

Stealthy Footsteps to  
the Boardroom:  
Executives'  
Backgrounds,  
Sophisticated  
Interpersonal Influence  
Behavior, and Board  
Appointments

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Drawing from theory and research on interpersonal attraction, as well as interviews with 42 directors of large U.S. industrial and service firms, we identified a set of social influence tactics that are less likely to be interpreted by the influence target as manipulative or political in intent and are therefore more likely to engender social influence. We consider who among top managers and directors of large firms is most likely to exercise such tactics and how their use affects the likelihood of garnering board appointments at other firms. An analysis of survey data on interpersonal influence behavior from a large sample of managers and chief executive officers (CEOs) at Forbes 500 companies strongly supports our theoretical arguments: managers' and directors' ingratiation behavior toward colleagues is more likely to yield board appointments at other firms to the extent that it comprises relatively subtle forms of flattery and opinion conformity, which our theory suggests are less likely to elicit cynical attributions of motive. Supplementary analyses also indicate that these relationships are mediated by an increased likelihood of receiving a colleague's recommendation for the appointment. Moreover, we theorize and find that managers and directors who have a background in politics, law, or sales, or an upper-class background, are more sophisticated and successful in their ingratiation behavior. ●

Political perspectives on corporate leadership and governance have traditionally focused on structural sources of power. Studies have examined, for instance, how variation in the formal and social structure of boards of directors can help explain the level and form of chief executive officer (CEO) compensation, perquisites, and other outcomes that indicate the power of top managers to satisfy their personal preferences (for a review, see Finkelstein, Hambrick, and Cannella, 2009). Many studies have also suggested how managers and directors who occupy central positions in the board interlock network can leverage their social structural power to acquire a range of benefits, including higher levels of pay, additional board seats, and prestigious positions in the public sphere (Useem, 1984; Davis, 2003, 2005; for a review, see Finkelstein, Hambrick, and Cannella, 2009). A growing literature has complemented the traditional focus on structural sources of power in corporate governance by examining managers' use of social influence tactics to further their personal interests or benefit their firms. For example, several studies have examined whether ingratiation and persuasion tactics by managers can explain positive performance evaluations and generous pay increases (e.g., Kipnis and Schmidt, 1988; Yukl and Tracey, 1992; Brass and Burkhardt, 1993; Wade, Porac, and Pollock, 1997; Westphal, 1998; Fiss, 2006). Westphal and colleagues have explored how managers and directors seek to further their personal interests or benefit their firms by engaging in ingratiation behavior toward powerful colleagues and external constituents. Westphal and Stern (2006, 2007) hypothesized and found that top managers who engaged in high levels of flattery and opinion conformity toward the CEO were more likely to receive board appointments at other firms where the CEO served as director. Moreover, outside

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directors who engaged in higher levels of ingratiation toward another director were more likely to receive a board position in a firm where the fellow director served on the nominating committee. In further research, Westphal and colleagues examined how CEOs seek to maintain support for their leadership following the adoption of controversial policies that appear to further their interests at the expense of shareholders by engaging in ingratiation toward various internal and external constituents, including outside directors, institutional fund managers, security analysts, and journalists (e.g., Westphal, 1998; Westphal and Bednar, 2008).

Although this literature suggests a variety of potential benefits to corporate leaders from engaging in ingratiation and persuasion tactics toward colleagues and external constituents, it has not addressed a significant limitation to the efficacy of such behavior that has been identified in the larger literature on interpersonal influence. In particular, as several theorists in social psychology have suggested, to the extent that social influence tactics are interpreted by the influence target as manipulative or political in intent, they are less likely to be effective in engendering social influence and may even be counterproductive (Jones and Pittman, 1982; Gordon, 1996). In the case of ingratiation, several authors have acknowledged that flattery can “backfire” when the influence target recognizes or interprets the complimentary remarks as an attempt to curry favor (Jones and Pittman, 1982: 237; Pfeffer, 1992; Vonk, 1998; Turnley and Bolino, 2001: 351). Though ingratiation is supposed to “increase one’s [interpersonal] attractiveness in the eyes of [another] person” (Kumar and Beyerlein, 1991: 619; Vonk, 2002; Kacmar, Carlson, and Bratton, 2004), most people have a profoundly negative schema for ingratiation and ascribe a variety of negative attributes to ingratiating actors. Thus if flattery and opinion conformity is interpreted as ingratiation by the influence target, it could reduce rather than enhance one’s interpersonal attractiveness. Yet social influence researchers, while acknowledging this apparently fundamental limitation to the efficacy of ingratiation as a source of influence, continue to hypothesize or presume that higher levels of flattery and opinion conformity will lead to beneficial outcomes, without considering whether or how individuals can avoid cynical interpretations of their ingratiation behavior and how people vary in the skillfulness of their social influence behavior.

