

Psyched-up to Suck-up: Self-Regulated Cognition, Interpersonal Influence, and  
Recommendations for Board Appointments in the Corporate Elite

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**ABSTRACT**

This study reveals how self-regulated cognition in advance of social interaction can resolve the so-called “ingratiator’s dilemma” that the most attractive targets of social influence, those who have relatively high social status, tend to be the most difficult to ingratiate successfully. Our theoretical argument suggests that, in anticipation of social interaction with a relatively high-status colleague, corporate directors tend to reflect on characteristics shared with that colleague, while avoiding thoughts about characteristics not shared. We explain how this pattern of cognition induces genuine positive feelings and admiration for the colleague, such that their interpersonal behaviors are less likely to appear as insincere attempts to curry favor, and thus more likely to engender influence. We further suggest that this pattern of cognition is especially valuable when interacting with relatively high-status colleagues who are demographically dissimilar from the focal actor. Finally, our theoretical framework indicates how this self-regulated cognition facilitates advancement in the corporate elite by positively moderating the effects of one’s interpersonal behavior on the likelihood that colleagues will recommend him/her for a board appointment. We test our hypotheses with a unique dataset including survey data from a large sample of directors collected before and after meetings.

## INTRODUCTION

Although behavioral perspectives on corporate leadership and governance have traditionally emphasized the importance of structural sources of power, a growing body of theory and research has examined how micro-level, interpersonal influence behaviors may complement or substitute for advantageous social structural positions, or enable managers to acquire structural sources of power (e.g., Finkelstein et al., 2009; Fiss, 2006; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988; O'Reilly & Main, 2010; Wade, Porac, & Pollock, 1997; Westphal & Stern, 2007). For example, Westphal and Stern (2006, 2007) provided evidence that corporate managers who engaged in ingratiation behavior toward colleagues were more likely to receive board appointments at other firms where those colleagues served as director. This research suggests how ingratiation, a common form of interpersonal influence behavior among corporate leaders, can help managers acquire greater social structural power in the corporate elite.

While this literature has expanded our knowledge about sources of power and influence in the corporate management, it has not fully explained how managers are able to overcome a fundamental constraint on the efficacy of ingratiation and related interpersonal influence behaviors that has long been acknowledged in the social psychological literature. In particular, while ingratiation behaviors such as flattery are supposed to enhance one's interpersonal attractiveness, such tactics can "backfire" if the influence target recognizes or interprets the remarks as an insincere attempt to curry favor, and the most attractive targets of ingratiation, those who have relatively high social status, tend to be the most difficult to ingratiate successfully (Jones & Pittman, 1982: 237; Pfeffer, 1992). Because high-status actors are frequent targets of ingratiation behavior, they tend to be more vigilant for insincere compliments or exaggerated displays of liking from their lower-status peers, which renders them less susceptible to strategic forms of ingratiation. This fundamental paradox facing social actors in exercising

interpersonal influence has been termed the “ingratiator’s dilemma” (Jones, 1964: 122; Leary, 1996; Liden & Mitchell, 1988; Schlenker, 2003).

In a recent study, Stern and Westphal (2010) showed that ingratiatory behavior by top managers and directors was more likely to engender social influence to the extent that it was comprised of relatively subtle or sophisticated behaviors, such as framing flattery as advice seeking, or framing a compliment as likely to make the influence target uncomfortable. Although effective in general, such tactics are unlikely to resolve the ingratiator’s dilemma. Because high-status actors are frequent targets of ingratiation, including these sophisticated tactics, they are especially vigilant for insincere or exaggerated flattery from lower-status peers (precisely because they are frequent targets, as discussed above), and consequently they should be more likely to recognize these behaviors as insincere attempts to curry favor.

In this study we integrate theory and research on self-regulation from cognitive psychology and organizational behavior with the similarity-attraction principle from the literature on social cognition to describe a social psychological mechanism by which individuals can resolve the ingratiator’s dilemma and gain interpersonal influence with relatively high-status colleagues. We argue that when directors anticipate social interaction with a colleague who has relatively high social status, they tend to engage in a pattern of cognition that involves reflecting on personal and social characteristics that they share in common with the colleague, while avoiding thoughts about characteristics that they do not share. Our theory indicates how this pattern of cognition renders a focal person psychologically prepared to exert interpersonal influence over a relatively high-status colleague by inducing genuine feelings of positive affect and respect for the colleague, which increase the credibility of the focal actor’s complimentary remarks and other verbal and non-verbal expressions of admiration and liking. As a result, the focal actor’s interpersonal behaviors are less likely to be interpreted as insincere attempts to

curry favor, and are therefore more likely to engender interpersonal influence. Drawing further from the similarity-attraction principle of social cognition, we suggest why this pattern of cognition may be especially valuable in gaining interpersonal influence with high-status colleagues who are dissimilar from the focal actor on potentially salient demographic attributes. The second portion of our theoretical framework addresses how the self-regulated cognition that we describe could ultimately facilitate an individual's advancement in the corporate elite. In particular, we propose that self-regulated cognition will moderate the effects of interpersonal behavior on recommendations for board appointments, such that a focal director's expressions of liking and admiration toward a relatively high-status colleague will have a more positive effect on the colleague's inclination to recommend the focal director for a board appointment at another firm to the extent that the director engages in self-regulated cognition prior to social interaction.

In revealing how self-regulated cognition enables corporate directors to resolve the ingratiation's dilemma, this study makes an important contribution to our understanding of how corporate leaders gain interpersonal influence. In addition, our study contributes to the growing literature on self-regulation. While research on self-regulated cognition has examined how actors avoid unproductive emotions through cognitive reappraisal of the situation, our theory extends this literature by revealing how and when actors engage in self-regulated *social* cognition, or cognition about another person that regulates one's feelings or attitudes about him or her in preparation for social interaction.

Moreover, in examining how the self-regulated cognition that we describe ultimately enhances the ability of directors to secure recommendations for board appointments at other companies, this study contributes to our understanding of how individuals advance to more central positions in the corporate elite. Although extant research has tended to emphasize the importance of social structural advantages in ascending to more central positions in the corporate

elite (Davis, 2005; Domhoff, 2002; Useem, 1984), we suggest a social psychological mechanism that complements extant, social structural explanations. While the directors examined in this study are structurally advantaged by having high-status colleagues who can recommend them for board seats, our theory implies that the ability of directors to capitalize on these ties and ascend to more central positions depends to a significant degree on the extent to which they engage in the pattern of self-regulated cognition that we describe prior to interacting with these colleagues.

This study is also unique in examining the micro-temporal dynamics of corporate leaders' social perceptions. Our theory leads to the expectation that directors will tend to feel greater liking and respect for their colleagues when they anticipate interacting with them than when they do not, resulting in a predictable oscillation of social perceptions over time. Moreover, our theory suggests that this social psychological dynamic is likely to be especially pronounced in relations between demographically dissimilar individuals. We discuss implications of this perspective for the literature on corporate leadership and governance, and the larger literature on management decision making, which has given little theoretical or empirical attention to the dynamic change in individuals' social perceptions over relatively short periods of time. For example, in hypothesizing that individuals in demographically diverse groups are likely to feel less positive affect for each other, evaluate each other less positively, and thus exhibit less social cohesion, scholars have implicitly assumed temporal stability of individuals' social perceptions. To the extent that the pattern of cognition we describe induces greater liking and more positive attitudes about demographically different colleagues in anticipation of social interaction, it should tend to enhance social cohesion and cooperation and dampen interpersonal conflict in diverse groups. Thus, our theory may help explain mixed evidence that demographic diversity necessarily reduces social cohesion and increases interpersonal conflict and turnover among managers (Knight et al., 1999; Smith et al., 1994; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007).

In the following section, we begin by reviewing the mechanisms by which ingratiation can engender influence, and provide a more detailed, theoretical description of the ingratiation's dilemma. We then describe theory and research on self-regulation from cognitive psychology and organizational behavior, and integrate this theory with the similarity-attraction principle from the literature on social cognition to suggest a novel form of self-regulated cognition that resolves the ingratiation's dilemma.

### **Self-Regulated Cognition in Anticipation of Social Interaction**

*Mechanisms of ingratiation and the ingratiation's dilemma.* Ingratiation is perhaps the most widely studied form of interpersonal influence behavior in the organizational literature. According to contemporary theory, ingratiation is comprised of interpersonal behaviors that serve to “enhance one’s interpersonal attractiveness” with another person (Gordon, 1996; Higgins & Judge, 2004; Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991: 619), including flattery, or expressions of admiration and respect more generally, as well as verbal and non-verbal expressions of liking (e.g., smiling at another person to convey positive affect for him or her) (Clark et al., 1996; Duck, 1986; Feldman et al., 2002; Godfrey et al., 1986; Higgins & Judge, 2004; Jones & Pittman, 1982; Leary, 1996; Rosenfeld, 1966).<sup>1</sup> These behaviors are thought to induce positive affect for the ingratiation through reciprocal attraction, which occurs on a preconscious level. As Jones put it (1964: 24): “people find it hard not to like those who think highly of them” (Heider, 1958). In addition, flattery is believed to engender interpersonal influence through the norm of reciprocity: when someone is “paid a compliment” that meaningfully affirms their competence or

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<sup>1</sup> Social influence scholars have observed that conceptions of ingratiation in the academic literature range from a relatively “restrictive” view that focuses on specific behaviors, especially flattery, to the relatively “expansive view” adopted here (Gordon, 1996: 54; Higgins & Judge, 2004; Jones & Pittman, 1982), which conceives ingratiation as comprised of a broader set of interpersonal behaviors that enhance interpersonal attractiveness with another (i.e., including expressions of liking, as well as expressions of admiration and respect, and non-verbal expressions such as smiling to convey positive affect for another person [Clark et al., 1996; Duck, 1986; Feldman et al., 2002; Godfrey et al., 1986; Goffman, 1959; Jones & Pittman, 1982; Leary, 1996; Rosenfeld, 1966]).

other positive qualities, they will feel psychologically indebted to the ingratiation, and will therefore tend to favor the ingratiation when given the opportunity (Westphal & Stern, 2006). As social influence theorists have long acknowledged, however, ingratiation can backfire when it is recognized or interpreted as an insincere attempt to curry favor (Aronson, 1999; Jones & Pittman, 1982; Liden & Mitchell, 1988). Not only are insincere compliments or expressions of liking less likely to be reciprocated, but most people have a negative schema for ingratiation and ascribe a range of negative attributes to ingratiating actors. Thus, if flattery and expressions of liking are recognized or interpreted as insincere attempts to curry favor, it could diminish rather than enhance one's interpersonal attractiveness (Jones & Pittman, 1982).

Moreover, social influence theorists have suggested that people can discern insincere or exaggerated flattery if they are alert to inconsistencies between verbal and non-verbal behavior (Jones, 1964, 1990). When people express liking or admiration that exaggerates how they actually feel, their true feelings often leak through non-verbally (Ekman, 2001; Jones, 1990; Sutton, 1991). Many nonverbal and paraverbal behaviors associated with particular emotions are difficult to perform voluntarily, so that the overall constellation or blend of behaviors that accompany exaggerated liking or admiration may appear incongruous or "unnatural" to the interlocutor (DePaulo et al., 2003: 78; Ekman, 1993; Knapp & Comadena, 1979). Feigned smiles may appear forced due to "micro-facial expressions", gestures, shifts in posture, and other non-verbal behaviors that appear discrepant with liking and betray one's true feelings. Similarly, compliments that exaggerate one's actual respect or admiration may come across as insincere due to subtle, paraverbal signals in the pitch or tone of one's voice that seem incongruous with the verbal content of the message. When people are mindful that they are potential targets of ingratiation, they are especially likely to notice such discrepancies between verbal praise and non-verbal or paraverbal behavior (Jones, 1990).

A fundamental dilemma facing ingratiators is that the most attractive influence targets, those who have relatively high social status, tend to be especially vigilant for signs of exaggerated praise or displays of liking, precisely because they are common targets of ingratiation (Gordon, 1996; Jones, 1964; Leary, 1996; Vonk, 1998). Moreover, high-status actors tend to be particularly vigilant for exaggerated praise or liking from those who have relatively low status, because lower-status peers have the most to gain from the high-status actor's social influence. Thus, it is particularly difficult to credibly exaggerate liking or admiration with a higher-status alter. In the present context, directors who have relatively high social status are particularly attractive targets of interpersonal influence behavior. There is evidence that directors who have high status in the corporate elite, as indicated by the number of board seats they hold, tend to exert greater influence over the compensation and hiring of top managers and other directors at each of the companies where they serve as director (Graffin et al., 2008; Useem, 1984). They are also especially likely to provide input to searches for prestigious positions outside the corporate sphere (Davis et al., 2003). Thus, high-status directors are likely to be common targets of interpersonal influence behavior. Yet, the interpersonal influence literature would suggest that, precisely because they are common targets of ingratiation, high-status directors are likely to be especially vigilant and attentive to signs of exaggerated praise or displays of liking from their lower-status peers, making them harder to ingratiate successfully.

