to in Fred Greenstein, "Reckoning with Reagan: How the 40th U.S. president was portrayed in books," CNN.com, June 8, 2004.

²² Jack Raymond, "White House Denies 'Missile Gap' Report," *New York Times*, February 8, 1961:1ff.

Table 3. Distribution of Responsibilities per Administration

President	Average Daily Number of Events by Responsibility										
	Working Alone	Personal	Travel	Speeches & Press	Ceremonial	Commander in Chief	Diplomatic	Legislative	Economic	Executive	Party Leader
Eisenhower	.7 0:30:57	2.4 3:01:06	.6 0:18:13	1.3 0:16:58	1.1 0:39:51	1.5 0:59:38	2.0 1:00:57	1.5 1:07:06	.4 0:15:22	1.5 0:56:58	.7 0:52:40
Kennedy	5.4 2:14:50	1.4 1:49:50	1.9 0:39:55	2.6 0:26:21	1.4 0:31:22	1.3 0:41:18	2.5 1:19:17	1.2 0:37:49	1.0 0:35:12	1.6 0:45:13	.3 0:13:53
Nixon	12.1 4:07:26	3.2 2:08:00	2.5 0:55:47	1.3 0:12:51	1.6 0:44:14	4.2 1:20:41	4.8 2:18:39	.9 0:24:37	.8 0:34:15	1.3 0:30:47	.3 0:19:05
Carter	12.0 2:31:55	4.0 2:55:06	1.3 0:21:07	.9 0:40:32	2.1 0:37:37	2.2 0:33:36	2.1 0:48:25	2.6 0:39:34	.9 0:18:14	1.9 0:44:42	.3 0:11:58
Reagan	7.0 1:59:51	3.2 3:21:32	1.2 0:20:32	1.5 0:25:12	1.9 0:45:48	.8 0:20:21	1.3 0:30:32	1.8 0:24:18	.5 0:27:43	.5 0:19:38	.3 0:11:23
Bush	6.8 1:38:54	4.5 2:17:38	2.2 0:43:44	2.0 0:27:05	3.0 1:17:19	4.1 1:21:26	3.4 1:11:27	2.1 0:31:48	.9 0:24:46	1.2 0:22:43	.2 0:11:12
<i>Means</i>	2:38:47	2:35:32	0:33:18	0:26:40	0:48:12	0:52:34	1:10:33	0:37:29	0:25:55	0:36:42	0:20:02

where...
 Working Alone Time the diary does not account for, typically found in the Oval Office. In the residence, working alone includes any periods sandwiched by other periods of designated work, e.g., between a series of phone calls to members of Congress.

Personal Time with family and friends or with subordinates in what clearly involves personal activities, e.g., a birthday party for the First Lady or bowling.

Travel Time in a motorcade, Marine or Army 1, or Air Force 1 or on the presidential yachts and not clearly associated with a specific task.

Speeches and Press Time attributed to presentation of the president's position or time allocated for preparing for such presentations.

Ceremonial Time allocated to events in which the President acts as Head of State.

Commander in Chief Time allocated to matters of national security.

Diplomatic Time allocated to a range of activities associated with carrying out the foreign policy of the United States or its diplomatic affairs, including state dinners and receiving diplomatic envoys.

Legislative Time allocated to contact with members of congress or with congressional relations staff.

Economic A variety of activities associated with the governments functions in the economy.

Executive A variety of activities involving management of the executive branch.

Party Leader Activities associated with the party organization, the previous campaign, party finances but does not include leading the congressional party.

Table 3 describes presidential workdays in terms of time committed to eleven responsibilities, ranging from working alone (and where there exists no adequate description of the subject matter) to a range of responsibilities from personal time to acting as the head of party.

Some findings in this area seem unremarkable, at least by comparison with the received wisdom. For example, the two “war presidents” in the dataset (Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon) spent a good deal of their time on the role of commander in chief (averaging around 1 hour and 10 minutes a day). President Kennedy, who faced a military fiasco in Cuba beginning day 81 also spent a substantial amount of time as commander in chief driving up his average to 41 minutes per day. By contrast, two of the three “peace” presidents (Presidents Carter and Reagan) dedicated 25 minutes a day to this function. This general reduction of almost forty-minutes could clearly constitute the cold-war “peace dividend” applied to the president’s time. These findings and their mundanity lend an additional degree of credibility on top of their undeniable statistical reliability.

They also calibrate a president’s level of “commitment.” For example, the two war presidents spent 60% more time on responsibilities as commander-in-chief as the presidents not embroiled in a war at the beginning of their hundred days. Similarly, when presented with the disastrous military situation at the Bay of Pigs, beginning 17 April 1961, President Kennedy spent 191% more time on average from that day forward on commander-in-chief responsibilities than he had earlier in his hundred days. These two patterns, both at the aggregated level (across presidencies) and at the individual level (within a single administration), afford a useful measure of what a significant commitment would look like: anything greater than say a 40% differential above some base.

While the Kennedy presidential campaign, for example, proclaimed a major defense problem facing the country (the so-called “missile gap”) and a lack of economic leadership as the two most significant issues facing the country, once elected, the Kennedy administration invested its focus on the economic issue alone. On commander-in-chief responsibilities, for example, President Kennedy spent 3 minutes *less* a day on average (including his significant investment *after* the Bay of Pigs) than his non-wartime peers. On the other hand, President Kennedy committed 46% more time a day to economic issues than did his peers.

Consider this calibration, then, for assessing the answer to the *Wall Street Journal* question about foreign policy and President Bush’s commitment. The amount of time that President Bush committed to diplomatic affairs (1 hour and 11 minutes a day) represents the clear exception to his immediate predecessors. President Bush invested 173% more time to diplomacy than the average for Presidents Carter and Reagan. However, both Presidents Nixon and Kennedy spent more time on diplomatic relations during their first hundred days (as did Johnson) and even President Eisenhower’s one hour on average came close to President Bush’s average and in far fewer encounters. In all then, President Bush did not spend more time on foreign policy than any other modern president did, just more than his two immediate predecessors had. President Bush spent only the third greatest amount of time during the last half of the 20th century: the heretofore-unknown *answer* for the *WSJ* question. Additionally, on combining the commander in chief and diplomatic functions into a “national security” function, President Bush still did not spend the most time on national security. As one might expect, President Nixon, embroiled in a difficult and divisive war, took that dubious distinction, as well.

Some findings afford unexpected results. One such result involves legislative responsibilities. In this area, President Eisenhower’s 1 hour and 30 minutes a day and President Carter’s 2 hours a day stand out as significant commitments among the elected presidents.²³ These two presidents, neither of them noted for their legislative interest or acumen, devoted more of their days to legislative responsibilities than any of their peers. This pattern for President Carter clearly contradicts contemporaneous reporting and secondary analyses detailing what seemed like significant legislative inattention. Their apparent level of commitment to legislative responsibilities might reflect the fact

²³ President Johnson, of course, during his first 100 days spent far more time on legislative affairs and had far more contacts with members of Congress than any of the other presidents in this dataset: 577 individual encounters and one hour and eight minutes a day. The large number of contacts, of course, comes from a huge number of phone calls.

that both Presidents Eisenhower and Carter managed relationships with brand new congressional leaders, newly elected Speakers Joseph Martin and Tip O'Neill in the House, and newly elected Senate Majority Leaders Robert Taft and Robert Byrd. All four had not held their respective job before and three of them had not served as their party's floor leader in the previous Congress. So, these numbers probably reflect that the president needed to create and then cement a relationship with the new congressional majorities they ostensibly led. Developing such a relationship, of course, would require a focus that only the president could initiate. Undoubtedly, the White House staff could follow-up on this initiative, but the president would have to make it a reality. Additionally, these two patterns of commitment on legislative affairs could directly reflect demands from their congressional partisans to lend the president's imprimatur to these new congressional leaders. Indeed, no other president during the 20th Century faced these kinds of immediate leadership change, as did Presidents Eisenhower and Carter.

Another unexpected finding involves the growth of presidential communications. Despite the seemingly overwhelming importance of presidential communications and the pace of advances in technologies to make communications easier,²⁴ the President's communications commitment did not grow during the period. Nor did communications increase over the first 100 days. As a portion of the president's day, devising communications strategy, preparing for speeches, preparing for press conferences, delivering speeches, and encountering the press through the range of question and answer sessions and photo opportunities, amounts to about 2% of the total time used during a typical day. Excepting the president's very limited time spent on campaign and other political party organization matters, presidential communications amounts to the smallest of all responsibilities in which presidents invest their time. They spend almost twice as much time on ceremonial events during the typical day. This apparent lack of committed time, of course, does not imply that communications does not occupy an important place in White House operations. That a huge percentage of the White House staff engages in communications suggests both its importance and that presidents leave this function to their subordinates.²⁵ This evidence also underscores that governing greatly differs from campaigning and that adjusting to this particular contrast between the two presidential environments presents a significant challenge to White House operations. Presidents simply abandon this campaign-oriented element of their work life once they begin to govern.

