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**HOMOPHILY PREDICTS POLITICAL ALLIANCE FORMATION AND
COOPERATIVE BEHAVIOR IN THE UTAH STATE LEGISLATURE**

**Connor Adam Davis (Shane J. Macfarlan)
Department of Anthropology**

Purpose: Cooperation and political alliance formation are core themes in the biosocial sciences; however, there is an absence of evolutionary inspired research on these topics in political arenas associated with modern, democratic nation-states. Here we seek to understand the factors that structure legislative cooperation and political alliance formation. Research demonstrates that in non-competitive political environments, like those found in legislative supermajorities, the importance of party unity decreases, allowing legislators to more frequently work “across the aisle.” However, biosocial science theory suggests that affinity for those who share similar characteristics (i.e., homophily) is a powerful force for relationship building and cooperation.

Methods: Here we seek to understand the role of homophily in a legislative supermajority by investigating bill floor sponsorship: a process employed across several US state legislatures in which a “floor sponsor” becomes the exclusive advocate for a colleague’s piece of legislation. Data are extracted from the Utah State Legislature over a four-year period spanning 2005-2008.

Results: Our analyses suggest that 1) party homophily predicts who legislators recruit as floor sponsors, while gender and seniority homophily do not; 2) legislators engage in reciprocal “quid pro quo” exchanges of floor sponsorship and both party and gender homophily increase the odds of these exchanges occurring; and 3) both political parties engage in party homophily, even when controlling for ideology.

Conclusion: We suggest that homophily constrains cooperative behavior between legislators, and represents either a cause of political polarization, or its consequence. Furthermore, we highlight the utility of local, state, and national legislatures as ideal venues for studying cooperative dynamics.