***How self-regulated cognition can resolve the ingratiator's dilemma.*** In this study we describe a process of interpersonal influence in which expressions of liking, admiration and respect are less likely to be interpreted as insincere even by relatively high-status actors, and thus more likely to elicit reciprocal attraction and a tendency to favor the focal person in allocating resources and social benefits. A key element of this influence process involves self-regulated cognition in anticipation of social interaction. A growing literature in cognitive psychology on



anticipatory self-regulation indicates that prior to an important performance (e.g., taking an exam), most people tend to regulate their thoughts – often on a pre-conscious level – in a way that prepares them psychologically and emotionally for an effective performance. Gross and colleagues suggest that an especially common and effective form of self-regulated cognition is “cognitive reappraisal of the situation” that reduces unproductive emotions such as anxiety (Gross, 1998; Gross et al., 2013: 424; Sheppes et al., 2011). For example, on the day of an important exam, one might cognitively frame the exam as routine, or as similar to exams that one has taken many times before, to reduce anxiety and increase confidence going into the test (Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2004). Anticipatory cognitive reappraisal of this kind is thought to be more effective in regulating emotion and boosting task performance than “suppression” of emotions in real time (i.e., during the actual performance)(Sheppes et al., 2011). There is also evidence that people are more likely to engage in such anticipatory, self-regulation when the subjective expected utility of a successful performance is relatively high (Larsen & Prizmic, 2004). Evolutionary psychologists suggest that the capacity for anticipatory, self-regulated cognition of this kind may have evolved due to its obvious adaptive value (Carver & Scheier, 2001).

Research in organizational behavior has extended this literature to examine self-regulation of emotions by service workers before and during interactions with customers. Building on Hochschild’s (1983: 33) seminal study of flight attendants, scholars have distinguished between “surface acting,” which involves direct monitoring of one’s interpersonal behavior in real time, including the suppression of negative emotions, and “deep acting,” which involves indirect management of one’s behavior by altering one’s inner feelings or attitudes prior to a “social performance” (Grandey, 2003: 86). When service workers engage in deep acting, they essentially “psych themselves up” to feel socially approved emotions in the presence of customers (Grandey et al., 2005; Hochschild, 1983: 33). While this research suggests the

potential for anticipatory self-regulation to create more successful social interactions, it has devoted little systematic attention to fundamental cognitive processes that underlie deep acting. Conversely, while psychological research has identified cognitive reappraisal as an effective mechanism of self-regulation, it has not revealed cognitive processes that prepare individuals to exercise social influence; the focus of this research has been on cognitive reappraisal of the “situation” (e.g., an impending exam), rather than self-regulated *social* cognitions, or cognitions about another person that regulate one’s feelings or attitudes about him or her.<sup>2</sup> In this study we extend research on self-regulated cognition to consider how people may regulate their social cognitions prior to interactions with high-status others (hereafter “alters”) in a way that prepares them psychologically to exert interpersonal influence by eliciting reciprocal attraction and a perceived social obligation to favor them in allocating resources and opportunities.

In particular, our theoretical proposition is that when people anticipate social interaction with a relatively high-status alter, they are especially likely to reflect on personal and social characteristics that they share in common with alter, and especially *unlikely* to reflect on characteristics *not* shared with alter. For example, when a director anticipates meeting with a colleague who has a different functional background, but who attended the same school and has prior management experience in the same industry, we expect that the director will be especially likely to reflect on the colleague’s educational background and management experience, and less likely to reflect on the colleague’s functional background. We suggest that this pattern of cognition will amplify the director’s positive affect toward his or her colleague. A core principle of social cognition is that people exhibit more positive affect toward others with whom they share salient personal characteristics, social affiliations or group memberships (Hogg & Terry,

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<sup>2</sup> Hochschild’s (1983) qualitative study includes examples of self-regulated social cognition by service workers, as when workers thought about customers as children in order to reduce feelings of hostility. However, such cognitions are likely to be less common among managers as a means of self-regulation in anticipation of social interaction.

2000; Montoya & Horton, 2004; Turner, 1987). Moreover, a corollary is that the cognitive salience and accessibility of shared personal and social characteristics strongly moderate the effects of demographic similarity on positive affect and liking (Hogg & Terry, 2000).

By reflecting on personal and social characteristics held in common with a colleague, one reinforces the salience of those characteristics and increases their cognitive availability, which should tend to amplify positive affect toward the colleague in subsequent social interaction. As noted above, research on self-regulation suggests how people regulate their cognitions prior to an important performance in a way that prepares them psychologically and emotionally to perform effectively. According to this literature, anticipatory self-regulation specifically involves storing useful information in one's working memory, where it becomes cognitively accessible during the subsequent performance (Baddeley, 1986; Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2004; Norman & Shallice, 1986). Thus, when one reflects on attributes held in common with a colleague, those shared attributes and the personal and social identities attached to them are stored in working memory, where they become more cognitively available during subsequent interaction. To the extent that these sources of similarity are relatively salient during the interaction, the focal actor is essentially primed to feel more positive affect toward his or her colleague.

Another consequence of similarity-attraction is a tendency to make relatively favorable attributions for the performance and accomplishments of others who are similar on salient social dimensions (Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Jones, 1990; Pettigrew, 1998). People tend to attribute the career success and accomplishments of similar others to internal factors such as talent and hard work, while attributing the success of dissimilar others more to external factors such as social connections or luck (Pettigrew, 1998). As a result, people tend to exhibit greater respect and admiration for high-status others who are similar on salient dimensions. Thus, to the extent that reflecting on attributes held in common with a colleague and avoiding thoughts about attributes

not shared makes sources of similarity relatively salient during subsequent social interaction, such cognitions should also prime the focal actor to exhibit greater respect and admiration for the colleague while conversing with him or her.

Thus, individuals who engage in such cognitive reflection prior to interacting with relatively high-status alters can resolve the ingratiation's dilemma. By reflecting on personal and social characteristics held in common with a relatively high-status director prior to interacting with him or her, and avoiding thoughts about characteristics not shared, the focal person is primed to feel more positive affect and respect for the director, which should then be manifested in more sincere verbal and non-verbal expressions of liking and admiration during social interaction. These relatively genuine interpersonal behaviors should be more likely to elicit reciprocal attraction, and because they meaningfully affirm alter's positive qualities, they should be more likely to induce a sense of psychological indebtedness to the focal actor, and thus a heightened propensity to favor him or her in allocating resources and opportunities. As discussed above, and consistent with the roots of self-regulation theory in evolutionary psychology, scholars have advanced the broad notion that people should be more likely to engage in anticipatory self-regulation to the extent that it prepares them psychologically and emotionally for an important "social performance" that can lead to valuable resources and opportunities. In effect, people are more likely to engage in self-regulation prior to a social performance when the subjective expected utility of a successful performance is relatively high. The self-regulated cognition that we have described should be especially effective in securing resources and opportunities from another director (alter), and thus have especially high subjective expected utility, to the extent that alter has relatively high social status in the corporate elite (i.e., high status relative to others, including the focal director), for two reasons. First, the tendency for similarity on salient characteristics to enhance liking and respect between people is among the

strongest and most robust tendencies in social cognition (Montoya & Horton, 2004). Thus, the pattern of cognition that we describe should significantly and reliably increase the sincerity with which the focal director expresses liking, respect, and admiration for alter, which is especially important to gaining interpersonal influence with relatively high-status alters. Second, high-status directors are in a better position than directors with lower status to provide valuable resources and opportunities that can improve the position of a lower-status peer.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, we expect that a focal director should be especially likely to engage in the self-regulated cognition that we have described when he or she anticipates interaction with another director who has relatively high social status in the corporate elite. Specifically:

*H1: A focal director (A) who anticipates social interaction with another director (B) is more likely to reflect on personal and social characteristics held in common with B, and less likely to reflect on characteristics not shared with B, to the extent that B has relatively high social status in the corporate elite.*

### **The Moderating Effect of Demographic Dissimilarity**

The self-regulated cognition that we have described may be especially valuable in gaining interpersonal influence with directors who are dissimilar from the focal actor on potentially salient demographic attributes. The social cognition literature indicates that, just as similarity on salient personal and social characteristics tends to increase interpersonal affect, so dissimilarity on such dimensions tends to reduce liking (Montoya & Horton, 2004). People likewise tend to feel less positive affect toward “out-group members” with whom they lack common social affiliations or group memberships (Hogg & Terry, 2000). This literature further suggests that people tend to make less favorable attributions about the performance and

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<sup>3</sup> In our theory, social status is relative in two distinct ways. An individual director (e.g., alter) has high or low status (1) relative to other directors at large (i.e., reflecting the director’s position in the status hierarchy of the corporate elite [Graffin et al., 2013]), and (2) relative to the focal director. Thus, self-regulated cognition is especially valuable when alter has high status relative to directors at large, such that he or she has a relatively high level of influence on board appointments and other valuable opportunities, and when the focal director has relatively low status in the corporate elite, such that he or she has the most to gain from alter’s social influence.

accomplishments of higher-status others who are dissimilar on salient personal and social dimensions, and consequently tend to feel less respect and admiration for such persons (Cuddy et al., 2007; Pettigrew, 1998). Thus, in the absence of self-regulated cognition, it may be especially difficult for a focal person to credibly express liking or admiration for a relatively high-status director who is demographically different on salient personal and social attributes.

Further, demographic dissimilarity may increase vigilance for insincere flattery. A corollary of the similarity-attraction principle is that people tend to exhibit lower levels of trust toward others who are demographically different on salient dimensions, or with whom they lack common social affiliations or group memberships (Hewstone et al., 2002). Lower levels of trust from demographic differences makes ingratiation especially difficult, because dissimilar others will tend to be more vigilant and attentive to signs of ingratiation intent, and thus more likely to notice nonverbal or paraverbal signs of exaggerated praise or displays of liking. The ingratiation's dilemma is therefore especially pronounced in interactions with demographically different alters.

Thus, to the extent that the self-regulated cognition that we have described enables individuals to resolve this fundamental dilemma in interpersonal influence, it should be especially valuable in gaining influence with directors who are demographically different on salient dimensions. If a focal person is dissimilar from a high-status director on salient characteristics such as race and gender, for example, he or she may reflect on other personal or social characteristics that the directors have in common (e.g., similar functional backgrounds, if they have prior experience in the same functional area, or similar educational backgrounds, if they both graduated from the same school), while avoiding thoughts about characteristics not shared. Our theory suggests that, by engaging in such reflection prior to social interaction with alter, the focal actor increases the relative, cognitive availability of shared attributes during the subsequent interaction. As a result, given the effects of similarity-attraction, the individual is

primed to feel greater liking and respect toward the other director while conversing with him or her, increasing the sincerity and credibility of verbal and nonverbal expressions of liking and admiration. Conversely, in the absence of self-regulated cognition, demographic differences will remain relatively salient during subsequent social interaction, resulting in less positive affect, and less positive attitudes toward alter, making it more difficult to credibly convey liking and admiration. Consequently, alter is less likely to feel reciprocal attraction for the focal individual, and less likely to feel psychologically indebted to him or her.

As discussed above, contemporary self-regulation theory would suggest that people are more likely to engage in anticipatory self-regulation to the extent that it is adaptive in preparing them psychologically and emotionally for an important social performance that can lead to valuable resources and opportunities. In the prior section we suggested how anticipatory self-regulation should be effective in preparing individuals to exert interpersonal influence over relatively high-status directors who control access to valuable resources and opportunities, and whose influence in the corporate elite is particularly valuable to their lower-status peers. In this section we have extended our theory to suggest why such self-regulation may be especially valuable in preparing individuals to exert interpersonal influence over high-status directors who are relatively dissimilar from them on salient demographic attributes. Accordingly, we expect that demographic dissimilarity will amplify the relationship posited in H1, such that a focal director is especially likely to engage in the pattern of cognition that we have described when he or she anticipates interaction with another director who has relatively high social status in the corporate elite *and* is relatively dissimilar from the focal individual on salient demographic characteristics. Stated differently, our theory suggests an interaction between anticipated social interaction with another director, relative status of the director, and demographic dissimilarity on self-regulated cognition, as follows:

*H2: A focal director (A) who anticipates social interaction with another director (B) is more likely to reflect on personal and social characteristics held in common with B, and less likely to reflect on characteristics not shared with B, to the extent that B has relatively high social status in the corporate elite and is demographically dissimilar from A.*

### **Self-Regulated Cognition and Recommendations for Board Appointments**

In the context of corporate leadership, one way to favor a focal person is to recommend him or her for a board appointment at another firm. The social influence literature suggests that interpersonal behavior is especially likely to influence recommendations for hiring or promotion when the criteria for appointment are relatively subjective (Liden & Mitchell, 1988; Pfeffer, 1981). Scholars have long suggested that the criteria for selection onto corporate boards at large U.S. companies are highly subjective (Useem, 1984; Westphal & Zajac, 1995), raising the potential for interpersonal behavior to influence recommendations for board appointments. Our theory would suggest that expressions of positive affect and admiration should be especially potent in securing a colleague's recommendation for a board seat to the extent that the focal director had engaged in self-regulated cognition prior to social interaction with him or her. Such cognitions should increase the sincerity and credibility of verbal and nonverbal displays of liking and admiration during social interaction, eliciting reciprocal attraction and an inclination to favor the focal director when given the opportunity, thus increasing the chances that the colleague would recommend the focal director for a board appointment at another company.

