

The Survival of Agency Heads in the Public Sector: Insiders versus Outsiders in UK Central Government Agencies*

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Abstract

We develop a theoretical framework about the duration in office of chief executives of public organizations. We assess whether chief executive 'insider' or 'outsider' background, performance, and political change influences duration in post. Chief executives can be 'insiders' by having previously worked in the organization they are leading now. Alternatively, they can be 'outsiders' to varying degrees, having previously worked in other parts of the same level of government, the broader public sector, or outside of the public sector. Using a panel data set of all UK central government executive agencies and the turnover of their chief executives in the period 1989-2012, we estimate a Cox survival model of chief executive duration in post. We find that chief executives who previously worked in the public sector, but outside of central government, tend to have a shorter tenure than chief executives who were promoted from inside the executive agency.

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