In addition, the data suggest that presidents spend little time on economic management in general. President Kennedy, whose presidential campaign had focused on the economy's performance, only spent 35 minutes a day on that responsibility. Most of the other late 20th Century presidents spent less than half an hour a day on economic matters. Relative to his reputation and regardless of his later vulnerability in the 1992 election, President Bush's meager attention to the economy may have originated in the earliest days of his administration, when he spent a meager 24 minutes a day on the responsibility, but this "inattention" did not distinguish him from his peers. Presidents Eisenhower (15 minutes) and Carter (at 18 minutes) spent less time early on the economy than did President Bush.

Finally, these findings make it possible to address a number of claims for which no data existed heretofore. For example, based on the data just from the hundred days, Secretary Regan's claims about President Reagan's lack of commitment on economic policy seem considerably far-fetched. While, in fact, he spent the second smallest amount of time on economic matters, behind only President Eisenhower, President Reagan spent a good deal of that time with Secretary Regan. And while he had no one-on-one meetings with Secretary Regan, President Reagan did meet with the Secretary some 11 times (not zero), exclusive of cabinet meetings. A large proportion of these meetings involved only one other person, typically the Vice-President, and for many of these meetings, the daily diary indicated that they specifically covered topics like "the economy," or "economic matters," or "economy and taxes." Hence, it seems unlikely that the Secretary of Treasury could not have had a conversation with the President on the economy during these meetings or that

²⁴ See Martha Kumar, *Managing the President's Message*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.

²⁵ See Martha Kumar, *ibid.*

this record of 11 meetings during the hundred days represented some kind of aberration by comparison with the rest of the President's first term. Indeed as noted in the Appendix, Secretary Regan stands among the very small group of executive branch subordinates who passed Secretary Rumsfeld's definition of the president's "inner circle:" seeing the president on average at least three times a week.

THE UBIQUITY OF EXTERNAL ISOLATION

In a cryptic and maybe apocryphal metaphor, President Lyndon Johnson told President-elect Richard Nixon that he should pay special attention to the fact that the Oval Office windows had three-inch thick glass. Though for his protection, the President said, they also cast a particularly pleasant hue on everything the President could see through them. The White House, itself, he pointed out, reflected the same traits as its windows: it protected the president but often distorted his vantage point. Do presidents find themselves isolated from external (presumably contradictory) advisors and does the White House build protective walls preventing engagement both without and within the administration? This section covers the basics structure of presidential engagement with an eye to considering the question of isolation from outsiders. The next section will consider whether external isolation reflects a broader more inclusive isolation.

Table 4 reports the average percentage of the president's day taken up by contact with three categories of potential advisors. The first lumps together all forms of genuine outsiders, those unassociated with government including business leaders, labor leaders, interest groups, and academics. The second group includes two groups of White House staff, all those staff commonly thought of as "senior" staff (Chief of Staff, Domestic Advisor, National Security Advisor, and Press Secretary²⁶) and other subordinate staff, even if the specific White House considers that staff designee as part of their "senior" staff. The third group includes two elements of the president's executive subordinates: cabinet secretaries, and sub-cabinet staff including professional agency staff and the uniformed military (excluding military aides altogether).

Most conspicuously, the data indicate that presidents, in general, have little contact with external advisors of any kind. The percentages of the president's day spent in meetings with such advisors typically averages in the single digits while, for calibration, time with senior White House staff averages in the mid-teens. For example, President Bush took a mere 7/10^{ths} of one percent of his day to consult with external advisors and 30% of his day with his senior staff. In other words, President Bush invested 42 times more in meeting with his White House senior staffers than with independent advisors. Yet, these dramatic statistics do not mark President Bush as extraordinarily isolated by comparison with his peers.

Table 4. The Range of Engagement: External Advice and the Executive

President	External Advisors	% of Average Day Spent with...				
		External Isolation	White House Staff		Cabinet	
			Senior	Other	Secretary	Sub-
Dwight Eisenhower	7.0%	.722	9.7%	1.0%	18.5%	6.2%
John Kennedy	1.9	.111	17.1	4.6	13.3	5.3
Richard Nixon	1.2	.067	17.8	3.4	7.9	8.5
Jimmy Carter	1.3	.121	10.7	1.2	3.9	3.3
Ronald Reagan	0.6	.028	23.3	9.3	3.6	2.2
George H. W. Bush	0.7	.024	29.8	4.4	5.7	7.7

Source: compiled by author

²⁶ This definition of "senior" staff coincides with the president's inner circle based on the range of contacts reported in the appendix.

Table 4 reports an “isolation” measure for the six elected presidents. The measure simply conveys the ratio of time spent with external advisors by comparison with the White House senior staff. The next section will consider a more complex measure. Ratios closer to 1.0 suggest the president spends relatively more time with outsiders while ratios closer to 0.0 suggest relatively more time with senior staff.²⁷ Consider President Nixon, whom many characterize in contemporary and scholarly research as completely isolated behind a California “mafia” or a “palace guard.” He saw his senior staff considerably less than President Bush did (18% of the average day), but still that time represented 15 times more engagement with senior staff than with outside advisors. His isolation score equals 0.067. That external isolation score, however, lands President Nixon experience right in the middle of the range of these scores. By comparison, for example, Presidents Bush (0.024) and Reagan (0.028) appear much more isolated, despite the fact that contemporaneous and scholarly assessments of these presidents rarely mention such isolation. By contrast, the Reagan and Bush walls measured three times higher than President Nixon’s did. On the other end of the spectrum, President Eisenhower scored a nearly balanced 0.722, suggesting that (as noted in some memoirs) he avidly pursued outsiders, especially through the auspices of his brother Milton, a university administrator. The Eisenhower score, however, far out-distanced the rest of the presidents. President Carter, scored the second most balanced ratio, but at 0.121, his score constituted a distant second in terms of balance.

As the 20th Century closed out, presidents clearly became more dependent on their core staff and isolated from external advice of all kinds.

THE FULL RANGE OF PRESIDENTIAL ENGAGEMENT

Of course, external advisors constitutes but one way to get beyond the president’s White House staff or even the executive “core” most associated with the President’s agenda. For example, advocates of “Cabinet government” suggest the advantages offered the president from their range of views. Others would include congressional leaders, either through their regularly scheduled meetings with the President or through irregular contacts associated with managing the legislative agenda. White House Chiefs of Staff, for example, generally bemoan the opportunities that these formal meetings provide for what they consider “side-tracking” the president’s attention, but which also could simply reflect alternative ways of bring engagement to the president outside the “regular channels,” those controlled by the White House staff, and especially the Chief of Staff.²⁸

Table 5 reports on the full range of presidential engagement during the hundred days as weekly averages. Using these averages allows for reasonable comparisons between those whom the president might see in regularized meetings (e.g., the legislative leadership or the national security advisor) and those the president might see on a daily basis (e.g., the Chief of Staff). The table also presents the actual numbers of contacts rather than considering their average duration, as in Table 4.

Regardless of the metric, though, the overwhelming bulk of presidential contacts involve the White House core staff. These contacts have increased as the president’s day has lengthened: by far and away, the historical expansion in presidential work has favored the core White House staff. By contrast, contact with the core Cabinet officers (the Attorney General and the Secretaries of Defense and State) represents the only other group that in any way would rival the White House staff for presidential engagement.²⁹ Since, as the Appendix on the president’s “inner circles” (see below) makes clear, the range of these contacts does not really include the Attorney General, these contacts really concentrate in the two Secretaries.

²⁷ No president spends more time with outsiders than with senior staff, which would generate a score greater than 1.0.

²⁸ See Terry Sullivan, *Nerve Center*, *op. cit.*

²⁹ The Attorney General, Secretaries of State and Defense represent the president’s core constitutional functions: magistracy, diplomacy, and defense.

Table 5. Full Range of Presidential Engagement and Isolation during First 100 Days

President	Weekly Averages for Presidential Engagement with...													
	External Advisors	Cabinet Level			Congressional ^a Leaders of		Regular Members	White House Staff		Heads of State	Formal Meetings of the		Isolation Indices	
		Core	Other	Sub-	Party	Opp		Senior	Other		Cabinet	NSC	Extn	Intr
Dwight Eisenhower	8.9	14.6	2.4	8.8	1.4	.8	9.0	9.7	1.8	.8	1.0	1.3	.722	1.219
John Kennedy	3.1	9.0	3.0	8.6	1.6	1.4	6.9	31.5	18.1	3.7	.6	.4	.111	.431
Richard Nixon	2.0	8.9	3.6	3.4	2.2	1.1	4.0	46.4	9.5	5.5	.4	1.4	.067	.260
Jimmy Carter	4.8	11.4	5.5	4.6	.9	.1	17.4	34.8	8.1	4.9	1.1	.6	.121	.644
Ronald Reagan	1.8	6.3	.3	1.9	.9	.7	11.6	50.9	13.4	5.6	1.0	.7	.028	.251
George H. W. Bush	3.0	12.2	4.6	5.5	1.4	1.5	13.4	80.4	16.5	9.7	.3	.8	.024	.279

Source: Compiled by author.