In the present study, we consider how corporate leaders can engage in interpersonal influence behavior in ways that effectively avoid cynical attributions of motive by an influence target by conceptualizing the skillfulness of interpersonal influence behavior in terms of its subtlety. We theorize that individuals derive significantly more benefit from ingratiation to the extent that they engage in relatively subtle forms of flattery and opinion conformity that are less likely to be recognized or interpreted as ingratiation by the influence target and more likely to be accepted as genuine expressions of admiration or sincere statements of opinion. We describe specific forms of flattery and opinion conformity that may be less likely to elicit cynical attributions of motive and examine how the exercise of these sophisticated forms of ingratiation behavior by managers and directors affects the likelihood that

they will garner board appointments at other firms. We extend our theory to consider who among corporate leaders is most capable of engaging in sophisticated forms of ingratiation. The literature on power and politics in organizations, including research on sociopolitical behavior by corporate leaders, has focused on the consequences of social influence behavior and has devoted less attention to the question of who is most capable of exercising influence effectively. We address this issue by suggesting how leaders' vocational and socioeconomic backgrounds predict the sophistication of their ingratiation behavior. Drawing from theory and research on interpersonal attraction, as well as interviews with 42 directors of large U.S. industrial and service firms, we identified a set of social influence tactics that are less likely to be interpreted by the influence target as manipulative or political in intent and are therefore more likely to engender social influence.

In examining how sophisticated forms of interpersonal influence behavior enhance the ability of managers and directors to secure board seats at other firms, this study also contributes to our understanding of how individuals advance to central positions in the corporate elite. Individuals who hold multiple board appointments at large U.S. companies exert disproportionate influence over the governance of corporations and the broader society. When managers acquire multiple board seats at large firms, thus gaining entry to the "inner circle" of corporate leaders (Useem and Karabel, 1986), they not only gain influence over policy making at more firms, but they also assume higher status in the corporate elite, which increases their relative influence over policy making at each of the firms where they serve as director (Useem, 1984; Finkelstein, 1992; Westphal and Stern, 2007). They are also more likely to assume leadership roles at powerful non-business institutions that exert influence over a variety of societal issues ranging from the curriculum of public schools and the research agenda of universities to governmental and bank lending policies (Useem, 1987; Ratcliff, 1987; Gersh, 1987; Burris, 2005; for a review, see Mizruchi and Bey, 2005). Accordingly, the question of which individuals are most likely to acquire multiple board seats at large firms is of considerable theoretical and practical significance. Our study complements extant theory and research on corporate elites, which has tended to emphasize the value of social network ties in gaining access to board seats and acquiring more central positions in the corporate elite (Useem, 1984; Davis, 1993; Domhoff, 2002). The executives and directors of large firms are structurally advantaged by having colleagues who serve on other boards and who are therefore in a position to recommend them for board seats at other firms. Our theoretical perspective suggests that executives and directors vary in their ability to capitalize on these potentially advantageous social ties to advance to more central positions in the corporate elite and that they are more likely to secure colleagues' recommendations for board appointments at other firms, and to ascend to central positions in the corporate elite, to the extent that they are capable of engaging in sophisticated forms of ingratiation toward colleagues.