Moreover, we have argued that self-regulated cognition should be especially valuable in gaining interpersonal influence with a director who has relatively high social status in the corporate elite, and who is demographically dissimilar from the focal director on salient dimensions. Drawing from the interpersonal influence literature, we suggested that the sincerity of interpersonal behavior is especially important in interactions with relatively high-status alters, because such persons are more common targets of ingratiation, and therefore tend to be more vigilant and attuned to signs of exaggerated praise or displays of liking from their lower-status



peers. High-status directors also tend to exert more influence over director selection decisions, such that genuine expressions of liking and admiration that enhance interpersonal influence with such directors should be especially valuable in gaining recommendations for board seats. We further argued that self-regulated cognition would be particularly valuable in gaining interpersonal influence with directors who are demographically different on salient dimensions. In the absence of such cognitions, demographic differences would remain relatively salient during subsequent interaction, resulting in less positive affect and less positive attitudes toward alter, thereby making it more difficult to credibly convey liking and admiration. We suggested why directors who are demographically different from a focal director on salient dimensions may be relatively vigilant and attentive to signs of ingratiation intent, and thus more likely to notice nonverbal or paraverbal signs of exaggerated praise or displays of liking.

Moreover, to the extent that expressions of liking and admiration are recognized as feigned or exaggerated, such behaviors may actually reduce the propensity for high-status colleagues to favor the focal individual in allocating benefits and opportunities, including recommendations for board seats. Exaggerated praise or displays of liking are commonly viewed as ingratiation, and most people have a profoundly negative schema for ingratiation that causes them to ascribe a range of negative attributes to ingratiating actors. For example, ingratiators are commonly viewed as self-interested and untrustworthy (Leary, 1996). Thus, if expressions of liking and admiration are recognized as feigned or exaggerated, such behaviors may reduce interpersonal attraction, and may even elicit negative affect. To the extent that ingratiators are viewed as less trustworthy, moreover, such behavior may be especially likely to deter a colleague from recommending the focal person for a board appointment, since perceived trustworthiness is known to be a central consideration in selecting corporate directors (Useem, 1984).

Accordingly, the self-regulated cognition that we have described, by increasing the sincerity with which directors express liking and admiration for their colleagues, should have an especially positive effect on the likelihood of gaining board recommendations from relatively high-status, demographically dissimilar colleagues, who are particularly likely to recognize nonverbal or paraverbal signs of exaggerated praise or displays of liking. This leads to the following hypothesis about the consequences of self-regulated cognition as described in the prior two hypotheses on recommendations for board appointments:

*H3: Expressions of liking and admiration by a focal director (A) about another director (B) interact with self-regulated cognition by A to increase the likelihood that B recommends A for a board appointment. This relationship is especially strong to the extent that B has relatively high social status in the corporate elite and is demographically dissimilar from A.*

## **METHOD**

### **Sample and Data Collection**

The population for this study included corporate directors at large- and mid-sized public U.S. companies with more than \$100 million in sales, as listed in the Reference USA index in 2005. We measured director cognitions and interpersonal behavior using longitudinal surveys. The sample frame included 1200 directors from this population who had participated in one or more previous studies on corporate governance. Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) two-sample tests indicated that these directors were representative of directors in the larger population on each of the archival variables, including the indicators of status and demographic background. Six hundred of these directors served on multiple boards and at least one nominating committee that was planning to fill a vacancy in the subsequent year. The other 600 directors served on a board together with one or more directors from the first set of 600. In total, 434 of these directors agreed to participate in the study, for a participation rate of 36%. This yielded a sample of 374 complete dyads (i.e., responses from two directors about their interactions with each other). There were 248 complete dyads and 71 incomplete dyads (responses from one director about

interactions with another director who did not respond) in which at least one director served on the nominating committee of another board that was planning to fill a vacancy in the subsequent year. In estimating effects of director cognitions and interpersonal behavior on recommendations for board appointments (H3), we determined when the particular nominating committee meets to discuss candidates for board positions, and then surveyed both members of the dyad over the six-month period prior to that date.<sup>4</sup> In estimating the determinants of director cognitions (H1-2), we also included dyads in which neither director served on a nominating committee (N=126). For these dyads the six-month observation window was from November through April.

To increase the construct validity of our survey measures, we conducted a qualitative pretest of the questionnaires that involved detailed interviews with 27 current or former directors from large and mid-sized U.S. firms (cf., Stevens et al., 2005). Each week during the six-month survey period directors were asked whether and when they expected to meet with the other director in their dyad over the next seven days.<sup>5</sup> If a meeting was expected, they responded to questionnaires at five points in time surrounding the meeting (discussed below). To assess interrater reliability and provide supplementary tests of H3, surveys were also sent to other members of nominating committees that included a director in our sample frame. The questionnaires were distributed one month following the meeting at which board candidates were discussed. The response rate was 39%, with at least two directors responding from 84% of committees surveyed. Again K-S tests and Heckman (1979) selection models indicated that participating directors were representative of directors in the larger population on each of the archival variables, and sample

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<sup>4</sup> A premise of this survey design is that relatively recent interpersonal behavior by a focal director (A) toward another director (B) will have the strongest effects on B's current perception of A's liking and admiration for him or her (which in turn is expected to influence B's inclination to recommend A for a board seat). This premise is supported by prior evidence that ingratiation behavior by corporate managers over the prior 6 months has a much stronger effect on interpersonal influence than ingratiation over the previous 12 months (Westphal & Stern, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Our preliminary interviews indicated that unexpected meetings between directors were very rare, and this was confirmed by responses to our large-sample surveys.

selection bias does not appear to compromise the validity of our results (see Appendix B for further information). Archival data sources are also listed in the Appendix.

## **Measures**

*Expressions of liking and admiration.* We measured expressions of liking and admiration with multi-item survey scales that drew from measures developed by Kumar and Beyerlein (1991), Provine and Fischer (2010), and Westphal and Stern (2006) (scales are provided in the Appendix A). We revised several questions and added new items based on our review of the literature and feedback from our preliminary interviews. For example, we added questions about the frequency with which the focal director smiles at alter during a meeting, as the interpersonal influence literature suggests that frequent smiling at another person is a primary element of expressed liking, regardless of its sincerity. As discussed above, when people express sincere liking for another, their smiling is more credible, in part because it tends to be correlated with other non-verbal behaviors that convey liking. When people exaggerate liking, they tend to smile at the other person without engaging in other non-verbals that convey liking, lowering the credibility of their interpersonal behavior (DePaulo et al., 2003; Ekman, 1993; Knapp & Comadena, 1979). There is also evidence that people can accurately report on the frequency with which another person smiles at them if they are surveyed shortly after the interaction (Provine & Fischer, 2010), and this was verified by our pre-test. Our preliminary interviews suggested that directors may also express liking for a colleague verbally, for example by stating that they enjoy working with him or her. Thus, we included several items that gauge verbal expressions of liking. Although prior research, as well as our interviews would suggest that directors typically convey admiration with verbal compliments, admiration may also be expressed non-verbally. Thus, in addition to questions about complimentary remarks, our measure of expressed admiration included items that asked directors to assess more generally whether the focal

director conveyed (or tried to convey) his/her admiration for alter, to capture both verbal and non-verbal communication (further information about scale items provided in Appendix A).

After each meeting, directors answered questions about the interpersonal behavior of alter toward them, and they answered a parallel set of questions about their own expressed liking and admiration toward alter during the meeting. In the primary analysis, we measured a focal director's expressed liking and admiration for alter using alter's responses, but the hypothesized results were unchanged using self-report measures. There was also a high level of inter-rater agreement between directors about expressed liking and admiration: Intra-class correlation coefficients (ICCs) for the items ranged from .85 to .93. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) indicated that the items loaded on two different factors as expected (i.e., expressions of liking and expressions of admiration), without loading on other factors in the model, providing evidence for convergent and discriminant validity of the scales. Alphas for the scales were high (.89 and .93 for expressions of liking and admiration, respectively). We estimated factor scores for all measures using the Bartlett method.

*Self-regulated cognition.* The survey included multiple questions about the extent to which directors reflected on personal and social characteristics that were shared (or not shared) with alter (see Appendix A). Consistent with our theory, we defined director characteristics broadly in the survey to include aspects of a director's personal background, experience, group memberships and affiliations, and personality attributes. We then asked directors to indicate whether they had thought about a characteristic of alter during the prior time period and if so which one(s), and on how many occasions. Directors answered these questions at five points in time surrounding each meeting with alter during the study period: the day before the meeting ("time 1"); the morning of the day of the meeting ("time 2"); just before the meeting ("time 3"); shortly after the meeting ("time 4"); and the day after the meeting ("time 5"). At time 1, they

reported thoughts over the prior day; at time 4, they reported thoughts since the meeting; and at the other three times, they reported their thoughts since the prior survey. In a subsequent survey, directors were asked to indicate whether they possessed each of these characteristics. Using this information, we created count variables that indicate: (i) the number of times that the focal director had reflected on a characteristic held in common with alter; and (ii) the number of times that the director had reflected on a characteristic not shared with alter during the relevant time period. Two other survey items asked respondents more directly how many times they had reflected on a characteristic or attribute of the other director that they also possessed (or did not possess). CFA indicated that the survey items loaded on two factors as expected, and did not load on other factors in the measurement model, again providing evidence for convergent and discriminant validity of the scales. Alphas for the scales were acceptably high (.90 and .92). In estimating the interaction between director cognitions and interpersonal behavior on recommendations for board appointments, the cognition variables are cumulated so that they indicate the number of times the focal director reflected on characteristics shared (or not shared) with alter from the day before the meeting to the time of the meeting. In separate models we measured director cognitions using factor scores, and the hypothesized results were unchanged<sup>6</sup>.

***Anticipation of social interaction.*** We developed a multi-item survey scale to measure the extent to which a focal director anticipates social interaction with alter (see Appendix A) (e.g., “To what extent have you thought about an upcoming interaction with [alter]...” “To what extent have you been anticipating interacting with [alter]...” over the prior day (time 1); since

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<sup>6</sup> Our hypothesis tests are unlikely to be confounded by any priming effects of the survey procedure itself. The survey questions should not prompt a pattern of cognitions that includes a reduced tendency to reflect on characteristics not shared with colleagues (i.e., if the colleagues have relatively high status and are dissimilar to the focal director). In any event, we tested the hypotheses for a separate sample of 112 director dyads that were surveyed only once before or after a meeting (directors in the sample were representative of the larger population on each of the archival variables in the study). Since directors were only surveyed once, the results would not be influenced by any priming effect of the survey itself. The hypothesized results were unchanged from those presented below, regardless of when the survey was administered (i.e., whether before or after the meeting).

the prior survey (times 2, 3, and 5); since the meeting (time 4). While the survey items represent reflective indicators of the extent to which directors anticipate social interaction, a “causal indicator” (Diamantopoulos & Winklhofer, 2001) of this construct is simply the amount of time before the next meeting (in minutes), assuming that a focal director is increasingly likely to anticipate social interaction with alter as the meeting approaches. This variable is inverted so that higher values indicate less time before the meeting. CFA showed that this indicator and the survey items loaded together on one factor as expected, with acceptable reliability ( $\alpha=.93$ ).

***Relative social status in the corporate elite.*** We used four indicators of social status in the corporate elite: the number of corporate board appointments held, the number of nonprofit board seats held, elite education, and whether the individual is CEO of a Fortune 500 firm. Studies have provided systematic evidence for the convergent and discriminant validity of the first three characteristics as indicators of status in the corporate elite (Finkelstein, 1992; Westphal & Khanna, 2003). Finkelstein (1992) and Westphal and Khanna (2003) also showed a statistically significant correlation between these variables and survey measures of perceived social status. Westphal and Khanna also provided evidence that an individual’s status as CEO of a Fortune 500 firm loaded on the same construct as the other three indicators of status without loading on other factors in their measurement model, and was strongly associated with a survey measure of perceived status. Each of these variables has been described as an indicator or source of social status in the corporate elite by multiple other scholars (e.g., Beckman & Haunschild, 2002; Palmer & Barber, 2001; Useem, 1984). CFA indicated that all four variables loaded on the same factor, without loading on other factors in the model, with acceptable reliability ( $\alpha=.83$ ). In the primary models we measured relative status as alter’s status in the corporate elite minus the focal director’s status (Fiss, 2006). As discussed above, status is relative in two distinct ways: an individual director (alter) has high or low status (1) relative to other directors at large, reflecting

the director's position in the status hierarchy, and (2) relative to the focal director. Both aspects of relativity are captured in the algebraic difference score. The multi-indicator measure of alter's status in the corporate elite captures status relative to other directors at large, and subtracting the focal director's status in the corporate elite captures status relative to the focal director.<sup>7</sup>

***Demographic dissimilarity.*** We examined demographic dissimilarity with respect to five characteristics that have been shown in multiple studies to provide a salient basis for personal and/or social identification among corporate leaders: functional background, age, gender, ethnicity, and primary industry of employment (Porac et al., 1999; Smith et al., 1994; Useem, 1984; Waller et al., 1995; for a review, see Westphal & Bednar, 2005). We combined these indicators into an index using principal components analysis (PCA), which is appropriate with causal or formative indicators (Diamantopoulos & Winklhofer, 2001). Since four of the variables are dichotomous, we used tetrachoric correlations in the analysis (McLeod et al., 2001).

***Recommendation for a board appointment.*** As discussed above, our sample included director dyads in which one director served on the nominating committee of another board that was planning to fill a vacancy in the subsequent year. We surveyed directors over the six-month period prior to the date on which the committee was scheduled to meet to discuss potential nominees. In addition, three months after the meeting we asked participating directors to indicate whether they had recommended anyone for a board appointment in the prior three months, and if so, whom they had recommended, and for what position. As noted above, we also surveyed other directors who served on one or more nominating committees with a director in our sample. We asked them whether the director(s) with whom they served had suggested someone for a board position during the prior three months, and if so, who they recommended, and for what position.