Notes: ^a Numbers on members include contacts with whips and below in both parties and in both houses and House majority leaders.

Two significant trends stand out in terms of the presidents' patterns of engagement over the historical period. First, the presidents have experienced a decline in reliance on subcabinet officers. These policy professionals represent a substantial source of government expertise. Over the period, the development of outsider presidencies (Nixon, Carter, and Reagan) clearly precipitated a decline in engagement with sub-cabinet personnel. In the early years, Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy saw sub-cabinet officers about 8.7 times a week, a bit more than once a day. By contrast the three outsider presidents 3.3 times a week or less than half as often.

Second, over the historical period, presidents have dramatically increased the amount of direct engagement with regular members of the Congress. Eisenhower, who spent the greatest amount of time with his congressional leaders, spent very little time seeking out members. He saw regular members a bit more than once a day. President Kennedy saw even fewer as did President Nixon. President Carter spent the most time with regular members — averaging 17 contacts a week. Starting with President Carter, presidents spent considerably more time with the regular members than their predecessors had. This pattern coincides with the procedural decentralization of Congress experienced initially after the passage of the internal majority rule reforms of the early 1970s.³⁰ Presumably, decentralization made presidential coordination with more, regular members a necessity and these numbers seem to suggest this pattern to engagement.

Finally, apropos of the *WSJ* question, President Bush spent considerably more effort engaging with foreign heads of state than his peers. President Bush, at 9.7 contacts a week, engaged foreign leaders almost twice as much as his nearest predecessor, President Reagan. Recall that these contacts do not consume a great deal of time, as President Bush did not spend the most time on diplomacy. However, he reached out to a larger number of foreign dignitaries, and on a more regular basis, than the other presidents did. Typically, these engagements involved phone conversations; recall President Bush had the largest number of daily calls than of his peers (and second only to Lyndon Johnson) — refer to Table 2.

ENGAGING THROUGH FORMAL MEETINGS

One indicator of the president's responsibilities and engagement comes from the more or less formalized meetings on the president's schedule. These include the presidential meetings with the congressional leadership, meetings with the Cabinet, and meetings with the National Security Council. The significance of these meetings lies not simply in their statutory or constitutional meanings but also in the fact that, as formal meetings, they last considerably longer than other large meetings and thereby consume large portions of the president's day.

Again, the president's relationship with these formal bodies constitutes the stuff of memoirs. And, again, some of these descriptions clearly try to distinguish their president from perceptions of their predecessors, ala Hamilton's fame. Many of these memoirs and perceived impressions of engagement involve legislative affairs and relations with the cabinet. Earlier analysis covered the images and some of the realities of congressional relationships. This section will reiterate that analysis at the level of weekly totals and with regard to the more formal contacts presidents have with leaders. This section also explores a new topic: the president's engagement with the cabinet.

In their memoirs, core staff of the President regularly suggested that President Kennedy found these formal meetings distasteful. Some of that reputation clearly exists to distinguish him from President Eisenhower, who Kennedy's staff presumed favored formal operations and utilized these formal meetings more.³¹ Eisenhower's own memoirs emphasized his commitment to relying on his cabinet, even if its interests contradicted those advised by his White House staff.³² Similarly, analysts have suggested that President Reagan preferred sub-cabinet working groups to President Carter's

³⁰ See Terry Sullivan, *Procedural Structure: Success and Influence in Congress*, New York: Praeger, 1984.

³¹ Theodore Sorensen, *op cit*.

³² Sherman Adams, *op cit*. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for change, 1953-1956; The White House years*, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1963. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The Eisenhower Diaries*, edited by Robert H. Ferrell, New York: Norton, 1981.

perceived reliance on cabinet task forces and President Bush, reacting to the perceived failure of the Reagan experiment reinvented the cabinet level working groups: flying teams of cabinet officers organized around topics. These various experiments with reconfiguring the cabinet secretaries should have increased the president's engagement with cabinet members outside the core cabinet.

Table 5 also reports on the range of these formal meetings and the relationship between the cabinet core and the outer group of cabinet secretaries. As a simple measure of their regularity, the hundred days typically takes thirteen weeks. So, for example, all of the presidents, exclusive of President Reagan, averaged a little less than a weekly meeting with their respective congressional leaderships. Most, again exclusive of President Reagan spent a considerable amount of time with the congressional opposition as well.

Given the juxtaposition of these data and reputations, President Reagan's reputation for congenial relations with the congressional leadership and especially with his opposition, "disagreeing without being disagreeable," does not appear deserved. His successor had far more contact with congressional opposition than President Reagan had, yet does not have that historical reputation. Moreover, several presidents maintained almost weekly contact with their opposition congressional leadership. Only President Carter made no attempt to keep up contact with his congressional opposition. His lack of contact may have resulted from the fact that his partisans held an overwhelming majority in both houses. On the other hand, President Carter amassed enormous contact statistics with regular members, a 75% greater number than his second rival (President Bush), meetings he claimed he found enormously informative.³³ President Nixon, on the other extreme, had relatively little contact with members (66 contacts to Carter's 251) during the first hundred days.³⁴

President Eisenhower, often described as more closely aligned philosophically with Sam Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson, clearly did not seek out contact with these opposition leaders during his hundred days, either. Again, for Presidents Eisenhower and Carter, part of their lack of effort with respect to partisans surely resulted from attempts to highlight their newly minted majority party leaders. In this respect, given the fact that a new Senate majority came in with him, President Reagan's disregard for the congressional leadership *en toto* provides ample evidence that, at least initially, the Reagan White House had little to do with the congressional leadership.

President Eisenhower maintained a schedule of once weekly meetings with both his Cabinet and NSC. Presidents Carter and Reagan also maintained such weekly schedules, but only with their cabinets. Only President Nixon, engaged simultaneously in a hot and cold war, maintained anything like a weekly schedule with the NSC. Presidents Kennedy, Nixon, and Bush eschewed cabinet meetings for the most part, with President Bush holding essentially fewer cabinet meetings than he did press conferences during the hundred days. His reputation for eschewing his cabinet notwithstanding, President Nixon had twice as many cabinet meetings as President Bush whose reputation does not include such a narrow core.

Contact with foreign heads of state constitutes the last area of essentially non-discretionary relations with others. These contacts represent one of the elements of historical change, the first two presidents averaging 31 and the last two averaging 87. To some extent, of course, presidents can put off contact with foreign governments but only with some difficulty. Like the congressional leadership, these leaders present a challenge to the president's schedulers. While many of these contacts involve courtesy calls near the beginning of the hundred days, many of them involve substantive policy relationships. The vast majority of President Nixon's 62 contacts result from a State visit to the NATO alliance in the middle of his hundred days. This trip, the only presidential travel to leave North America, involved engaging heads of state in Germany, Belgium, Italy, the

³³ Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith*, New York: Bantam Books, 1982.

³⁴ John Ehrlichman quotes an internal White House study conducted by Legislative Liaison William Timmons that noted that over the administration's first four years, the president's contact with legislators had declined from these early and lowly standards. Timmons cites figures for 1969 of 212 contacts with legislators, including leadership meetings. The statistics from Table 5 would account for about half of those contacts during the first hundred days. Timmons study quoted in John Ehrlichman, *Witness to Power: The Nixon Years*, New York: Simon and Shuster, 1982.

Vatican, and the UK. Both Presidents Reagan and Bush had consultations with the Ottawa governments representing the only other “foreign” travel during the hundred days.

Internal vs External Isolation

Table 5 also introduces a second measure of isolation comparable to the first reported in Table 4 (and repeated here). Call the first a measure of “external” isolation, as it focused on the relative importance of advisors wholly outside of government, and call this second measure, “internal” isolation, as it covers the relative importance of the president’s engagement with non-White House staff. This latter score would include external advisors as well as cabinet officers and other government personnel, including those in the legislative branch. It considers all of these “outsiders” for the purposes of measuring the president’s engagement. This internal isolation measure ranges from zero (where the president spends no time with outsiders) to infinity (where the president spends enormous amounts of time with outsiders).

Again, on this measure, President Eisenhower stands out as significantly more open than the other elected presidents.³⁵ Presidents Carter and Kennedy remain in second and third place considerably less open than President Eisenhower, but about twice as open as the next group. That group includes Presidents Reagan and Bush, who constitute two of the three most isolated presidents. This measure of isolation now catapults President Nixon’s first hundred days from fourth to fifth most isolated president, surpassing President Bush but still less isolated than President Reagan’s first hundred days.