## **SOPHISTICATED FORMS OF INGRATIATION AND BOARD APPOINTMENTS**

Ingratiation involves two forms of behavior: flattery, or “other enhancement,” and opinion conformity, or verbal statements that validate the opinion held by another person, in an attempt to gain favor with him or her (Jones, 1964; Jones and Pittman, 1982; Kumar and Beyerlein, 1991; Ellis et al., 2002; Higgins and Judge, 2004). The use of these behaviors is thought to engender social influence primarily by increasing positive affect for the ingratiation. Other enhancement increases liking through reciprocal attraction (Jones, 1990) while also invoking norms of reciprocity: when someone is “paid a compliment,” he or she may feel psychologically indebted to the ingratiation and look for ways to return the favor (Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004). Opinion conformity is believed to increase liking by triggering similarity-attraction bias (Jones, 1964; Yukl and Tracey, 1992; Ellis et al., 2002). Opinion conformity can also be viewed as a type of flattery, in that it validates the person’s judgment or intellect (Jones, 1964). Positive affect from ingratiation is believed to cause attribution biases in performance evaluation, wherein people overattribute good performance by the ingratiation to dispositional causes (e.g., hard work or ability) while overattributing mistakes or failures to bad luck or extraneous factors in the work environment, thus leading to favoritism toward the ingratiation in allocating rewards and career opportunities (Wayne and Liden, 1995; Westphal and Stern, 2006). Field studies have provided mixed evidence that ingratiation significantly enhances social influence, however, with several studies showing weak or insignificant effects of ingratiation on such outcomes as pay raises and promotions (Gordon, 1996; Brodsky and Cannon, 2006). A possible explanation is that flattery and opinion conformity can backfire if the behavior is recognized or interpreted as ingratiation by the influence target (Jones and Pittman, 1982; Baron, 1986; Vonk, 1998). Most people have a negative view of ingratiation and impute a variety of negative attributes to ingratiation actors. If a person’s behavior is interpreted as ingratiation, that individual is more likely to be seen as self-interested and selfish, cold and calculating, manipulative, weak, and untrustworthy. Moreover, people may be insulted by the apparent presumption that they are the kind of person who likes or needs ingratiation. Thus if acts of flattery and opinion conformity are interpreted as ingratiation by the influence target, they are less likely to elicit positive affect or reciprocity and may even elicit negative affect for the focal actor. Accordingly, the success of ingratiation may depend on whether individuals engage in flattery and opinion conformity in such a way that the influence target fails to recognize or interpret the behavior as an attempt to curry favor.

To gain a better understanding of interpersonal influence among the corporate elite, we conducted preliminary interviews with 42 corporate elite members. The interviews were approximately 20 to 35 minutes in length. Interviewees were representative of directors in the population of large U.S. industrial and service firms in terms of the distribution of their professional backgrounds (politics, law, sales/marketing, or other functional background), the number of board appointments held, age, top management experience, and characteristics of their

primary employers (e.g., firm performance and size, measured as return on assets and total sales). The interviews were designed to identify the ways in which leaders engage in social influence, including effective and less effective approaches. In response to open-ended questions, leaders described specific forms of flattery and opinion conformity that are less likely to elicit cynical attributions of motive and thus are more likely to engender social influence. Analysis of data from these interviews produced 7 forms of flattery and opinion conformity. We describe these below, providing quotations from the interviews for clarification.

**Framing flattery as likely to make alter uncomfortable.**

One tactical approach to reducing the likelihood that an influence target ("alter") will adopt a cynical interpretation of flattery is to frame the admiring remark as likely to be embarrassing to alter or as likely to make him or her uncomfortable. For instance, one manager whom we interviewed noted that he commonly prefaces flattering remarks with such phrases as "I don't want to embarrass you but. . .," or "I know you won't want me to say this but. . .," or "You're going to hate me for saying this but. . . ." By framing flattery in this way, the focal actor subtly disavows ingratiation intent, as the purpose of ingratiation is to elicit positive affect, not to make the other person uncomfortable. Such prefatory statements also portray the influence target as modest. Whereas most people take a negative view of people who like flattery, modesty is a socially desirable attribute (Goffman, 1967), making this form of ingratiation a subtle and indirect form of flattery.

**Framing flattery as advice seeking.** Another tactical approach to reducing the likelihood that an influence target will interpret flattery as ingratiation is to frame the admiring remarks as advice seeking. As one manager whom we interviewed suggested, ". . . if I wanted someone else to know that I admire him, rather than saying 'I really admire you,' I would be more likely to ask him for advice: 'How were you able to pull off that strategy so successfully?' something like that . . . the basic question is, how can I replicate your success?" Such questions frame flattery as an attempt to learn from alter rather than as an attempt to curry favor. Moreover, the elaboration likelihood model (cf. Petty and Wegener, 1999) would suggest that posing a question that requires cognitive reflection on the part of the influence target should increase the tendency for alter to accept the stated motive for the encounter (i.e., to learn from the influence target). In effect, the influence target will be busy formulating an appropriate response to the question rather than critically assessing the stated motive of the ingratiation.