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<sup>7</sup> Separate models indicated that the results satisfied standard requirements for using an algebraic difference score: (i) the effects of alter's status and the focal director's status on the cognition variables were opposite in sign and not significantly different in magnitude (see Edwards, 2007; Ferrier et al., 1999; Fiss, 2006), and (ii) we estimated the polynomial regression model described by Edwards (2007), and found the polynomial terms were non-significant.



Using this information, we developed a dichotomous variable to indicate whether the focal director was recommended by the other director in their dyad (alter) for a board appointment where alter serves on the nominating committee. There was very high inter-rater agreement about whether participating directors recommended the other director in their dyad for a board appointment at particular firms where they served on the nominating committee (96%). Accordingly, the results were identical whether we measured recommendations for board appointments with responses of participating directors or fellow committee members. The surveys also included questions about the strength with which directors were recommended, and results of analyses using these measures are reported separately below.

***Controls.*** We describe our controls in detail in Appendix B. Controls in models of director cognitions include friendship ties; the level of prior social interaction; director background in law, politics, or sales and marketing; time since the most recent social interaction; length of the focal interaction; the number of other individuals present; the type of interaction (meetings about committee-related work, actual committee meetings, board meetings, or other interactions); the amount of time spent in other interactions with directors on the same day; the number of directors with whom the focal person interacted in those meetings; whether alter served on the nominating committee of another board; firm performance in the prior year, measured as return on assets; and dummies for industry and time period. In models of recommendations, we controlled monitoring and control behavior and the provision of strategic advice and information to the CEO by the focal director with survey measures validated by Stern and Westphal (2007); whether the focal individual is an inside or outside director; whether the focal director is a woman or racial minority; and the focal director's tenure on the board. In separate models we controlled for the perceived performance of fellow board members; the number of years the focal director and alter had served together on the board; the background

characteristics of the focal director described above (sales and marketing, politics, or law), other firm performance measures (market-to-book value and annual stock returns), and a measure of self-monitoring, and the hypothesized results were unchanged. Other robustness checks are described in the results section and Appendix.

## **Analysis**

Since we surveyed directors about their cognitions at five points in time surrounding each social interaction during the six-month study period, we were able to test H1-2 regarding the determinants of director cognitions using longitudinal panel data. The unit of observation is the focal director's report about their thoughts over a specific time period (as described above). The full sample included 4,002 observations (as noted above, there were 374 complete dyads, and on average directors interacted with each other approximately 2.2 times during the six-month study period). Since the cognition measures are counts characterized by extra-poisson variation, we estimated these variables using negative binomial regression analysis.<sup>8</sup> Since the primary sample included multiple dyadic combinations that involve the same director, we adjusted for the resulting non-independence of observations using a robust variance estimator for clustered data (Wooldridge, 2002). To correct for serial correlation, we used the random effects model. The Hausman test for clustered data indicated that a random effects model was adequate for estimating the model coefficients (Wooldridge, 2002). In separate analyses we randomly selected (i) one director response per meeting (N=809) or (ii) one director response per dyad (N=374). In both sets of analyses, the hypothesized results were substantively unchanged.

In the primary analyses we used logit regression to estimate recommendations for board appointments. The main sample for this analysis included complete dyads in which alter served on the nominating committee of another board (N=248). The cognition variables in these models

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<sup>8</sup> The likelihood-ratio test for overdispersion was statistically significant at  $\alpha < .001$  in these models, and thus we can reject the null hypothesis that the data is poisson distributed (Greene, 2008).

represent the number of times the focal director reflected on characteristics shared (or not shared) with alter prior to interacting with him or her (i.e., from the day before the interaction to the time of the interaction) averaged across interactions that occurred during the study period. The measures of expressed liking and admiration were also averaged across meetings. Again we used a robust variance estimator for clustered data in these models.

## RESULTS

Bivariate correlations are provided in table 1 (variable means and standard deviations are included in Appendix B). The results in table 2 support H1. As shown in model 2, there is a statistically significant and positive interaction between anticipation of social interaction with another director (alter) and alter's relative social status in the corporate elite on the extent to which a focal director reflects on personal and social characteristics held in common with alter. Conversely, as shown in model 5, there is a *negative* interaction between anticipation of social interaction with alter and alter's relative status on the extent to which a focal director reflects on characteristics *not* shared with alter. Stated differently, the results indicate that a focal director (A) will be more likely to reflect on personal and social characteristics held in common with another director (B), and less likely to reflect on characteristics *not* shared, to the extent that A anticipates social interaction with B and B has relatively high social status.

H2 predicted that this relationship would be especially strong when there is a relatively high level of demographic dissimilarity between directors. The results in table 2 support this hypothesis as well. As shown in model 3, there is a statistically significant, three-way interaction between anticipation of social interaction with alter, alter's relative social status, and demographic dissimilarity on the extent to which a focal director reflects on personal and social characteristics held in common with alter. Conversely, as shown in model 6, there is a *negative* interaction between anticipation of social interaction with alter, alter's relative status, and

demographic dissimilarity on the extent to which a focal director reflects on characteristics *not* shared. Taken together, these results indicate that a focal director (A) will be more likely to reflect on personal and social characteristics held in common with another director (B), and less likely to reflect on characteristics *not* shared, to the extent that (i) A anticipates social interaction with B, (ii) B has relatively high social status, *and* (iii) B is demographically dissimilar from A.

H3 predicted that expressions of liking and admiration by a focal director (A) about another director (B) would have a more positive effect on the likelihood that B would recommend A for a board appointment to the extent that A reflects on characteristics shared with B and does not reflect on characteristics not shared with B prior to social interaction. The results provide consistent support for this hypothesis. As shown in model 2 of table 3, there are positive interactions between expressions of liking for alter and both (i) reflection on characteristics held in common with alter and (ii) the relative absence of reflection on characteristics *not* shared with alter on the likelihood that alter will recommend the focal director for an appointment. There are also statistically significant interactions between expressions of admiration for alter and the cognition variables on director recommendations. We predicted that these effects would be especially strong when alter has relatively high social status and is demographically dissimilar from the focal director. We tested this prediction in several ways. First, we estimated interactions for the subsample of dyads in which alter had relatively high status and was relatively dissimilar from the focal director (above the median value on each variable). The results are included in model 4 of table 3. A comparison with results in model 2 indicates that the hypothesized interactions are consistently stronger in magnitude and statistical significance for the subsample of dyads with relatively high-status, dissimilar alters. Chow tests confirmed that each interaction was significantly stronger for this subsample ( $p < .001$ ). The interactions are illustrated in Figure 1. As discussed in Appendix B, the interactions suggest that the moderating effects of the

cognition variables on the relationship between ingratiation and board recommendations are stronger than the moderating effects of demographic similarity on this relationship.

In light of the potential difficulties with interpreting interactions in logit models (Connelly et al., 2010), we conducted several additional analyses. First, we estimated marginal effects of the independent variables. These analyses indicated that, for each of the interactions, the marginal effects were positive and statistically significant over the full range of predicted probabilities of director recommendations (Wiersema & Bowen, 2009). We also assessed the hypothesized interactions using the simulation-based methodology described by King et al., (2000), and the results were very similar to those shown in Figure 1. We also estimated effects of the independent variables on the strength with which alter recommended the focal director for a board appointment. One survey item asked “How strongly did [alter] recommend [the focal director] for the position?” [not strongly...somewhat strongly...very strongly]. Using responses to this question, we developed an ordinal-scale measure ranging from 0 (the focal director was not recommended by alter) to 5 (the focal director was very strongly recommended by alter). We estimated effects of the independent variables on this measure using ordered logit regression, and found very similar results to those in table 3. Another survey item asked “How many times did [alter] suggest [the focal director] for the position?” We estimated effects of the independent variables on responses to this question using negative binomial regression, and again the results were very similar to those in the table. As discussed in Appendix B, the results were also robust to estimating director recommendations for the subsample of dyads that included relatively high-status, dissimilar alters using Heckman selection models. In other analyses we tested H3 using three-way interaction terms (e.g., expressions of liking X reflection on characteristics held in common X relative status of alter). The interactions were consistently statistically significant, and corroborated the results of our other analyses.

The hypothesized effects of director cognitions are also strong in magnitude. For example, in a dyad that includes a relatively high-status, dissimilar alter, a focal director who is one standard deviation above the mean on all four interaction terms is 2.9 times as likely on average to receive alter's recommendation for a board appointment as a director at the mean level. By way of comparison, a director who provides high levels of strategic advice and information to the CEO (one standard deviation above the mean) is 81% more likely on average to receive a relatively high-status colleague's recommendation than a director who provides mean levels of advice and information. Moreover, supplemental analyses reported in Appendix B indicated that receiving alter's recommendation after engaging in relatively high levels of the influence behavior that we describe had a very strong effect on the likelihood of actually obtaining a board appointment where alter serves on the nominating committee.

Our theory suggests that reflecting on characteristics held in common with alter (and avoiding thoughts about characteristics not shared) prior to interaction with alter enhances liking and admiration for alter going into the social interaction, which in turn enhances the credibility of expressed liking and admiration. Separate analyses confirmed that the cognition variables were associated with survey measures of self-reported liking and admiration for alter as expected (see Appendix for a description of these measures). As shown in Figure 2, on average positive affect toward alter increases as social interaction approaches; after interaction, positive affect tends to be lower, and then diminishes further over time. The pattern for admiration toward alter is very similar. Moreover, this pattern is especially pronounced when alter is relatively high in status and dissimilar from the focal director. The figure indicates that while positive affect toward high-status, dissimilar colleagues tends to be lower than positive affect toward others when interaction is not anticipated, positive affect toward these high-status, dissimilar colleagues tends to be *higher* than positive affect toward other colleagues *just before interaction*. We also

examined whether the hypothesized interactions between director cognition and interpersonal behavior on board recommendations were significantly mediated by survey measures of perceived liking and admiration (these measures gauge the extent to which alter perceives that the focal director likes and admires her, based on the focal director's behavior during social interaction), using the procedure recommended by MacKinnon et al. (2002). The results are included in Appendix B, and provide consistent evidence for mediation.

## DISCUSSION

On one level our theory and findings contribute to an understanding of the micro-mechanisms by which corporate leaders acquire social influence and power, while also contributing to the larger literature on interpersonal influence, by revealing a social psychological mechanism by which individuals can resolve the so-called “ingratiator's dilemma” (Jones, 1964: 122; Leary, 1996; Schlenker, 2003) to gain influence with relatively high-status colleagues. Our theoretical approach integrated theory on self-regulation with the similarity-attraction principle from research on social cognition to suggest that when directors anticipate social interaction with a relatively high-status colleague, they tend to engage in a pattern of cognition that induces relatively genuine feelings of positive affect and admiration for the colleague, which in turn enhances the credibility of their complimentary remarks and other verbal and non-verbal expressions of admiration and liking. As a result, the individual's interpersonal behaviors are less likely to be interpreted as insincere attempts to curry favor, even by relatively high-status actors, and are thus more likely to engender interpersonal influence.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> It might be suggested that status differences among corporate directors are generally small in magnitude. Our theory assumes only that there are meaningful differences in *perceived* status among directors, and status differentials that may appear small to persons outside a community often appear more significant to community members (Merton, 1968). In Appendix B we provide evidence that differences in our archival status measure of one standard deviation correspond with meaningful differences in (i) perceived status, (ii) perceived influence over board decision making, and (iii) perceived influence over decision making on board nominating committees.

Moreover, our theoretical perspective on interpersonal influence was supported in the context of director recommendations for board appointments. Expressions of liking and admiration toward a relatively high-status colleague had a more positive effect on the colleague's inclination to recommend the focal director for a board appointment at another firm to the extent that he or she engaged in the pattern of cognition that we describe prior to social interaction.

Our theory and findings complement a recent study by Stern and Westphal (2010), which demonstrated that ingratiation behavior by top managers and directors was more successful to the extent that it included relatively sophisticated forms of flattery, such as framing flattery as advice seeking. Stern and Westphal (2010) suggested that these behaviors, though they involve exaggerated praise, are relatively subtle and thus less likely to be recognized as insincere. We suggest an alternative approach in which the ingratiation engages in a pattern of cognition in anticipation of social interaction that increases the *actual* sincerity of verbal and non-verbal expressions of admiration and liking. While the sophisticated forms of flattery described by Stern and Westphal (2010) are more effective in general than less subtle forms of exaggerated praise, they are unlikely to resolve the ingratiation's dilemma. Because high-status actors are more frequent targets of ingratiation from their lower-status peers, including the sophisticated forms of flattery documented by Stern and Westphal, they tend to be more vigilant for these insincere compliments, making them less susceptible to such strategic forms of ingratiation. In the Appendix we report evidence that the pattern of cognition we identify is significantly more likely to engender influence with relatively high-status alters than the sophisticated forms of ingratiation described by Stern and Westphal. Moreover, while the social influence literature has focused on variation in interpersonal behavior and its effects on the social psychology (affect and attitudes) of the influence target, our theory and findings suggest how and why the effectiveness



of social influence with the most attractive targets depends on the social psychology (i.e., self-regulated cognition) of the influence *agent*.