THE IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHOICES

Public administration experts, experienced practitioners, Washington insiders, interested outsiders, and political scientists all agree that its organizational flexibility constitutes a central characteristic and advantage of the presidential institution. They emphasize the president’s capacity to dictate White House organizational structure and to fit it to personal work habits or professional predilections. Of course, statutes direct some elements of the president’s staff, e.g., the National Security Act of 1947. And, the relatively narrow range of conceivable organizational options suggests that most presidential support structures will likely change only gradually.³⁶

Reflecting the limited organizational options, most analyses focus on a distinction between advisory systems that promote a wide range of competitive advocacy versus those which afford extensive “breadth of control.”³⁷ The first system, emphasizing easy access to the President among subordinates, sometimes called the “Spokes of the wheel” organization, places the President at the hub of a complex of relationships in which many subordinates enjoy equal footing with regard to access to the president. Each of these “spokes” becomes a point of access and a source of advice to the president. In this system, presidents determine their own schedules and requests for access come directly to the President. In addition, a wider range of advisors has an opportunity to provide competing advice. The second operation, often referred to as a “hierarchal” system, relies on a White House Chief of Staff to structure the president’s work and control access. Not surprisingly, when utilizing a hierarchal system, White House Chiefs typically consider orchestrating the president’s day as their primary responsibility [Sullivan 2004]. The hierarchal system emphasizes clear lines of responsibility and therefore allows the president to delegate control functions “down” and, hence, “out” across the organization.

³⁵ Ironically, President Johnson, whose anecdote symbolizes the sense of White House isolation, in fact, stands above the Eisenhower experience with a score of 1.265.

³⁶ Karen Hult and Charles Walcott, *Governing Public Organizations: Politics, Structures, and Institutional Design*, Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1990. See also Bradley Patterson’s description of the regularity of White House organization in his *To Serve the President: Continuity and Innovation in the White House Staff*, Washington: Brookings Institution, 2008

³⁷ The two most significant work in the area remains Alexander George, *op cit*.

The basic question on organizational choice emphasizes differences in work styles and contacts, suggesting more competitive advice giving and broader access. A second kind of question emphasizes the efficiency of hierarchal advisory systems, especially in reference to its impact of external advice. If a Nixon White House adopts a strong centralized, hierarchal structure, does that organizational decision effectively isolate the president as many have suggested? According to Attorney Lewis Paper, for example,

Kennedy believed that Eisenhower's staff operation impeded his effectiveness in making sound decisions. ...In Kennedy's eyes, too much organization stifled debate; it denied him access to a broad scope of information and ideas; and, perhaps most importantly, it undercut his ability to understand the real merits of available options.³⁸

Does a more "open" staffing structure allow for a "broad scope of information," at least as far as engagement patterns might reveal? Or does every White House organizational structure merely grapple with the tidal wave of requests for access that typify and overwhelm every administration, suggesting then little difference between structures?

OPERATIONAL DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS

From Table 1, the impact of choosing a hierarchal White House organization, with a Chief of Staff, seems clear. Consider the length of the president's workday. Presidents using a Chief of Staff to organize their operation have significantly shorter average workdays. The day for the four presidents with a Chief averages 10 hours, 24 minutes while the three presidents eschewing a Chief of Staff (data from LBJ included for more precise comparisons) averaged 13 hours, 26 minutes.³⁹ Having no Chief of Staff appears to result in a 22% increase in the president's day.

According to former Chiefs, this difference probably results from a President's natural inability to fend off direct requests for time.⁴⁰ Even when they have already committed to allowing their Chiefs to control their scheduling, presidents still will respond favorably to direct requests for time, proffered at inopportune times precisely to skirt the Chief's control function. Presidents want, the Chiefs argue, to offer their administrations an "open door" and those presidents without a gatekeeper apparently get something very much like that.

Table 6 details some of the other effects associated with selecting a Chief of Staff (or hierarchical) organization. These figures report the averages for types of presidential encounters described earlier in Table 2. The times listed in grey report the average length of each kind of event. The last row summarizes the difference between the two organizational choices in terms of time saved (a positive value) by choosing a Chief of Staff.⁴¹

From the results in this comparison, it appears that adopting a Chief of Staff operation results in substantial changes to the total time used by the presidents during their 100 days. For example, using a Chief of Staff, the president chaired fewer meetings with individuals and small groups, saving about 43 hours and 21 hours, respectively. Recall, of course, that these "savings" resulted in a shorter workday (and considerable more sleep) for the president rather than a reallocation between presidential responsibilities. All tolled, the selection of a Chief of Staff resulted in a savings of about 54 hours over the 100 days.

On the other hand, Chief of Staff organizations staged about 10 hours more public events for the president's involvement. In addition, the advent of a Chief of Staff increases the amount of time that the President has working alone, by another 10 hours. When Chiefs of Staff orchestrate the president's schedule, the president's personal time suffers: these two increases supplant the president's personal time to the tune of 21 hours.

³⁸ Lewis J. Paper, *The Promise and the Performance: The Leadership of John F. Kennedy*, New York: Crown 1975.

³⁹ Though LBJ eventually obtained a Chief of Staff in 1965, his first hundred days retained the Kennedy organization.

⁴⁰ See Sullivan, *Nerve Center*, *op cit*.

⁴¹ Since the Eisenhower and Kennedy operations did not log the President's phone calls, to report phone use statistics by organizations would report the "average" for a single administration.

Table 6. Distribution of Work per Administration and Time Saved, by organizational choice

White House Organization	Average Number of Events by Type over 100 days average length per event						
	Meetings with...						
	Working Alone	One Person	Small Group	Large Group	Public Event	Personal	Travel
Spokes of the wheel	683	477	373	166	224	189	169
Avg. length	0:20:33	0:17:28	0:24:41	0:50:35	0:25:17	0:19:39	0:17:06
Hierarchal	598	326	300	156	236	255	141
Avg. length	0:24:28	0:17:42	0:26:28	0:54:40	0:32:22	0:08:31	0:22:54
<i>Time Saved</i> (hours : minutes)*	-9:55	42:40	21:19	-2:24	-9:45	20:52	4:52

Source: Compiled by author.

*Negative numbers indicate time added to the president's work load.

One operational dilemma that Chiefs of Staff describe involves whether the White House operation utilizes all its potential, maximizing its time immediately to support the president's agenda, or saves some capacity for long-term planning and to commit to the inevitable, though unpredictable, crisis [see Sullivan 2004]. Few administrations ever deal successfully with the question of long-term planning, so great their day-to-day operational challenges. Some administrations, however, have tried to side-step this balance between commitment and crisis by bringing in outside expertise to handle crises when they arise, leaving the White House to handle its not-inconsequential, "routine" duties. As Clinton administration Chief of Staff Leon Panetta has noted, this approach tries to keep the White House staff at their posts focused on their specific responsibilities rather than running to the "ball," where inevitably the president's immediate interests lie. Congressman Panetta described the latter approach as a White House that looks unflatteringly like a schoolyard soccer game, everyone running to the ball and no one maintaining their position on the field of play [Sullivan, 2004].

An alternative approach, however, would simply ratchet down the president's schedule and thereby reduce those parts of the White House operation that key off the president's work schedule. These offices would include the central control functions responsible for orchestrating the president's schedule and decision process (the Chief of Staff's operation, the Cabinet Secretary's, the Staff Secretary's), the communications operation that speaks for the President (the Press Secretary's office), and the National Security Advisor's operation. Clearly, the evidence would suggest that

Table 7. Distributing Contact among the Executive Branch

Organization	During 100 Days, Average Number of Presidential Meetings with...		
	White House Staff	Cabinet Ranked	Agency Staff
Spokes of the wheel	161.3	29.7	31.3
Hierarchal	128.5	27.0	27.8
<i>Improvement</i>	25.6%	9.9%	12.9%

Source: compiled by author.

Chiefs of Staff opt for maintaining this balance between pursuing the President's work and maintaining a spare capacity by taking this last approach, reducing demands.

In addition to reducing demands on presidential time, a Chief of Staff operation also reallocates presidential time among executive subordinates.

This pattern to presidential engagement reflects one of the principal reasons presidents opt for a spokes of the wheel operation. Consider the Executive Branch as three concentric circles around the President. The White House staff occupies the first ring closest to the President. The second ring includes the Cabinet and cabinet level officers, the latter including such as the Budget Director. The third ring includes senior appointees, senior executive service officers, and the professional staffs in the line agencies, including the military. Table 7 reports on how presidents engage these three rings and how their organizational

structures affect their engagement. In each category, selecting a Spokes of the wheel operation increases contact at all levels with subordinates. The two operational systems however have no effect on the distribution across the three circles. In both organizational structures, 70% of the president's contact comes from the closest circle of the staff. In both organizations, senior agency and cabinet level appointees share equally the remaining 30% of contacts. As a gatekeeper, then, the Chief of Staff has no discernible impact on who sees the President, just how often.