**Arguing prior to conforming.** A focal actor may reduce the likelihood that opinion conformity is interpreted as ingratiation by challenging an influence target's opinion prior to agreeing with him or her. The focal actor's expression of agreement is then more likely to be interpreted as a genuine affirmation of alter's opinion rather than as an attempt to curry favor. In part this is because such behavior varies from most people's cognitive script or stereotypic conception of ingratiation behavior, as the stereotypic ingratiation is a "yes man" who

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simply agrees with whatever the influence target says (Higgins and Judge, 2004; Varma, Toh, and Pichler, 2006). Thus such opinion conformity is less likely to be interpreted cynically as an attempt to curry favor. As one manager put it, “. . . if you keep saying ‘yes boss I agree boss’ it looks like sucking up. If you appear to challenge the boss a bit before yielding—‘OK you’ve convinced me, good point’—the agreement seems more genuine.” Moreover, because alter’s opinion appears to stand up to critical scrutiny, opinion conformity of this kind is likely to be viewed as a stronger and more meaningful validation of alter’s judgment, thus yielding a more positive reaction from him or her. The ingratiation also subtly affirms the influence target’s powers of persuasion, adding another layer of flattery to the conversation.

**Conforming to opinions expressed by alter to a third party.** An alternative approach to avoiding cynical interpretations of opinion conformity is to express an opinion that was previously expressed by the influence target to a third party (e.g., a mutual acquaintance) and then indirectly relayed to the focal actor. As one manager suggested, “. . . if you just keep agreeing with the boss it might seem like you’re sucking up . . . but if you find out the boss’ opinion on a policy from talking to his friend and then later in talking to the boss you raise the same opinion . . . it would come across as more sincere.” Such behavior is unlikely to be recognized as opinion conformity by the influence target, who will often not know or suspect that his or her opinion was passed on indirectly to the focal actor, and in any event, opinion conformity of this kind deviates from most people’s stereotypic conception of ingratiation. Moreover, such behavior may be especially likely to trigger similarity-attraction bias because the focal actor appears to generate the opinion autonomously and thus should receive more credit for the opinion than if he or she simply agrees with the influence target.

**Complimenting alter to alter’s friend.** Another tactical approach to avoiding cynical interpretations of flattery is to co-opt third parties in the ingratiation attempt. The sophisticated ingratiation knows that “word gets around” in friendship networks and uses the social network to his or her advantage in the act of ingratiation. As one manager put it, “. . . complimenting someone to his face is kind of obvious brown-nosing, or at least suspect. If you regularly say nice things about him to his friend though, he [the influence target] will almost always find out about it eventually, and it will mean a lot more when he does.” Another manager noted, “. . . a friend recently told me ‘You know, he [a colleague] sure thinks highly of you.’ . . . it was nice to hear that frankly—it seemed sincere because [the colleague] was complimenting me to someone else.” Again, other enhancement of this kind does not fit with the prevailing schema or stereotypic conception of ingratiation, which involves direct, face-to-face flattery, and consequently such behavior is less likely to be interpreted by the influence target as an attempt to curry favor.

**Engaging in value conformity prior to flattery or opinion conformity.** A different tactic is to begin the ingratiation attempt by engaging in value conformity, defined as verbal statements that express commitment to a cause, institution,