Our study also sheds light on the micro-temporal dynamics of leaders' social perceptions, an issue that has received little attention in prior research. In hypothesizing that individuals in demographically diverse groups feel less positive affect for each other and evaluate each other less positively, scholars have assumed temporal stability of managers' social perceptions. Our theory suggests that managers should tend to feel greater liking and admiration for their colleagues when they anticipate interacting with them than when they do not, resulting in a predictable oscillation of social perceptions over time, and our longitudinal survey data support this expectation for a large sample of corporate directors. Moreover, this dynamic is especially pronounced in relations between demographically dissimilar individuals. Future research could examine the implications of this dynamic for the management and decision making of demographically diverse groups. For example, to the extent that the pattern of cognition we describe induces greater liking for demographically different colleagues and more positive attitudes about such colleagues in anticipation of social interaction, it should tend to dampen interpersonal conflict in diverse groups. Thus, our theory and findings may help explain mixed evidence that demographic differences necessarily increase interpersonal conflict among corporate managers (Knight et al., 1999; Smith et al., 1994; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). The social psychological dynamic that we describe would also suggest that peer reviews in diverse groups may be more positive shortly before and after meetings than at other times.

Similarly, our theory suggests a novel mechanism by which out-group biases resulting from demographic differences can be minimized or avoided. The social psychological literature has focused largely on social contact between demographically different individuals as a means of reducing out-group bias (e.g., a tendency to exhibit less positive affect for demographically

different others, or to evaluate out-group members less positively) (Dovidio et al., 1997; Pettigrew, 1998). However, there is mixed evidence that inter-group contact necessarily reduces in-group/out-group bias (Bergsieker et al., 2010; Pearson et al., 2008). Our theory suggests how self-regulated cognition in anticipation of social interaction with demographically different others may reduce or offset such biases (in prior experimental studies of inter-group contact, subjects typically do not anticipate social interaction with out-group members). Thus, a testable implication of our theory is that inter-group contact should have a stronger, dampening effect on out-group biases when social interaction is anticipated by the interlocutors in advance.

Our study also contributes to the growing literature on self-regulation in cognitive psychology and organizational behavior by revealing a novel mechanism of anticipatory, self-regulated cognition. The focus of psychological research on cognitive processes in self-regulation has been on how people can avoid unproductive emotions through anticipatory, “cognitive reappraisal of the situation” (Gross et al., 2013: 424; Sheppes et al., 2011). Little theory or research has sought to identify fundamental mechanisms of self-regulated *social* cognition, or cognition about another person that regulates one’s feelings or attitudes about him or her in preparation for social interaction. Our theoretical argument integrated extant theory on self-regulation with the principle of similarity-attraction to suggest how and when individuals engage in self-regulated social cognition in anticipation of social interaction with colleagues. Future research could examine the generalizability of this mechanism to other firm leaders aside from corporate directors, as well as lower-level managers, and professionals outside the corporate sphere. Its generalizability as a form of self-regulated, social cognition is suggested by the fact that similarity-attraction is a fundamental principle of social cognition and the tendency for similarity on salient characteristics to enhance liking and respect is among the strongest and most robust tendencies in social psychology (Montoya & Horton, 2004). Thus, the pattern of

cognition we describe should significantly and reliably increase the sincerity with which the focal actor expresses liking, respect, and admiration for colleagues in a wide variety of contexts.

Our measures of self-regulated cognition were not associated with the provision of strategic advice and information to the CEO or director monitoring and control of the CEO, which extant theory suggests are central components of director performance (Finkelstein et al., 2009; Hillman & Dalziel, 2003). Moreover, the marginal effects of our independent variables on board recommendations by relatively high-status alters were considerably stronger in magnitude than the effects of providing strategic advice and information, while the effect of monitoring and control behavior on recommendations was *negative*. Supplemental analyses reported in Appendix B revealed a similar pattern of effects on other beneficial outcomes for directors aside from board recommendations, including appointments to major board committees, memberships in prestigious social clubs, and introductions to other, high status actors. Thus, it appears that engaging in self-regulated cognition prior to ingratiating higher-status alters may be a more effective means of acquiring prestigious positions that confer disproportionate influence over governance and policy making within and beyond the corporate sphere, while also acquiring valuable connections and social privileges, than engaging in behaviors that have been linked to the quality of firm governance and strategic decision making in extant theory and research.

The self-regulated cognition that we describe can also be characterized as a social psychological mechanism by which individuals build, strengthen, or maintain social network ties. The social network literature suggests that social ties to demographically different individuals tend to be especially valuable in providing novel information and different points of view (McDonald & Westphal, 2003; McPherson et al., 2006), and that ties to persons with relatively high social status are especially valuable in providing access to a range of personal and social benefits (Lin, 2008). As our discussion of the ingratiation's dilemma suggests, however,

social actors face particular challenges in gaining interpersonal influence with relatively high-status alters, and these difficulties are exacerbated by demographic differences. To the extent that the self-regulated cognition we describe enables individuals to overcome these difficulties and enhance their influence with demographically different, high-status alters, it may be a particularly important mechanism by which individuals build and maintain social capital.

Extant theory on the ingratiation's dilemma suggests that relative status of the influence target is an especially important moderating influence on the effects of ingratiation behavior (i.e., because relatively high-status persons are particularly attractive targets of ingratiation). Nevertheless, future research might examine whether other characteristics of the influence target, including individual differences such as personality traits, moderate the effects of self-regulated cognition prior to social interaction. In the Appendix we report the results of supplemental analyses examining whether narcissism of the influence target moderates the hypothesized effects of our independent variables on board recommendations.

Moreover, future studies could examine the potential for other kinds of self-regulated cognition in anticipation of social interaction. While the present study examines self-regulated cognition about personal and social characteristics, firm leaders might also engage in self-regulated cognition about important organizational characteristics, such as firm strategy. For example, top managers might reflect on encouraging information and feedback about their strategies, while avoiding thoughts about negative feedback, prior to communicating with important constituents such as security analysts or journalists. Such cognitions might increase the effectiveness of leaders' impression management efforts by enhancing the sincerity and credibility with which they make positive claims about their strategies, in much the same way that the pattern of cognition identified in this study enhances the sincerity with which managers express liking and admiration for their colleagues. Thus, we hope that the theoretical perspective

and findings presented in this paper initiate a larger body of research that develops a more dynamic perspective on the social psychology of firm leadership.

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**TABLE 1a: Bivariate Correlations for Negative Binomial Regression Analysis**

<b>Independent variable</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
1. Anticipation of social interaction with alter																			
2. Demographic dissimilarity to alter	-.03																		
3. Alter's relative social status in the corporate elite	.02	.09																	
4. Time since most recent social interaction with alter	.02	.03	-.01																
5. Friendship tie to alter	.02	-.17	-.07	-.06															
6. Number of other directors in meeting	-.02	-.01	.02	-.01	-.04														
7. Time spent in other meetings with directors on same day	-.03	.00	-.04	-.02	.00	-.12													
8. # of other directors with whom interacted in separate mtg. on same day	-.03	-.01	-.04	-.03	.00	-.14	.31												
9. Length of meeting	.02	-.01	-.03	.04	.03	.16	-.06	-.05											
10. Return on assets of focal firm	.00	.01	-.02	.03	.03	-.01	-.02	-.01	-.02										
11. Board committee mtg.	-.02	.03	.01	.02	-.03	.33	.12	.10	.24	-.07									
12. Board meeting	-.03	.04	.02	.03	-.04	.37	.11	.10	.21	-.04	-.14								
13. Meeting about committee-related work	.02	-.03	.01	-.01	.02	-.29	.09	.08	-.15	-.09	-.54	-.27							
14. Alter on nominating committee of another board	.02	-.01	.17	.02	-.01	-.04	.01	.00	-.02	.01	-.03	-.04	.02						
15. Reflection on characteristics held in common with alter	.16	-.10	.10	-.03	.12	-.06	-.02	-.04	.01	-.03	-.03	-.05	.04	.07					
16. Reflection on characteristics not shared with alter	-.15	.12	-.08	-.02	-.07	.02	.00	.01	-.01	-.02	-.03	-.02	-.04	-.06	-.18				
17. Sales/marketing background	.04	.03	.01	-.03	.06	-.02	.05	.04	.03	.02	-.03	-.04	.02	.03	.05	-.04			
18. Background in politics	-.05	-.04	-.04	.02	.02	.04	-.07	-.08	-.01	-.01	.05	.07	-.01	.02	.04	-.04	-.17		
19. Legal background	.01	.01	-.02	-.01	-.04	-.01	-.02	-.02	-.01	-.02	.06	.07	.02	.01	.02	-.02	-.27	-.17	
20. Listing in <i>Social Register</i> /attendance at exclusive prep school	.02	.05	-.13	-.04	.06	-.03	.04	.03	.04	-.01	-.04	-.06	-.02	.04	.02	-.01	-.10	.14	.02

N=4,002. Correlations greater than .03 are statistically significant at  $p < .05$ .

**TABLE 1b: Bivariate Correlations for Logit Regression Analysis**

<b>Independent variable</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
1. Expressions of liking for alter																			
2. Expressions of admiration for alter	.41																		
3. Reflection on characteristics held in common with alter	.21	.19																	
4. (Low level of) reflection on characteristics not shared with alter	.18	.15	.17																
5. Monitoring and control behavior	-.06	-.07	-.05	-.09															
6. Provision of advice and information	-.10	-.12	-.04	-.06	-.15														
7. Outside vs. inside director	-.03	-.04	-.02	-.02	.34	.13													
8. Time spent interacting with alter	.16	.14	.12	-.05	-.01	.02	.11												
9. Board meetings (% total)	-.14	-.17	-.05	.02	-.01	.01	-.08	-.08											
10. Meetings about committee-related work (% total)	.13	.19	.05	.03	.03	.03	.41	.19	-.35										
11. Board committee meetings (% total)	-.10	-.15	-.03	.02	.01	.02	.35	-.02	-.43	.10									
12. Number of other directors in meetings	-.17	-.21	-.07	-.03	-.02	-.01	.03	-.06	.35	-.27	.32								
13. Friendship tie to alter	-.06	-.08	.11	.07	-.01	-.02	.03	.17	-.04	-.02	-.03	-.04							
14. Return on assets, focal firm	.01	.02	-.03	.02	-.03	-.02	.00	.01	-.04	-.08	-.07	-.01	.03						
15. Demographic dissimilarity to alter	.05	.07	-.09	-.12	.01	.02	-.03	-.13	.04	-.03	.03	-.01	-.16	.01					
16. Alter's relative social status in the corporate elite	.09	.10	.10	.07	.02	-.02	-.14	-.08	.02	.01	.01	.02	-.08	-.01	.09				
17. Director recommendation for board appointment	.17	.20	.14	.16	-.15	.23	.09	.04	-.05	.12	-.03	-.16	.14	.03	-.17	.13			
18. Tenure on the board	-.08	-.04	.06	-.05	.11	.15	.05	.06	-.04	.13	.11	-.03	.06	.05	-.06	.04	.09		
19. Ethnic minority	.07	.10	-.13	-.13	.19	.16	-.05	-.15	.04	-.10	-.09	.02	-.19	.04	.18	.09	-.19	-.18	
20. Woman	.06	.11	-.12	-.11	.15	.13	-.09	-.17	.03	-.07	-.07	-.01	-.16	.03	.14	.07	-.21	-.15	-.05

N=248. Correlations greater than .12 are statistically significant at  $p < .05$ .