As noted earlier, recommendations for the “Spokes of the wheel” organization often argue that its use increases the amount of external advice the president receives. By increasing the amount of competitive advice and thereby reducing the chances for creating a “palace guard” around the president, the spokes system allows other interests to interject themselves into the president's considerations. While this organizational effect seems plausible, note that the statistics on external isolation (Table 4) clearly suggests little variation across the presidencies, suggesting in turn that these organizational differences might have little discernible effect. Over the 100 days, the average spokes of the wheel president engages with 51.0 external advisors, while the average hierarchal president engages with 49.0 external advisors. That difference amounts to a 4% increase over the 100 days, not considered as a significant difference.

In sum, then, the spokes of the wheel system has little to recommend it.

THE PRESIDENT'S INNER CIRCLES

Rumsfeld's advice quoted earlier directly addresses the range of presidential access suggesting the Chief ought to limit that access to a small number of “inner circle” subordinates, those with as little as four contacts a week with the President. As just indicated, the selection of a hierarchal staff system has little effect on gate-keeping. So, Rumsfeld's definition might define an inner circle with a constant aspect, regardless of the organizational choices made by the president. Table 10, found in the Appendix, describes just how narrow a group Rumsfeld recommendation entails. It lists three sets of subordinates, ranked in terms of how often they had contact with the President during the 100 days. The first group has wide-ranging contact with the President (some averaged multiple daily encounters), but limited to no fewer than one contact a day on average. The second group fits Rumsfeld's original definition of the inner circle with at least four contacts a week. The third group in the table lists those prominently associated with an administration that had fewer than three contacts a week with their president. Regardless of organizational structure, it seems clear that while they see an enormous number of people each day, presidents see almost no one in particular.

The President's relationship with the White House Chief of Staff constitutes one of those central organizational and personal presidential relationships. It makes sense to suppose that Chiefs have an on-going, almost pathologically intimate relationship with their presidents in order to appreciate fully their own jobs at the pinnacle of the president's staff system. One could easily imagine that the president and chief spend hours together keeping each other abreast. Sherman Adams, some suggest, had exactly that relationship with Eisenhower:

It involved... being present at a large number of Eisenhower's meetings, including regularly scheduled ones,... as well as ad hoc presidential conferences. By spending so much time in Eisenhower's presence... Adams was able to keep abreast of Eisenhower's views.⁴²

How closely do Chiefs shadow their presidents both in nominal and relative terms: do others match a Chief's access or percentage of time with their presidents?

For most presidents in this dataset, the numbers of people (excluding family members) having “regular” weekly contact with the president and at Rumsfeld's level amounts to about 11 people per administration.⁴³ Typically, within that compact group, another five people might have contact with the president as least 7 times a week.

⁴² Greenstein, *Hidden Hand*, 142-3.

⁴³ Contacts include phone conversations and group meetings as well as individual meetings.

Almost without exception this inner, inner circle includes the Chief of Staff or Staff Director, chief domestic advisor, the Secretary of State, the National Security Advisor, the Vice President, and then typically either the Director of Congressional Relations or the President's Press Secretary. While the Secretaries of Defense and Treasury and Budget Directors typically see their presidents four times a week, they rarely rise into the closer circle.

The table includes four prominent variances using Rumsfeld's standard. All these irregularities have to do with the earlier presidencies. First, James Hagerty, President Eisenhower's storied Press Secretary had very limited contact with the President in the first 100 days. Second, only the Kennedy Administration had regular enough contact with the Speaker of the House to include the Speaker into the president's inner circle. Third, despite the popular notion that he suffered as Kennedy's Vice President, Lyndon Johnson appears on Kennedy's list of inner, inner circle, having daily contact with the President. Indeed, among Vice Presidents, only Richard Nixon did not enjoy this kind of closest association with the President. Fourth, Robert Kennedy, President Kennedy's brother, campaign manager, and Attorney General did not break into either of Kennedy's inner circles.

These surprises suggest something about Spokes of the wheel systems: it shrinks the president's inner circle. Purportedly adopted to increase access to the president, the lack of some central orchestration actually results in fewer subordinates having regular presidential contact. This consequence probably results from what would seem like a cacophony of requests for the president's time. Given the presidential penchant to relent on requests for time or to encourage access, the resulting pattern to that access spreads the president's time among a very wide group of people. Even more than usual, Spokes of the wheel presidents see no one in particular.

In sum then, choosing a hierarchal staff operation creates more time for the president and associated core staff with a potential impact on better responses to crisis and more planning. It also has meant additional public events for the president and transferring some work time to personal time. Chiefs also reduce the total number of meetings of all types but increase slightly the length of those that remain for the president. And lastly, hierarchal operations increase the size of the president's inner circle.

ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT ON TENURE CHANGES

Table 8 reports on these effects along with the president's level of popular approval, the latter typically considered as an important control variable in understanding presidential activities. One might expect, for example, that independent of organizational choices, presidents might devote more and more work time in response to decreasing popular approval of how they have performed. The available dataset includes enough cases for each administration to have relatively high confidence that the estimated effects reported here capture reliable and non-zero influences on the president's day. In addition, by social science standards, the overall statistical equation presented in this table does a very good job of describing the data with the few variables it employs.⁴⁴

In explaining the length of the president's day, first consider the control for the president's popular standing: it plays absolutely no role in determining the length or the progression of the president's day. The first effect, the variation in presidential choices, appears in the statistical model as part of the starting point or "constant." An interactive effect for organizational choice of a Chief of Staff illustrates how the choice of a Chief creates a completely different starting point for those presidents choosing that organizational structure. The fact that the president's organizational choice has a positive and significant coefficient suggests that the line predicting the effect of historical trends both within an administration and across time will appear less steep for hierarchal systems.

The two trends affecting the president's day appear in the model as the variables "Historical Trend" and "Tenure," respectively. Both appear to have significant effects on the president's day (as

⁴⁴ Social science typically deals with processes more difficult to observe and more prone to cross-cutting influences, which together make for more difficulty in coding observations, hence, more error prone observation.

previously suggested in the discussion).⁴⁵ Both have positive coefficients suggesting that as time progresses the president's workday lengthens both within an administration's first hundred days and across the range of administrations. White Houses do not appear to respond with more efficiency in the early stages, shortening meetings or public events. Instead, both seem only to respond to the historical and secular challenges by requiring the president to work harder.⁴⁶ Because the historical trend stretches over a significant amount of time, it has a far smaller coefficient. Introducing a hierarchal organization has an effect on these forces. Using a Chief of Staff seems to cut in half the impact of both the historical trend and the secular trends lengthening the president's schedule.

Though clearly the selection of a hierarchal organization slows the growth of the President's duties and workday, even the application of that organizational force does not stop the progressive lengthening of the President's day.⁴⁷ In terms of the potential organizational reactions to growing (and possibly unexpected) demands on the president's time, it seems clear that administrations have opted universally for making room in the president's schedule by making the day longer.

In effect, then, during their first 100 days, administrations reel under the pressures that confront them upon taking office. The choice of the president's schedule matters and the choice of whether the president allows a Chief of Staff to orchestrate the workday matters. Both slow the impact of the historical and secular trends on presidential work. Possibly because presidents and their subordinates do not know what to expect, seriously underestimate what they will face, and then have few tools with which to react, the potency of these pressures remain despite the choices made by presidents.

Table 8. Impact of Organization Choice on Length of President's Workday

Variables	Effect	Reliability of Estimates		
		Standard error	t	Level of Significance
<i>Constant</i>	10826.353	8312.588	1.302	.193
Org Impact on Choice	14429.706	2494.430	5.785	.000
<i>Main Effects</i>				
Historical Trend	.007	.000	14.066	.000
Historical Limitation	-2.4E-012	.000	-6.260	.000
Org Impact on Historical Trend	-0.003	.000	-9.293	.000
Tenure	43.290	23.176	1.868	.062
Org Impact on Tenure	-38.899	30.343	-1.282	.200
<i>Controls</i>				
Popular Approval	12269.015	10353.128	1.185	.236

Source: compiled by author.

Note: Summary Statistics: Adj. R² = 0.449 7 and 583 df.

⁴⁵ Because of multi-colinearity, the reliability measures underestimate the significance of the Tenure and Chief-Tenure variables but other available tests assure their significance.

⁴⁶ The Nixon presidency managed a slight down tick in the length of the president's day.

⁴⁷ A simple regression of the length of small group meetings on tenure, for example, generates the following results:

Variables	Effect	Std. Error	Significance
<i>Constant</i>	1760.572	143.073	.000
<i>Main Effects</i>			
Tenure	-3.233	3.013	.284
Org impact on tenure	3.713	2.663	.164

FINDING AND USING PRESIDENTIAL DISCRETION

For most of the country's history, the institutional clocks of the Congress and the Presidency maintained the same time. The close of World War II coincided with the end of this coincident institutional time. The twenty-second amendment, along with a maturing congressional seniority system begun during the 1920s, made the initiation of the president's time in office critical in many ways. More than the lamentable comparisons with FDR's shadow, the time constraints ticking down the president's tenure and the growing congressional strengths in creating permanent forms of accommodation while spreading institutional authority have placed an inordinate interest in a president's first hundred days. The president's activities have become not just a signal about the administration's future intentions but also its modal competencies. Using those first hundred days to their fullest and to the president's policy advantage redounds to institutional advantage and policy leadership. To accomplish this focused treatment of the president's time means maximizing control over discretionary time, those periods that the White House operation could devote to the president's agenda.

