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Reaction Paper Week 6

       The paper by Wojcik and Mullenax looked at data from Brazil's legislature to understand how women in the Chamber of Deputies engaged in higher rates of networking–specifically intragender, intra-age and different legislative experience–compared to their male colleagues. They also found that representatives that were more well-connected (which was measured by communication relationships between their congressional offices) would receive a larger proportion of the electoral votes. The second paper, by Kirkland, looked at cosponsorship of legislation to measure two types of relationships between legislatures: strong and weak ties in relation to their legislative successes. He consistently found that weak ties between legislators are more useful than strong ones in increasing legislative success.

       I will focus on the Kirkland paper, as I found this paper far more interesting, but also took quite a bit of umbrage with it. Overall I felt this paper contradicted itself quite often by stating gaps in research, pledging to fill those gaps, and then simply not. The first issue the paper pointed out was the lack of generalizability of past research due to the single state presentation; but then the paper only looks at eight legislatures, which is still an increase but does not make the paper super generalizable. Another weakness of the paper was when he pointed out that not all weak ties are equal, but then proceeded to not distinguish between types of weak ties in his analysis. He also pointed out how there are many bill-specific reasons for bills to have higher likelihood of success such as: committee chairmanship, majority party status of the sponsor, and seniority of the sponsor. However, his solution to control for these problems was to include a measure of the number of cosponsors on each piece of legislation. I simply do not find this to be a general solution to the three very specific problems pointed out, and think adding indicator variables for these three separately could be simple and helpful. I found this paper quite frustrating, as there were clear and interesting findings presented, but many methodological issues running rampant throughout the paper.