**TABLE 2: Negative Binomial Regression Analysis of Director Cognitions**

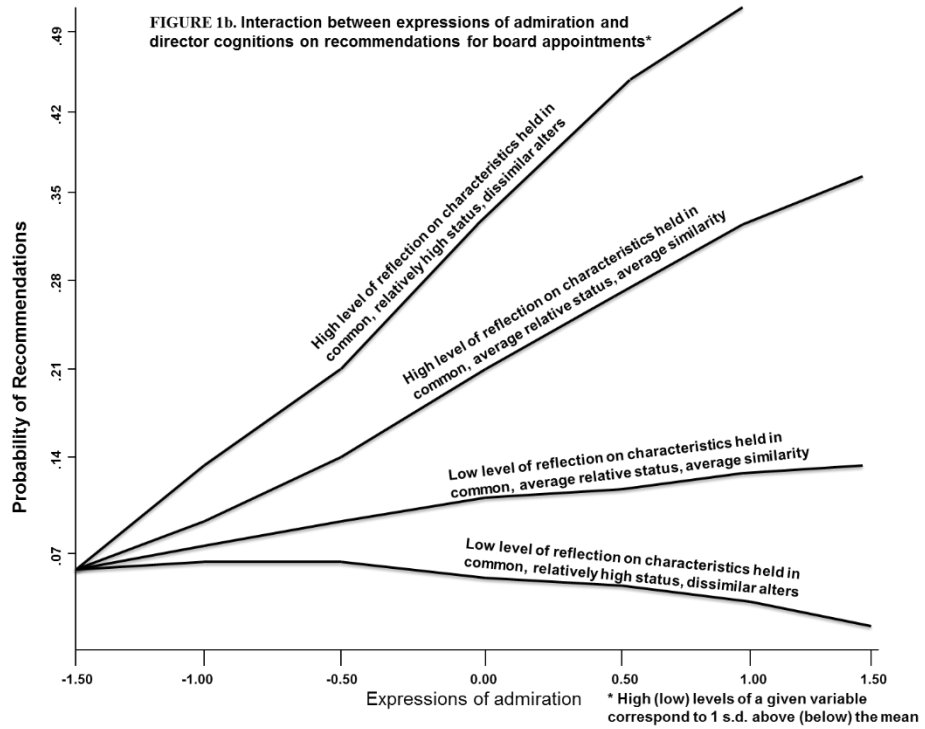
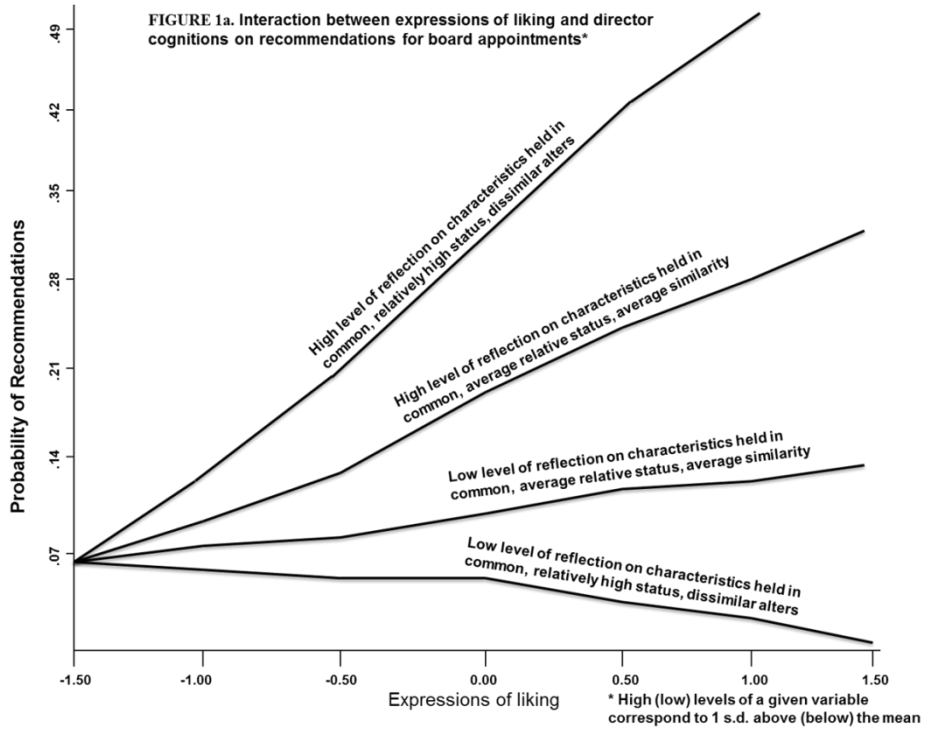
Independent variable	Reflection on characteristics held in common with alter			Reflection on characteristics not shared with alter		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Anticipation of social interaction with alter	0.035** (0.014)	0.036* (0.015)	0.037* (0.015)	-0.032** (0.012)	-0.034* (0.013)	-0.035* (0.015)
Demographic dissimilarity to alter	-0.017* (0.008)	-0.020* (0.008)	-0.023** (0.009)	0.017* (0.007)	0.019* (0.008)	0.022* (0.009)
Alter's relative social status in the corporate elite	0.024* (0.010)	0.026* (0.011)	0.027* (0.011)	-0.023* (0.009)	-0.024* (0.009)	-0.024* (0.010)
<b>Anticipation of social interaction with alter X Alter's relative status in the corporate elite</b>		<b>0.043*** (0.011)</b>	<b>0.041*** (0.011)</b>		<b>-0.046*** (0.009)</b>	<b>-0.044*** (0.009)</b>
Anticipation of social interaction with alter X Demographic dissimilarity to alter		0.023** (0.008)	0.022** (0.009)		-0.018* (0.007)	-0.017* (0.007)
Demographic dissimilarity to alter X Alter's relative status in the corporate elite		0.015* (0.006)	0.014* (0.006)		-0.013* (0.005)	-0.013* (0.005)
<b>Anticipation of social interaction with alter X Alter's relative status in the corporate elite X Demographic dissimilarity to alter</b>			<b>0.029*** (0.002)</b>			<b>-0.031*** (0.002)</b>
Time since most recent social interaction with alter	-0.0005 (0.0003)	-0.0005 (0.0003)	-0.0005 (0.0003)	-0.0004 (0.0003)	-0.0004 (0.0003)	-0.0004 (0.0003)
Friendship tie to alter	0.058** (0.020)	0.055** (0.020)	0.055** (0.020)	-0.038* (0.017)	-0.037* (0.017)	-0.037* (0.017)
Number of other directors in meeting	-0.022* (0.011)	-0.022* (0.011)	-0.021* (0.010)	0.005 (0.009)	0.005 (0.009)	0.004 (0.009)
Time spent in other meetings with directors on same day	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.0003 (0.001)	-0.0003 (0.001)	-0.0003 (0.001)
Number of other directors with whom interacted in separate meeting on same day	-0.038 (0.021)	-0.038 (0.021)	-0.037 (0.021)	0.002 (0.019)	0.002 (0.019)	0.002 (0.019)
Length of meeting	0.001 (0.0005)	0.001 (0.0005)	0.001 (0.0005)	-0.001 (0.0005)	-0.001 (0.0004)	-0.001 (0.0004)
Return on assets of focal firm	-0.180 (0.154)	-0.175 (0.153)	-0.175 (0.153)	-0.119 (0.131)	-0.117 (0.131)	-0.113 (0.130)
Board committee meeting	-0.071 (0.049)	-0.071 (0.049)	-0.072 (0.049)	-0.037 (0.047)	-0.037 (0.047)	-0.036 (0.047)
Board meeting	-0.432 (0.226)	-0.414 (0.217)	-0.410 (0.215)	-0.166 (0.339)	-0.163 (0.340)	-0.153 (0.336)
Meeting about committee-related work	0.057 (0.029)	0.057 (0.030)	0.056 (0.030)	-0.040 (0.028)	-0.038 (0.028)	-0.038 (0.028)
Alter on nominating committee of another board	0.053* (0.026)	0.053* (0.026)	0.053* (0.026)	-0.053* (0.025)	-0.052* (0.025)	-0.051* (0.025)
Sales/marketing background	0.064 (0.034)	0.048 (0.034)	0.037 (0.034)	-0.056 (0.029)	-0.037 (0.029)	-0.026 (0.029)
Background in politics	0.073 (0.046)	0.053 (0.046)	0.027 (0.047)	-0.067 (0.039)	-0.036 (0.040)	-0.017 (0.040)
Legal background	0.049 (0.034)	0.044 (0.034)	0.037 (0.034)	-0.034 (0.029)	-0.028 (0.029)	-0.023 (0.029)
Alter listing in <i>Social Register</i> /attendance at exclusive prep school	0.045 (0.041)	0.044 (0.042)	0.042 (0.042)	-0.028 (0.035)	-0.025 (0.036)	-0.024 (0.036)
Constant	0.099* (0.043)	0.093* (0.043)	0.085 (0.043)	0.075 (0.040)	0.074 (0.040)	0.066 (0.040)
Wald $\chi^2$	125.08***	188.72***	213.53***	69.87***	125.96***	148.41***

N=4,002. \* p ≤ .05; \*\* p ≤ .01; \*\*\* p ≤ .001; t-tests are one-tailed for hypothesized effects, two-tailed for control variables. Standard errors are in parentheses.

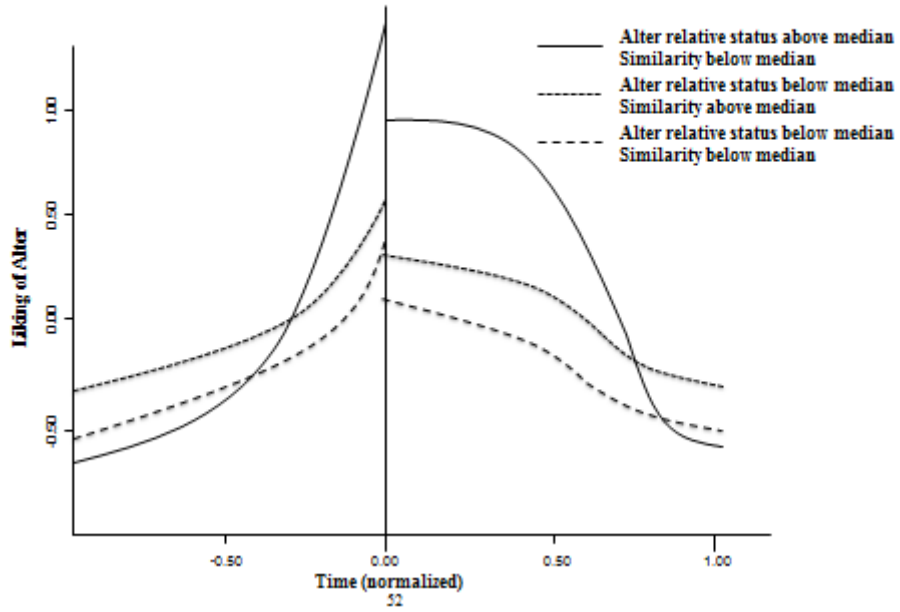
**TABLE 3: Logit Regression Analysis of Director Recommendations for Board Appointments**

Independent variable	Full sample		Dyads in which alter (i) has high relative status and (ii) is dissimilar from focal director	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Expressions of liking for alter	0.583* (0.235)	0.522* (0.248)	0.858* (0.350)	0.760* (0.365)
Expressions of admiration for alter	0.553** (0.203)	0.498* (0.217)	0.846** (0.331)	0.693* (0.336)
Reflection on characteristics held in common with alter	0.217* (0.107)	0.227* (0.113)	0.370* (0.153)	0.358* (0.160)
(Low level of) reflection on characteristics not shared with alter	0.259* (0.121)	0.262* (0.125)	0.437* (0.182)	0.424* (0.191)
<b>Expressions of liking for alter X Reflection on characteristics held in common with alter</b>		<b>0.412* (0.168)</b>		<b>0.952*** (0.251)</b>
<b>Expressions of liking for alter X (Low level of) reflection on characteristics not shared</b>		<b>0.424** (0.163)</b>		<b>1.112*** (0.262)</b>
<b>Expressions of admiration for alter X Reflection on characteristics held in common with alter</b>		<b>0.277** (0.106)</b>		<b>0.751*** (0.160)</b>
<b>Expressions of admiration for alter X (Low level of) reflection on characteristics not shared</b>		<b>0.397* (0.169)</b>		<b>0.937*** (0.248)</b>
Monitoring and control behavior	-0.550* (0.229)	-0.557* (0.233)	-0.855* (0.336)	-0.861* (0.343)
Provision of advice and information	0.853*** (0.252)	0.859*** (0.257)	0.918** (0.314)	0.946** (0.326)
Outside vs. inside director	0.822 (0.483)	0.812 (0.489)	1.306 (0.819)	1.317 (0.833)
Time spent interacting with alter	0.004 (0.002)	0.004 (0.002)	0.005 (0.003)	0.005 (0.003)
Board meetings (% of total)	-1.170 (1.271)	-1.159 (1.286)	-1.606 (1.864)	-1.609 (1.888)
Meetings about committee-related work (% of total)	1.045 (0.567)	1.047 (0.575)	1.488 (0.800)	1.511 (0.818)
Board committee meetings (% of total)	-0.543 (1.841)	-0.468 (1.864)	-0.359 (2.442)	-0.508 (2.487)
Number of other directors in meetings	-0.475* (0.200)	-0.501* (0.212)	-0.875* (0.349)	-0.880* (0.356)
Friendship tie to alter	0.622* (0.256)	0.635* (0.264)	0.875* (0.365)	0.891* (0.376)
Return on assets of focal firm	2.525 (2.459)	2.427 (2.473)	3.416 (3.689)	3.313 (3.787)
Demographic dissimilarity to alter	-0.338** (0.125)	-0.345** (0.128)		
Alter's relative status in the corporate elite	0.386* (0.171)	0.369* (0.175)		
Tenure on the board	0.063 (0.035)	0.061 (0.035)	0.099 (0.053)	0.096 (0.054)
Ethnic minority	-1.712 (0.883)	-1.980* (0.888)	-2.679* (1.312)	-3.683** (1.324)
Woman	-0.785 (0.481)	-1.003* (0.489)	-1.539* (0.766)	-2.082** (0.781)
Constant	1.952 (1.103)	1.795 (1.113)	2.801 (1.725)	2.381 (1.739)
Wald $\chi^2$	54.99***	82.64***	79.38***	128.01***
N	248	248	108	108

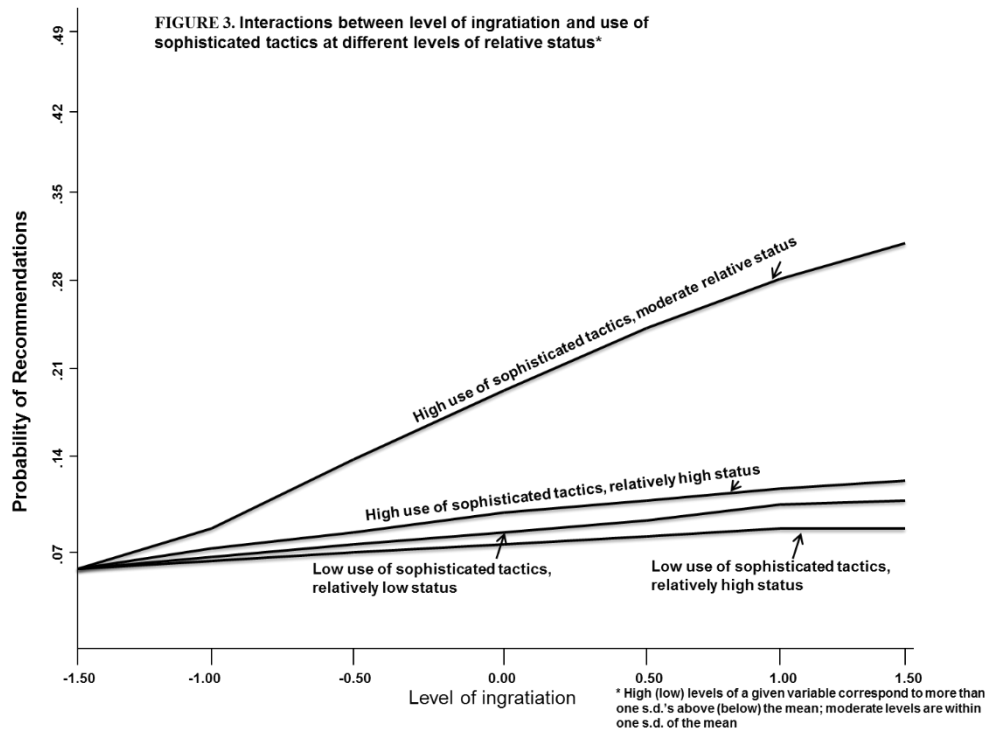
\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ ; standard errors are in parentheses.