This section reports on two aspects of this question about presidential discretion. From the current findings, it identifies a range of opportunities for more presidential time. Then, it reviews previous analysis of how this discretion can have an impact on the president's advantage.

THE SEARCH FOR DISCRETION

Within the context of the transition, many presume that the easiest source of increasing discretion derives from limiting the president's ceremonial responsibilities. Averaging around five percent of the most recent presidents' daily activities, the analysis here suggests that ceremonial responsibilities do present a possibility. Additional ceremonial events and public events, remember, account for a large portion of the 2¼ hour increase in the historical component driving longer presidential days. But the analysis also suggests that ceremonial responsibilities represent but just one of many opportunities for expanding presidential time. This section reviews all those identified in the previous analysis.

Avoiding External Forces Shaping Transitions

Some of the opportunities for additional presidential time depend upon avoiding "distractions," some of which confront the president within a particular historical challenge. Presidents Nixon and Reagan, for example, faced significantly unstable diplomatic environments. President Nixon took office in the midst of a growing Viet Nam war and its roots in the broader Cold War conflict. He needed an opportunity to restructure diplomatic relations. President Reagan needed an easy way to divert attention from the context of diplomatic embarrassment of a great power literally held hostage until and through his own presidential transition. Both of these presidents found it useful to embark on high-profile foreign trips, which consumed considerable presidential time and energy. The absence of such needs, of course, provides for an easy "expansion" of presidential time, but one that the president's team would probably not consider as an opportunity, *per se*.

Knowing what to expect from the first few days in office provides another of these negative opportunities to manage the president's work better. Knowing, for example, that a new congressional leadership, whether the president's party holds the majority or not, requires additional presidential attention. Knowing, for example, to expect a weekly meeting with that leadership and at least a bi-weekly outreach to the opposition, especially where they maintain the majority, reduces the amount of dislocation in the president's schedule generated by trying to reconciling these demands for time. And finally, knowing how and remaining committed to diverting outside pressures for presidential involvement remains the most significant transition task for any White House trying to

preserve the president's time. As Secretary Baker has noted, a White House Chief of Staff has to learn to say, "I appreciate your position, but right now, we are concentrating on one, two, and three."

Organizational Strategies

Short of avoiding these negative opportunities, carving out more presidential discretion depends upon both positive and creative strategies. Selecting a hierarchical staff organization constitutes one major strategy. It creates a number of opportunities for affording the president more time. In general, it shortens the president's day, which, in turn, creates something of a spare capacity that presidents can commit to their own use. Of course, a president can always create this kind of time by simply choosing to say "no" and thereby making the time. Adopting the hierarchical staff organization, however, allows a president to side-step that choice by never bringing it to the Oval Office. The hierarchy not only protects the president's time but it reduces the amount of time that the president fields requests for time and attention. Both changes improve the workday.

A hierarchical staff organization reduces the number of meetings thereby generating additional discretionary time. In the past, presidents have used this additional time to stage additional public events, increase their involvement in communications. Limiting the regularity of cabinet meetings and National Security Council meetings suggests another reduction possible for the president. Clearly, Presidents Bush and Carter took this approach although limiting these formal meetings afford small opportunities for changing the workday and may adversely affect the president's success (see below).

Choosing a hierarchical organization, however, also requires pressing for a broader distribution of participation. To some extent, having a Chief of Staff seems to increase the president's inner circle by an additional three or four subordinates, but even broadening further that circle to include the executive and external advice would require a conscious effort. The recent wider use of the rank of "Counselor" in both the Clinton and Bush administrations might constitute just such a conscious effort. These subordinates, with ranks that parallel the Chief of Staff and National Security Advisor, may have had the effect of broadening the range of the president's most common contacts.

Operational Strategies

A few changes in operations could also afford the president additional opportunities for discretion. Shifting ceremonial events, for example, from the middle of the president's day to the early evening would also afford additional time. Some public events constitute parts of elaborate strategies for influencing the congress or other public decision-makers and for that reason must remain in the middle of the president's workday where they can garner immediate attention. Where the administration intends these events to create a long-run impact, then setting them in the early evening would do just as well.

USING DISCRETION

In the end, the use of the president's time has but one motivation — making a difference on the president's policy agenda. This section investigates presidential influence during the first hundred days. Can the administration take advantage of its relatively strong position during the transition by forging and then employing a unified operation? Neustadt's comments, cited in the introduction, suggest but do not demonstrate that the success of the president's program rests upon the mustering out and use of the Executive Branch. FDR could cast a great shadow, Neustadt suggested, because he had had the time during his extended transition to orchestrate the new administration and cast them into a unified policy apparatus before the Congress arrived to consider the New Deal agenda. Can the unification of an administration generate similar effectiveness in the modern day with less opportunity to build a unified administration perspective?

Table 9. Range of Presidential Contact during First 100 Days

President	Number of Contacts with President and with...									Day Agenda Completed
	External	Leaders	Congressional		Cabinet		Press	Isolation Measures		
			Opposition	Members	Secretary	Staff	Leaks	Extn	Intn	
John Kennedy	44	23	19	96	8	120	10	.111	.431	98
Richard Nixon	28	31	16	62	6	49	35	.067	.260	116
Jimmy Carter	69	14	2	251	16	65	43	.121	.644	94
Ronald Reagan	22	11	9	144	13	24	155	.028	.251	145
George H. W. Bush	33	15	16	145	3	60	64	.024	.279	205
Correlation	-0.53	-0.36	0.26	-0.08	-0.59	-0.40	0.42	-0.87	-0.61	

Source: Compiled by author.

Table 9 reports measures of such a linkage between engagement, unification, isolation, and effectiveness. The measure of effectiveness used here describes the length of time necessary to bring to legislative fruition the main elements of the new president's agenda. This measure derives from extensive research of the president's agenda and reporting about it found in *Congressional Quarterly's* annual almanacs. For a variety of reasons having to do with the reliability of the Congressional Quarterly's earliest reports, the table excludes data on President Eisenhower's agenda. For the purposes of definition, the president's agenda relates to the administration's first set of policy recommendations set out during the first two months in office.

The measures of engagement and isolation come from estimates reported earlier. In addition, the table considers a measure of "discipline,"⁴⁸ The three measures of engagement include statistics on external advisors, congressional partisans, and the cabinet. Efforts at building legislative support include engaging the legislative leaderships of both parties. These activities would include mobilizing and coordinating partisans to support the administration's efforts and then persuading the opposition to consider closely the risks entailed in trying to defeat the president's program. Building legislative support also involves contacts with individual members providing services for which they will become beholden and engaging them with persuasive appeals.⁴⁹

Coordinating the executive branch includes meetings with the cabinet and subcabinet appointees. A final variable measures the pressure on the administration, internally, as observed through unnamed press leaks (to the *Washington Post* or *New York Times*) during the first hundred days.

Because of data limitations, the analysis will rely on Pearson correlation measures, which compare the patterns of change in and between two targeted variables. In this case, the last row of Table 9 reports the relationship between change in the engagement measure across the presidencies and change in the effectiveness measure. While this approach cannot establish a causal relationship, rarely does such causation exist without a commensurate correlation. Hence, this evaluation constitutes a first step in evaluating the effect of engagement on effectiveness. Given the inherent difficulties with these kinds of data, correlations worth considering must exceed an absolute value of 0.4.

As the table indicates, few of the engagement variables reach the appropriate correlation level. For example, while coordinating with the congressional leadership has a value close to the relevant standard, close enough to consider worth noting, the other "contact" measures on the congressional side do not fall in the relevant range at all. The data for this one congressional measure suggests that as an administration dedicates more of its efforts at contacting the congressional leadership, even if the majority hails from the other party, then the quicker the president's agenda gets considered and concluded. Except for the relative strength of this association, at -0.36, this data would lend support to the notion that preparing the president's agenda for an early release and thereby permitting intensive administration lobbying at just the right time, provides an excellent opportunity for administration effectiveness.

Note that using these two measures, of coordination and effectiveness, the data do not support the relationship often described as between Presidents Carter and Reagan and their relative early successes or failures. As indicated earlier, President Reagan actually spent far less time working with the opposition leadership than many argue. Indeed, he had the second smallest number of contacts with the majority, opposition leadership of any president. In addition, at 145 days, President Reagan's effectiveness score suggests a mediocre performance, well below the median and quite near the bottom. And while overall, Carter spent a relatively small amount of time in coordination with the leadership (he did have at least weekly contact with them) his agenda did receive very prompt attention from the Congress: his agenda moved through Congress 35% faster than Reagan's did.