**FIGURE 2**  
Average Positive Affect Toward Alter Before and After Interaction



**FIGURE 3.** Interactions between level of ingratiation and use of sophisticated tactics at different levels of relative status\*





## APPENDIX A

### Survey scales

#### *Anticipation of social interaction with alter*

1. To what extent have you thought about an upcoming interaction with [alter] (i) over the prior day; (ii) since [the prior survey]; (iii) since [the meeting]. [5-point scale: not at all ... somewhat ... very much so].
2. To what extent have you been anticipating interacting with [alter] (i) over the prior day; (ii) since [the prior survey]; (iii) since [the meeting]. [5-point scale: not at all ... somewhat ... very much so].
3. I've been anticipating interacting with [alter] (i) over the prior day; (ii) since [the prior survey]; (iii) since [the meeting]. [5-point agree/disagree scale].
4. I've been thinking about an upcoming interaction with [alter] (i) over the prior day; (ii) since [the prior survey]; (iii) since [the meeting]. [5-point agree/disagree scale].

#### *Expressions of liking for alter*

1. To what extent did [the focal director] smile at you frequently during the meeting? [5-point scale: not at all ... somewhat ... very much so].
2. How many times would you say [the focal director] smiled at you during the meeting? [None ... once or twice ... more than twice but less than 10 times ... more than 10 times].
3. The focal director] smiled at me a lot during the meeting. [5-point agree/disagree scale].
4. During the meeting, did [the focal director] say something to the effect that [he/she] likes working with you? How many times?
5. During the meeting, did [the focal director] say something to the effect that [he/she] enjoys meeting with you? How many times?
6. Did [the focal director] say anything else that conveyed (or tried to convey) that they like you? [open-ended].

#### *Expressions of admiration for alter*

1. How many times did [the focal director] compliment you during the meeting?
2. During the meeting, did [the focal director] express admiration for you in some way? How many times?
3. Did [the focal director] pay you a compliment during the meeting? How many times?
4. During the meeting, did [the focal director] convey (or try to convey) that [he/she] respects you? How many times?
5. Did [the focal director] say something to you during the meeting that conveyed (or tried to convey) that [he/she] admires you? How many times?

#### *Reflection on characteristics held in common (or not shared) with alter*

Note: instructions specify that a director characteristic or attribute can include an aspect of one's personal background, experience, personality, group memberships or affiliations.

1. Have you thought about such a characteristic or attribute of [alter] (i) over the prior day; (ii) since [the prior survey]; (iii) since [the meeting]. Specify which [characteristic(s) or attribute(s)]. How many times have you thought about [each characteristic or attribute]?
2. How many times have you reflected on a characteristic or attribute of [alter] that you also possess (i) over the prior day; (ii) since [the prior survey]; (iii) since [the meeting]?
3. How many times have you thought about a characteristic or attribute of [alter] that you do *not* possess (i) over the prior day; (ii) since [the prior survey]; (iii) since [the meeting]?

## ON-LINE APPENDIX B

### Further information about measures

**Expressions of liking/admiration.** As discussed above, our measures are based on what social influence theorists have called the “expansive view” of ingratiation, which conceives ingratiation as comprised of interpersonal behaviors that serve to enhance one’s interpersonal attractiveness with another person, including expressions of liking, as well as expressions of admiration and respect, and including non-verbal expressions such as smiling to convey positive affect for another person (Clark et al., 1996; Duck, 1986; Feldman et al., 2002; Godfrey et al., 1986; Goffman, 1959; Gordon, 1996: 54; Higgins & Judge, 2004; Jones & Pittman, 1982; Leary, 1996; Rosenfeld, 1966). The Westphal and Stern (2007) scale is based on a more “restrictive” view of ingratiation that focuses on specific behaviors, especially flattery (Gordon, 1996: 54). Thus, it includes questions about specific kinds of flattering statements (e.g., “How often have you complimented [the director] about [his/her] insight on a particular strategic issue”) that are captured by slightly broader questions in the present scale (e.g., “Did [the focal director] pay you a compliment during the meeting? How many times?”) Our measures exclude questions about “opinion conformity”, which is often described as an indirect form of flattery (Jones & Pittman, 1982; Leary, 1996; Westphal & Stern, 2007). As social influence researchers have long suggested, flattery takes different forms in different social contexts (Jones, 1964; Jones & Pittman, 1982; Leary 1996), and recent evidence, as well as our pretest interviews, indicate that opinion conformity has become much less common as a kind of flattery specifically among board members of large U.S. companies (Keeves et al., 2014). Thus, our measures capture forms of ingratiatory behavior that occur currently in the empirical context that we examine. Moreover, and consistent with Westphal and colleagues’ recent work, we consider favor rendering to be distinct from ingratiation (e.g., Stern & Westphal, 2010), and further analyses confirmed that a reliable, survey measure of favor rendering does not load on the same construct as the ingratiation items; in separate models we controlled for favor rendering between directors, and the hypothesized results were unchanged.

**Liking and admiration.** We measured the focal director’s liking and admiration for alter with multi-item survey scales (e.g., “To what extent do you like [alter]?”...“To what extent do you think highly of [alter]?”). Scale items were adapted from extant survey measures of liking and admiration (Nesler et al., 1993; Orpen, 1996). We also included survey items that gauge the extent to which directors *perceive* that the other director likes and admires them (e.g., “From [focal director’s] behavior [in the prior meeting], to what extent did you get the impression that [he/she] likes you?”). Items in these scales loaded on different factors as expected, with acceptable reliability ( $\alpha$ 's = .86-.92).

**Second-order factor analysis of reflection items.** Our theory suggests that reflection on characteristics held in common with alter and (low) reflection on characteristics not shared are related but distinct dimensions of self-regulated cognition. They are distinct in that individuals *can* engage in one kind of reflection without engaging in the other, but they are both components of self-regulated cognition and our theoretical argument applies equally to both. Consistent with this perspective, a second-order factor analysis showed that the survey measures loaded onto two first-order factors corresponding to reflection on characteristics held in common and (low) reflection on characteristics not shared, which in turn loaded onto a single, second-order or “meta” factor that represents self-regulated cognition.

**Further information on control variables.** We controlled for a survey measure of friendship between directors that has been validated in prior research on corporate elites (Westphal & Stern, 2006). There was a high level of interrater reliability for this measure in our sample (weighted kappa [k]=.86). Although merely engaging in frequent social interaction with powerful individuals does not necessarily lead to favorable treatment in the allocation of resources and opportunities (Gordon, 1996; Vonk, 2002), as a precaution we also included a survey measure of prior social interaction between directors that has been validated in prior research (Westphal & Stern, 2006). This measure gauges social interaction over the prior six-month period, and had acceptable reliability for our sample ( $\alpha$ =.85,  $k$ =.79). Given evidence that managers with a background in sales and marketing, politics, or law tend to engage in more sophisticated forms of ingratiation (Stern & Westphal, 2010), we included dummy variables for each of these background characteristics. We controlled for the type of interaction with a series of dummy variables (i.e., meetings about committee-related work, actual committee meetings, board meetings, or other interactions); most interactions in our sample were dyadic meetings about committee-related work. The control for time spent in other interactions with directors on the same day is measured in minutes. We also included dummies for industry, measured at the two-digit SIC-code level, and time period (not reported to conserve space).

In models of recommendations we controlled for a survey measure of monitoring and control behavior by the focal director, and a measure that gauges the extent to which the focal director provides strategic advice and

information to the CEO. These measures were validated by Westphal and Stern (2007), and had acceptable reliability for our sample as well ( $\alpha=.87$  and  $.91$ ,  $k=.80$  and  $.81$  for monitoring and advice giving, respectively). These two dimensions of director behavior capture normative expectations and constraints regarding outside director contributions to strategic decision making, and are thought to represent central components of director performance (Hillman & Dalziel, 2003; Shropshire, 2010). We also developed a survey scale that prompted directors to assess the performance of fellow board members; reliability of the scale was acceptably high ( $\alpha=.85$ ;  $k=.79$ ). We included this measure in separate models for the subsample of cases in which at least one other director from the same board as the focal director participated in the study. Further analyses indicated that the hypothesized results were robust to including the following, additional controls: (i) dummy variables to indicate whether the director serves as CFO or COO (either at the focal firm or another firm); (ii) prior experience as a top manager; (iii) indicators of board independence (both for the focal firm and the firm where alter serves on the nominating committee), including the portion of outside directors appointed after the CEO, relative CEO-board tenure, the portion of the board composed of affiliated directors, and separation of the CEO and board chair positions (cf., Finkelstein et al., 2009; Pollock et al., 2002); (iv) firm size, measured as total sales; (v) industry, measured at the two-digit SIC-code level; (vi) and the focal director's tendency toward self-monitoring, using Snyder and Gangestad's (1986) self-monitoring scale. There was not a statistically significant relationship between the self-monitoring measure and the pattern of cognition that we examine. Although high self-monitors may be especially motivated to elicit positive affect and liking, they may experience less cognitive or emotive dissonance from engaging in exaggerated praise and admiration for a colleague; the pattern of cognition we describe enables individuals to achieve a kind of authenticity in their interpersonal behavior, insofar as their expressions of liking and admiration will tend to be more sincere than if they had not engaged in self-regulation, and interpersonal authenticity is thought to be especially important to low-self-monitors (Oh & Kilduff, 2008). Moreover, high self-monitors should be relatively skilled at "surface acting" as defined above (Hochschild, 1983: 33), which may reduce the need and motivation to engage in the pattern of cognition that we examine.

### Information on archival data sources

We obtained demographic and biographical data on directors from multiple sources that have been used extensively in prior studies of corporate elites, including *Capital IQ*, *Dun and Bradstreet's Reference Book of Corporate Management*, *Marquis' Who's Who*, *Standard and Poor's Register*, the *Social Register*, proxy statements and annual company reports (Domhoff, 2002; Palmer & Barber, 2001; Useem & Karabel, 1986). Data on ethnicity and gender were provided by a management consulting firm. We validated these data for the subsample of directors for whom pictures could be located on-line or from company documents (Livingston & Pearce, 2009). There was a high rate of correspondence between ethnicity and gender classifications based on our primary data source and classifications based on one or more of the other sources (95%). We obtained data on board membership and other board characteristics from proxies, and data on firm performance came from COMPUSTAT and EDGAR.