⁴⁸ See Terry Sullivan, *Nerve Center*, *op cit*, especially chapter six.

⁴⁹ See Gregory Petrow and Terry Sullivan, "Presidential Persuasive Advantage, Compliance-Gaining, and Sequencing," *Congress and the Presidency*, 34,2(Autumn 2007):35-56

One disappointing (or puzzling) relationship involves the range of contact with those members of Congress outside the leadership or opposition. These contacts have almost no association with effectiveness. This result may reflect the varied reasons for these congressional contacts and the complex relationships inherent in presidential persuasion. For example, president regularly contact members in order to persuade them to support the administration, but because of the complex considerations that go into persuasion and commitment of the president's time, these contact often involve the most difficult cases for persuasion. Hence, presidents will not likely have impressive conversion effects when considering these contacts and the relationship between these kinds of contacts and eventual legislative success will seem remote at best.

On the other hand, it appears that the data suggest a reasonably strong association between cabinet coordination and effectiveness. The association has a correlation of -0.59. The more new presidents consult with their cabinets, the quicker they clear their agendas through Congress. Given the trend over time to reduce presidential investment in the Cabinet as a policy instrument (as opposed to an administrative instrument), this finding seems very intriguing. As discussed earlier, part of Neustadt's concern with employing the hundred days standard derived from the fact that FDR enjoyed what no post-22nd president has had, an opportunity to prepare a completely unified administration position to present to Congress. If substantiated by more causal analysis, this finding about cabinet coordination would refocus attention towards transition efforts to better prepare the cabinet agencies to present a unified and coordinated front on early administration policy proposals. It would also mean that the White House has a bigger job still to do in coordinating these agencies into a more unified front.

This advice to refocus transition efforts could underscore two practices used in previous transitions but not universally. In one approach, as it identified and recruited its cabinet officers, the transition team would present each potential nominee with a "play book," a series of agency-specific policy commitments the President intended to pursue. Accepting the President's agenda, then, becomes a *sine qua non* for nomination. But more important than assuring a prior commitment to the administration's policies, this program also probably set in motion planning at the cabinet officer's level for how the agency could support the new agenda.

Second, some transitions have focused their appointments program on first identifying what the new president would want to pursue and then stacking the nomination process deep in nominations relevant to pursuing that specific agenda. Rather than pursuing a horizontal approach to nominations, moving from one agency to the next on the same level filling positions before moving down in an organization, the administration would pursue a vertical strategy taking all available appointments in a particular cone of agencies critical the president's immediate agenda. Taking up these nominations then in the Senate would simultaneously play a role in highlighting the president's agenda and filling out the policy-government necessary to present a unified executive front on that policy agenda. The early nomination process, where presidents likely receive the least resistance, then becomes an additional sounding board for the new agenda.

The Special Case of Isolation

While these data seem to tell a story about the impact of engagement on effectiveness, the strongest effects involve the isolation measures developed in the study of organizational choices. By social science standards, the correlations between external and internal isolation and effectiveness suggest very strong relationships. The more isolated the administration the slower its agenda. In particular, the lack of engagement with external advisors (external isolation) has an exceptionally strong correlation with effectiveness. Internal isolation, a measure focused on advice from outside the White House, has a high correlation, one quite similar in strength to the correlation with engaging the cabinet. Again, a story seems to emerge here reminiscent of the FDR story: focusing the entire effort of the Executive Branch, what one might call exhibiting a unity of purpose, has a positive impact on moving the president's agenda.

TRANSITION OUTPUT AND EFFECTIVENESS

While most of the previous research has focused on presidential operations, on the presidential process within the White House, transitions have legacies as well. First, of course, they produce on-going operational patterns. White Houses, either through their Chiefs of Staff or through presidential edicts, institute procedures during the 100 days that lay down, or adjust to, what become relatively permanent patterns of White House procedure. Second, transitions produce outcomes. Some of these outcomes involve others in the policy-making process, e.g., a message to the Congress that engages potential majorities, while some involve entirely the exercise of exclusive executive powers. These latter outcomes include the issuance of executive orders or memoranda of administration both of which carry the force of law. Third, transitions produce presidential pronouncements. These include the plethora of materials that originate in the Press Office and the communications offices but they also include the speeches, remarks, and radio broadcasts that involve the president's own words. These also include the myriad of encounters with the press, including formal press conferences but also those less formal interchanges between press and president and even photo opportunities with the press that often evoke presidential pronouncements.

Table 11, in the Appendix, lists a range of presidential outputs and describes these for each of the new presidents. The patterns of these outputs do not seem as clear as those in presidential activities do, and will remain for future work. For example, presidential outputs do not seem to reflect the general increase in activity found by looking at the length of the president's day or other measures found in Table 1 and elsewhere in this report.

WORKING IN FDR'S SHADOW

INACCURACIES AND EFFICIENCIES

Contemporaneous reportage and insider memoirs have an enormous impact on understanding governing. A considerable amount of "knowing" about administrations, how they work, and their absolute and relative effectiveness, derives from glimpses of the decision-making process these accounts provide. These "common" understandings shape both secondary scholarly analyses and succeeding administrations' views of what has worked and what has not. Even attempts to detail the work of previous administrations in exit interviews and follow-ups often rest on what those subjects perceive as the facts of their own administration's work and of their predecessors. Because the president regularly sees so few people, we now know that both of these kinds of perceptions will have serious flaws. The flaws in these perceptions, then, underscore the importance of primary research, like this.

Getting right the perceptions of predecessors and of your own administration's work, of course, has more value to it than just getting the historical record right. Based on those perceptions, however inaccurate, administrations structure their own work, and if they make organizational choices, they have a right to know what options they actually have. The lack of effective information about the impact of choosing one organizational structure over another, for example, explains the tradition among Chiefs of Staff to pass on to their successors a mangled bicycle wheel as a symbol of their initial attraction to and universal disappointment with the spokes of the wheel operation. We can now understand that dissatisfaction as occurring on two levels. Adopting a spokes of the wheel organization does not present the trade-off with which presidents and their staffs think it presents them one between increased engagements at the expense of organizational efficiency. The spokes of the wheel system fosters neither engagement nor efficiency.

These misperceptions, whether about predecessors or your own administration's work, carry a special toxicity beyond simple organizational systems. They poison ones own impressions of how to organize the president's work and how much discretion the president will have in that work. So, much of what a White House does in terms of orchestrating the president's day seems to revolve

around the unique qualities of the specific president and so little about the demanding expectations of the job itself that much of the president's real leeway in finding and using discretion get dissipated in pursuing faulty and false strategies. It seems that, for the most part, presidents work at the pace of the presidency.

Organizational learning then becomes a central variable in White House operations. For now, we know that learning takes place as well as reacting: the president's staff gets more efficient at the same time it lengthens the president's workday. For now, we do not know whether the learning that takes place during the hundred days fixes or merely shapes the rest of the administration, whether the patterns of the hundred days resemble the enduring patterns of a whole administration. Given that these misperceptions occupy the common ground, it seems likely that the high turnover experienced by all White Houses leads to a permanence of the same mistakes, or not to know histories lessons condemns one to repeat them. On the other hand, the dynamism of the presidential institution constitutes one of its most significant characteristics and possibly the first hundred days represents merely the beginning of operational realities and not the end.

APPENDICES

These appendices present useful data on a number of topics, including total numbers of events during the 100 days and the range of subordinates with inner circle access across administrations.

Table 10. Identifying Inner Circles by Administration

President and the Inner Circle	
...includes	...notably excludes
Dwight Eisenhower	
John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State	
Sherman Adams, Chief of Staff	
Wilton Persons, Congressional Relations	Joseph Dodge, Director of Bureau of the Budget
Charles Wilson, Secretary of Defense	Gabriel Hauge, Domestic Advisor
Robert Cutler, National Security Advisor	C. D. Jackson, Special Projects ⁵⁰
Herbert Brownell, Attorney General	Oveta Culp Hobby, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare
Harold Stassen, Director Emergency Preparedness	James Lay, National Security Council
George Humphrey, Secretary of Treasury	James Hagerty, Press Secretary
Richard Nixon, Vice President	Allen Dulles, Director CIA
John Kennedy	
Kenneth O'Donnell, Staff Director	
McGeorge Bundy, National Security Advisor	
Dean Rusk, Secretary of State	
Lyndon Johnson, Vice President	
Ted Sorenson, Domestic Advisor	
Pierre Salinger, Press Secretary	Douglas Dillon, Secretary of Treasury
Sam Rayburn, Speaker of the House	David Bell, Director of Bureau of Budget
Chester Clifton, Air Force Aide	Robert Kennedy, Attorney General
Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense	
Richard Nixon	
Henry Kissinger, National Security Advisor	
Bob Haldeman, Chief of Staff	
John Ehrlichman, Domestic Advisor	
Bryce Harlow, Domestic Advisor	
William Rogers, Secretary of State	
Rosemary Woods, staff	
Ron Ziegler, Press Secretary	
Spiro Agnew, Vice President	Robert Mayo, Director OMB
Melvin Laird, Secretary of Defense	David Kennedy, Secretary of Treasury
Arthur Burns, Domestic Advisor	
John Mitchell, Attorney General	
Patrick Moynihan, Domestic Advisor	

⁵⁰ C. D. Jackson did not join the president's staff until February 16, 1953. Even in the limited time, however, Dodge did not satisfy Rumsfeld's standard.

President and the Inner Circle

...includes

...notably excludes

Jimmy Carter

Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Advisor
 Hamilton Jordan, Staff Director
 Jody Powell, Press Secretary
 Frank Moore, Congressional Relations
 Walter Mondale, Vice President
 Cyrus Vance, Secretary of State

Stuart Eisenstat, Domestic Advisor
 Jack Watson, Cabinet Secretary
 Harold Brown, Secretary of Defense
 Bert Lance, Director OMB

James Schlesinger, Domestic Advisor
 Michael Blumenthal, Secretary of Treasury
 Griffin Bell, Attorney General

Ronald Reagan

James Baker, Chief of Staff
 Michael Deaver, Communications Director
 Edwin Meese, Domestic Advisor
 George H. W. Bush, Vice President
 Richard Allen, National Security Advisor
 Max Friedersdorf, Congressional Relations

James Brady, Press Secretary
 Alexander Haig, Secretary of State
 David Fisher, Executive Assistant
 David Stockman, Director OMB
 Martin Anderson, Domestic Advisor
 Helene VonDamm, Executive Assistant
 Donald Regan, Secretary of Treasury

David Gergen, Deputy Chief of Staff
 Caspar Weinberger, Secretary of Defense
 William F. Smith, Attorney General

George H. W. Bush

John Sununu, Chief of Staff
 Brent Scowcroft, National Security Advisor
 Dan Quayle, Vice President
 Marlin Fitzwater, Press Secretary
 Robert Gates, CIA
 James Baker, Secretary of State

Andrew Card, Deputy Chief of Staff
 Nicholas Brady, Secretary of Treasury
 Timothy McBride, Executive Assistant
 Richard Darman, Director OMB
 Boyden Gray, White House Counsel
 Frederick McClure, Congressional Relations

Richard Cheney, Secretary of Defense

Source: compiled by author.

Table 11. Some Measures of Presidential Output

President	Numbers of Outputs over 100 days				
	Speeches and Remarks	Press Encounters	Executive Orders	Messages to Congress	Proclamations
Eisenhower	23	31	7	4	0
Kennedy	47	71	23	37	20
Nixon	23	56	2	29	1
Carter	75	169	16	38	22
Reagan	86	41	18	19	26
Bush	67	81	11	13	31

Source: Compiled by Author.

Table 12. Distribution of Work per Administration

President	Recorded Days	Number of Events by Type							
		On the Phone	Working Alone	Meetings with...			Public Event	Personal	Travel
				Individual	Small Group	Large Group			
Dwight Eisenhower	89	—	59	406	193	142	159	217	52
			0:46:41	0:22:51	0:32:25	1:11:34	0:37:52	0:03:12	0:31:10
John Kennedy	98	—	632	542	352	141	229	136	191
			0:20:37	0:18:06	0:25:32	0:54:22	0:24:46	0:33:28	0:19:21
Richard Nixon	100	526	1,209	446	390	149	213	262	245
		0:04:40	0:20:28	0:18:59	0:27:22	1:09:05	0:40:48	0:16:48	0:22:35
Jimmy Carter	100	875	1,222	422	403	192	420	359	153
		0:03:19	0:20:29	0:16:50	0:23:50	0:46:47	0:25:49	0:05:51	0:14:51
Ronald Reagan	87	395	607	124	236	130	260	280	101
		0:03:28	0:16:18	0:18:45	0:24:40	0:46:00	0:24:58	0:02:53	0:17:42
George H. W. Bush	76	767	517	328	379	202	310	261	167
		0:03:55	0:14:26	0:10:12	0:21:27	0:32:02	0:25:49	0:11:13	0:20:08
<i>Averages</i>		641	708	378	326	159	265	253	152
<i>% of total of events</i>		22	25	13	11	6	9	9	5
<i>Average length</i>		0:02:41	0:18:49	0:16:20	0:21:10	0:45:03	0:24:10	0:09:01	0:16:31
<i>% of average day taken up by event type</i>		3	25	15	16	17	14	4	6

Source: Compiled by author.

Table 13. Distribution of Responsibilities per Administration, Totals for the 100 Days

President	Total Number of Events by Responsibility										
	Working Alone	Personal	Travel	Speeches & Press	Ceremonial	Commander in Chief	Diplomatic	Legislative	Economic	Executive	Party Leader
Eisenhower	59	218	52	54	94	135	175	132	35	137	66
	0:30:57	3:01:06	0:18:13	0:16:58	0:39:51	0:59:38	1:00:57	1:07:06	0:15:22	0:56:58	0:52:40
Kennedy	632	136	191	118	139	126	243	119	102	155	33
	2:14:50	1:49:50	0:39:55	0:26:21	0:31:22	0:41:18	1:19:17	0:37:49	0:35:12	0:45:13	0:13:53
Nixon	1212	321	252	128	164	418	478	88	78	129	33
	4:07:26	2:08:00	0:55:47	0:12:51	0:44:14	1:20:41	2:18:39	0:24:37	0:34:15	0:30:47	0:19:05
Carter	1204	398	130	259	205	224	210	262	86	193	32
	2:31:55	2:55:06	0:21:07	0:40:32	0:37:37	0:33:36	0:48:25	0:39:34	0:18:14	0:19:38	0:11:23
Reagan	607	280	101	127	162	69	114	145	46	43	23
	1:59:51	3:21:32	0:20:32	0:25:12	0:45:48	0:20:21	0:30:32	0:24:18	0:27:43	0:19:38	0:11:23
Bush	517	345	167	151	228	311	262	160	66	91	17
	1:38:54	2:17:38	0:43:44	0:27:05	1:17:19	1:21:26	1:11:27	0:31:48	0:24:46	0:22:43	0:11:12
<i>Means</i>	2:38:47	2:35:32	0:33:18	0:26:40	0:48:12	0:52:34	1:10:33	0:37:29	0:25:55	0:36:42	0:20:02

THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSITION PROJECT



WHAT WHTP DOES

The White House Transition Project unites the efforts of academic institutions with those of the policy community and private philanthropy into a consortium dedicated to smoothing the transfer of governing essential to a functioning American republic. It manages two related programs, one on institutional memory and best practices, and one on presidential appointments. In both programs, the White House Transition Project brings to bear the considerable analytic resources of the world-wide academic community interested in the viability of democratic institutions on those problems identified as critical by those experienced hands that have held the unique responsibilities for governing. As such, the White House Transition Project brings ideas to bear on action.

The White House Interview Program

A common problem of the democratic transfer of power, the White House has no mechanism for maintaining an “institutional memory” of best practices, of common mistakes, and needed background information. Partisanship and growing complexity of the selection process exacerbate the natural tendency to avoid passing from one administration to the next the vital experiences necessary to carry on governing from one administration to the next. The lack of an institutional memory, then, literally turns the hallmark of the American constitutional system, its peaceful transfer of power, into a breathe-taking gamble. The White House Interview Program bridges the gaps between partisanship and experience by providing a conduit for those who have borne the extraordinary responsibilities to pass on their judgments to those who will enter the American nerve center. Its briefing materials compile these lessons from the practitioners with the long-view of academics familiar with executive organizations and operational dynamics. Provided to the transition planners for the national presidential campaigns and then to the president-elect’s newly appointed management team, these materials provide a range of useful perspectives from those who have held the same positions and faced the same problems that they cannot get on their own or from government resources.

Nomination Forms Online Program

Detailing the complex problems involved in nominating and then confirming presidential appointments, the WHTP’s Nomination Forms Online program provides the best available expertise on the nomination and confirmation process. Its software, *NFO*, constitutes the only fully-functional, open-architecture, completely reusable software for making sense of the morass of government questions that assail presidential nominees. In one place, this software presents nominees with all of the some 6,000 questions they may confront. Provided free as a public service by WHTP, *NFO* prompts nominees for needed information and then distributes and customizes answers to all of the forms and into all the questions that the nominee must answer on a subject.

HOW TO HELP SMOOTH THE NEXT PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION

Originally funded by grants from the Pew Charitable Trusts, WHTP manages its operations with the help of private philanthropy. To assist in that effort, please contact WHTP at WHTP@unc.edu.