### Descriptive Statistics

Independent Variable	Mean	SD
Anticipation of social interaction with alter	0	0.94
Demographic dissimilarity to alter	0	1.59
Alter's relative social status in the corporate elite	0	1.32
Time since most recent social interaction with alter	79.36	40.51
Friendship tie to alter	0.37	0.66
Number of other directors in meeting	1.82	1.56
Time spent in other meetings with directors on same day	4.8	12.58
Number of other directors with whom interacted in separate mtg. on same day	0.36	0.95
Length of meeting	52.03	26.58
Return on assets of focal firm	0.03	0.07
Board committee mtg.	0.21	0.41

Board meeting	0.1	0.3
Meeting about committee-related work	0.51	0.5
Alter on nominating committee of another board	0.65	0.48
Reflection on characteristics held in common with alter	1.73	2.88
Reflection on characteristics not shared with alter	1.17	2.62
Expressions of liking for alter	0	0.97
Expressions of admiration for alter	0	0.96
Monitoring and control behavior	0	0.98
Provision of advice and information	0	0.97
Time spent interacting with alter	116.85	104.56
Tenure on the board	7.61	5.44
Ethnic minority	0.11	0.31
Woman	0.18	0.39
Sales/marketing background	0.20	0.40
Background in politics	0.10	0.30
Legal background	0.22	0.41
Listing in <i>Social Register</i> /attendance at exclusive prep school	0.12	0.33
Director recommendation for board appointment	0.16	0.37

## Results of mediation analysis

Description of path	Z	
	Full sample	High relative status, dissimilar alter
Expressions of liking for alter X Reflection on characteristics held in common with alter $\xrightarrow{+}$ alter's perception of liking $\xrightarrow{+}$ recommendation	2.40*	3.48***
Expressions of liking for alter X (Low level of) reflection on characteristics not shared $\xrightarrow{+}$ alter's perception of liking $\xrightarrow{+}$ recommendation	2.58**	3.99***
Expressions of admiration for alter X Reflection on characteristics held in common with alter $\xrightarrow{+}$ alter's perception of admiration $\xrightarrow{+}$ recommendation	2.48*	4.13***
Expressions of admiration for alter X (Low level of) reflection on characteristics not shared $\xrightarrow{+}$ alter's perception of admiration $\xrightarrow{+}$ recommendation	2.31*	3.58***

*Model statistics:*  
GFI = .980; NFI = .973; CFI = .970; RMSEA = .032; RMSR = .030

\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

## Supplemental Analyses

***The relative effectiveness of sophisticated forms of ingratiation.*** We conducted supplemental analyses that compared the relative effectiveness of the sophisticated forms of ingratiation identified by Stern and Westphal (2010) and the pattern of cognition identified in the present study in securing recommendations for board appointments from relatively high-status alters. We used the scales developed and validated by Stern and Westphal to measure each of the sophisticated forms of ingratiation, and we followed their procedure of developing a single measure of sophisticated ingratiation using second-order factor analysis (Stern and Westphal, 2010: 292). We

then estimated interactions between the level of ingratiation, sophistication, and relative status in our models of board recommendations. The results indicated (1) a statistically significant and positive, two-way interaction between the level of ingratiation and sophistication, and (2) a statistically significant and *negative*, three-way interaction between the level of ingratiation, sophistication, and the relative status of alter. The hypothesized effects of the cognition variables remain strongly significant in these models. As shown in Figure 3, while ingratiation is significantly more likely to elicit recommendations for board appointments at high levels of sophistication when alter's relative status is moderate (i.e., within one standard deviation of the mean), it is not significantly more likely to elicit recommendations at high levels of sophistication when alter has relatively high status (i.e., more than one standard deviation above the mean). By contrast, our results presented and discussed above reveal that expressions of admiration and liking are significantly more likely to elicit recommendations from alters who have relatively high status to the extent that directors engage in the pattern of cognition that we describe. Thus, while sophisticated forms of ingratiation are generally more effective in securing board recommendations, consistent with Stern and Westphal's theoretical arguments, they do not resolve the ingratiation's dilemma that the most attractive targets of ingratiation – those who have relatively high social status – should tend to be the most difficult to ingratiate successfully. However, the pattern of cognition that we describe does appear to resolve this fundamental paradox facing social actors in exercising interpersonal influence.

***Other benefits to the focal actor.*** We conducted further analyses that estimated effects of the independent variables on other beneficial outcomes for the focal director, including (1) introductions to other, high-status persons, (2) prestigious social club memberships, and (3) memberships on major board committees. Each of these analyses included the full set of controls in Table 3. To conduct the first analysis, the survey asked alters whether they had introduced the focal director to anyone in the prior three months, and if so, to whom. We used these responses to estimate introductions for the three-month period subsequent to the period for which the independent variables were measured. Each of the independent variables (i.e., expressions of liking/admiration X (low) reflection on characteristics (not) shared with alter) had a statistically significant effect on (i) the number of introductions by alter, and (ii) the likelihood of introducing the focal director to an individual in our larger sample frame who has relatively high social status in the corporate elite (at least one standard deviation above the mean). To conduct the second analysis, we used Palmer and Barber's (2001) and Domhoff's (2002) listings of prestigious social clubs. Each of the independent variables had a statistically significant effect on the likelihood of the focal director joining a prestigious social club where alter is a member during the subsequent two-year period. We conducted the third analysis for dyads in which alter is chair of a major board committee at the focal firm (e.g., audit, compensation, nominating, or executive committee) and the focal director was not a member of that committee in the prior period. Each of the independent variables had a statistically significant effect on the likelihood that the focal director would be appointed to that committee within the subsequent two-year period. These supplemental analyses suggest that directors can derive a range of additional benefits from engaging in self-regulated cognition prior to social interaction with high-status colleagues (aside from board recommendations), including social connections with other, high status actors, access to social organizations that afford prestige and provide further opportunities to make valuable contacts, and influential roles on particular boards. Moreover, monitoring and control behavior had a statistically significant and negative effect on each of these outcomes. A director who engages in high levels of monitoring and control behavior (one standard deviation above the mean) is (i) 62% less likely to be introduced by alter to an individual who has relatively high social status in the corporate elite, (ii) 74% less likely to gain a prestigious social club membership, and (iii) 71% less likely to be appointed to a major board committee than a director who engages in mean levels of monitoring and control. The provision of strategic advice and information had a positive effect on appointments to a major board committee (though the effect was considerably smaller in magnitude than the effects of our independent variables), and was not significantly related to the other outcomes.

***The magnitude of status differences and director influence.*** We examined the magnitude of perceived status differences for our sample of director dyads using a survey measure that prompted responding directors to compare the status of other individual directors with their own status. This measure was validated by Westphal and Khanna (2003). Anchors on the seven-point scale include "Much lower than me"... "lower than me"... "slightly lower than me"... "about the same"... "slightly higher than me"... "higher than me"... "much higher than me." An increase (decrease) in the composite, archival measure of alter's status relative to the focal director's status of one standard deviation is associated with an average increase (decrease) in the survey measure of approximately two levels on the scale from "about the same" to "higher (lower) than me." Thus, a standard deviation in our archival status measure corresponds to meaningful differences in perceived relative status (i.e., if a change in the archival measure of one standard deviation were associated with an average change in the survey measure from "about the same" to only "slightly higher (lower) than me," one might question whether typical differences in relative status are significant in magnitude).

Our theory implicitly assumes that director recommendations resulting from the influence behavior that we describe have a significant effect on actual board appointments. Separate analysis indicated that receiving alter's recommendation for a board appointment where he/she serves on the nominating committee has a strongly significant effect on the likelihood that the focal director will actually obtain a position on that board in the following year ( $p < .001$ ). A test of the mediated relationships between the independent variables, recommendations and board appointments indicated that in over 80% of the cases in which alter recommended the focal director for a board appointment at a particular firm following high levels of the independent variables (at least one standard deviation above the means), the focal director subsequently obtained an appointment on that board. Other analyses reported above showed that the independent variables predict the strength with which alter recommended the focal director for an appointment, which helps explain the strong effect of recommendations on actual appointments. Separate analyses also indicated that the independent variables had strong and statistically significant effects on subsequent appointments to *both* nonprofit boards and corporate boards.

Our theory suggests that directors tend to engage in self-regulated cognition prior to interacting with relatively high-status directors ("alters"), and further analysis indicates that these alters tend to have high status relative to other members of the nominating committee on which they serve. In particular, the average difference in status between alters who receive relatively high levels of the influence behavior that we describe (i.e., directors who are the object of higher than average levels of self-regulated cognition and expressed liking/admiration) and the average status of other directors on the nominating committee is approximately one standard deviation on that variable. We also examined whether average differences in status correspond to meaningful differences among directors in perceived influence over board decision making and the decision making of nominating committees in particular. We used a measure of director influence that was adapted from items developed and validated by Westphal and Milton (2000). A change in the archival measure of alter's status of one standard deviation is associated with an average change in perceived influence of more than two levels on a seven-point scale from "somewhat influential" to "very influential." Thus, a difference of one standard deviation in our status measure corresponds to meaningful differences in perceived influence over board decision making. We conducted a separate analysis using an analogous measure of director influence over decision making on nominating committees (i.e., respondents who serve on a nominating committee assessed the influence of each of the other members over decision making on the committee). This analysis yielded even stronger results: a difference in alter's status of one standard deviation is associated with a very significant difference in alter's perceived influence over decision making by the committee. A recommendation from a director who has worked closely with a candidate on another board recently is particularly credible and persuasive to other committee members, especially when the recommendation comes from a director with relatively high status. This is consistent with evidence reported above that director recommendations mediate effects of the independent variables on board appointments.

***The moderating effect of narcissism.*** As discussed above, there is very little evidence from the social influence literature that individual differences among influence targets (i.e., psychological traits such as personality) moderate the effectiveness of ingratiation (Gordon, 1996; Jones, 1964). This accumulated evidence led Jones (1990) to assert that social position, and specifically the recipient's relative social status, is likely to have a stronger moderating effect on responses to ingratiation than individual differences such as personality. Jones argued that the main source of variance in response to ingratiation is whether the influence target perceives the flattery as insincere, and suggested that the most attractive targets, those with relatively high status, are most likely to recognize insincere flattery (resulting in the ingratiation's dilemma). In interpreting the lack of evidence for individual differences, Jones suggested that there is relatively little variance in the extent to which flattery that appears genuine to the recipient engenders some level of interpersonal influence, and more recent research provides some support for this assertion. There is considerable evidence that reciprocated affect – one of the mechanisms by which ingratiation can engender influence – is a very strong and robust psychological phenomenon that operates on a preconscious level (Izuma et al., 2008; Lewis, 2005; Saxe & Haushofer, 2008). Moreover, a large, interdisciplinary literature indicates that the norm of reciprocity – a further mechanism by which ingratiation can engender influence – is similarly strong and robust: most people feel a deep-seated indebtedness to those who provide them with meaningful benefits, whether material or psychic in nature (Cialdini, 2001; Hoffman et al., 1998), and sincere expressions of affect and respect are more affirming, and provide more substantial psychic benefits, than insincere liking or praise. Conversely, recent evidence suggests that flattery which is recognized as insincere almost always triggers negative sentiments toward the ingratiation, and thus rarely engenders interpersonal influence (Keeves, et al., 2014). Thus, extant theory and research suggests that individual differences are most likely to moderate the effect of ingratiation to the extent that they affect the ability of recipients to recognize expressions of liking and admiration as (in)sincere.

Given the special interest of upper echelon scholars in narcissism as an individual difference variable, we considered whether the narcissism of alter could moderate the hypothesized effects of self-regulated cognition on the

likelihood of securing a board recommendation. An extensive review of the narcissism literature did not suggest a clear, directional prediction about whether narcissism would increase or decrease the ability of individuals to recognize expressions of liking and admiration as (in)sincere. Nevertheless, we examined the potential moderating effect of narcissism empirically using the archival measure of CEO narcissism developed and validated by Chatterjee, Hambrick and colleagues (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007; see Gerstner et al., 2013). Specifically, we conducted supplemental models of board recommendations for the sample of complete dyads in which alter is CEO of a public company and for which requisite archival data were available (N=101). While our independent variables were consistently statistically significant in these models, interactions between the independent variables and the narcissism of alter were consistently non-significant. These results indicate that the effects of reflection on characteristics shared with alter (and low levels of reflection on characteristics not shared) prior to expressing liking and admiration for him or her on the likelihood of receiving alter's recommendation for a board appointment did not significantly depend on the level of alter's narcissism, based on the archival measure validated by Chatterjee and Hambrick.

***The relative effects of demographic similarity and self-regulated cognition.*** We compared the effects of expressed liking/admiration on board recommendations at high levels of reflection on characteristics held in common with alter and low levels of demographic similarity with the effects of expressed liking/admiration on board recommendations at *low* levels of reflection on characteristics held in common and *high* levels of demographic similarity (high/low levels of each variable correspond to 1 standard deviation above/below the mean). The coefficients of the expressed liking/admiration variables were significantly stronger in the former condition than in the latter condition ( $p < .001$ ). Moreover, our analyses indicated that (1) the interactions between expressed liking/admiration and the cognition variables were statistically significant at high levels of demographic similarity (greater than 1 standard deviation above the mean), while (2) the interactions between expressed liking/admiration and demographic dissimilarity were *not* statistically significant at high levels of the cognition variables. These analyses suggest that high levels of demographic similarity do not fully substitute for (or offset the effects of) the cognitions that we describe in enhancing the effectiveness of expressed liking/admiration, or alternatively, that high levels of these cognitions can neutralize the negative, moderating effect of demographic differences on the relationship between ingratiation and board recommendations.

***Test for survey sample selection bias.*** We conducted Heckman (1979) models in which the selection equation estimates the likelihood that a director dyad in the larger population will be included in the study, and the inverse Mills ratio is included in a second-stage equation that estimates the hypothesized relationships. The selection equation included independent and control variables measured with archival data (e.g., indicators of status and demographic background), as well as variables that reflect variation in the survey process (e.g., the month in which a director was invited to participate). The selection parameter was not statistically significant in these models, and the hypothesized results were very similar to those presented below, suggesting that sample selection bias does not compromise the validity of our results.

***Tests of H3 using Heckman selection models.*** In further analyses we estimated director recommendations for the subsample of dyads that included high-status, dissimilar alters using Heckman selection models. The selection equation in these models estimated the likelihood that a dyad would include a relatively high-status, dissimilar alter using probit regression (i.e., for the full sample of dyads), and parameter estimates from that equation are included in a second-stage regression model to test the hypothesized relationships. The results of this analysis were very similar to those reported in model 4 of table 3.

***Other social interaction.*** In addition to controlling for friendship ties and social interaction between directors outside meetings, we tested the hypotheses for the reduced sample of dyads in which directors reported that they did not interact with each other outside the meetings included in our study. The hypothesized results were essentially unchanged from those reported in the tables.