or code of conduct that indicates personal values that are similar to those perceived to be held by the influence target. As one manager suggested, "I've found that a good way to begin a discussion is to make some reference to something that's important to me personally and that I have reason to believe is important to the other person—sometimes it's my religious conviction, sometimes it's my commitment to environmental protection, sometimes it's my family . . . [when asked why:] they're more likely to trust whatever I say afterward." Value conformity may reduce the likelihood of cynical interpretations of subsequent flattery or opinion conformity by triggering similarity-attraction bias. The expression of similar values induces positive affect and liking for a focal person through two complementary mechanisms: providing consensual validation of alter's beliefs and prompting alter to infer favorable information about the focal actor (Byrne, Clore, and Smeaton, 1986; Montoya and Horton, 2004). Positive affect and liking, in turn, are known to reduce the likelihood of cynical or otherwise negative interpretations of an actor's behavior (Isen, 1984; Fiske and Taylor, 2008). Similarity-attraction bias is especially strong for personal values, in part because such values tend to have more valence attached to them than attitudes about work-related matters and in part because similarity with respect to a single personal value indicates similarity on a larger number of attitudes and is therefore especially informative about the overall level of similarity between people (Montoya and Horton, 2004; Giberson, Resick, and Dickson, 2005). Statements that foster the impression of value similarity should therefore enhance interpersonal trust and the credibility of subsequent opinion conformity and flattery, which essentially involves expressing a positive opinion about the influence target (Kaplan and Anderson, 1973; Giberson, Resick, and Dickson, 2005), and thus reduce the likelihood of cynical interpretations of subsequent opinion conformity and flattery. Again, the prevailing stereotype of an ingratiation is someone who is coldly calculating or chameleon-like, not someone who is committed to a higher cause, institution, or code of conduct; thus people who express strongly held personal values to their colleagues do not fit most people's stereotypic conception of an ingratiation. Given that people tend to engage in schema-consistent information processing (Jones and Goethals, 1972; Fiske and Taylor, 2008), they are less likely to interpret flattery or opinion conformity as ingratiation following an act of value conformity.

**Referencing social affiliations held in common with alter prior to flattery or opinion conformity.** A companion approach to establishing value conformity is to begin an ingratiation attempt by referencing shared group memberships or social affiliations held in common with the influence target. As one manager put it, "If I'm trying to influence someone I might start the conversation by mentioning a group or organization that I know we both belong to . . . [when asked what sort of group:] might be a political party, a religious organization . . . [when asked why:] I think it helps build trust so you can be more convincing." This tactic reduces the likelihood of cynical interpretations of subsequent flattery and opinion conformity by triggering in-group bias.

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Increasing the salience of shared group memberships tends to increase positive affect and liking between individuals (Brewer, 1979; Chen and Kenrick, 2002), and, as noted above, positive affect reduces the likelihood of cynical or otherwise negative interpretations of the other's behavior. Making common group affiliations salient also increases presumptive trust between individuals; given some level of uncertainty about their motives, people tend to give in-group members the benefit of the doubt (Kramer, 2001; Hewstone, Rubin, and Willis, 2002). In-group bias is preconscious and can occur even when the criteria for group categorization are seemingly trivial and not obviously linked to underlying values and opinions (Ashburn-Nardo, Voils, and Monteith, 2001; Wittenbrink, Judd, and Park, 2001). Accordingly, statements that make common group affiliations salient should reduce the likelihood of cynical interpretations of subsequent flattery and opinion conformity. Moreover, in-group bias causes people to overestimate their similarity to other in-group members with respect to values, beliefs, and attitudes (Hogg and Terry, 2000). Thus statements that make common group affiliations salient should increase the credibility of subsequent opinion conformity. These various forms of flattery and opinion conformity have an element of subtlety, in multiple senses of the term, as defined in the *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (1996: 1898): they are relatively "non-obvious" forms of ingratiation, they are "skillful" and "refined," and they "operate insidiously." Our theory suggests that managers should obtain higher returns from ingratiation directed at colleagues (i.e., more favorable treatment in the allocation of benefits such as prestigious appointments) to the extent that ingratiation comprises the subtle forms of flattery and opinion conformity described above.

In this study, we consider how the form of ingratiation behavior by managers and directors toward their colleagues affects the likelihood that they will garner board appointments at other firms. We expect that the greater the extent to which managers' ingratiation behavior toward their CEO comprises relatively sophisticated forms of flattery and opinion conformity, the greater the likelihood that the CEO will favor the ingratiating manager by recommending him or her for a board appointment at another firm where the CEO serves on the nominating committee of the board. We also expect that the effect of sophisticated forms of ingratiation by outside directors toward fellow board members will increase the likelihood of receiving board appointments. Our theory suggests that, for both sets of actors, ingratiation attempts should be more effective in garnering recommendations for board appointments to the extent that managers and directors engage in subtle forms of flattery and opinion conformity that are less likely to be recognized or interpreted as ingratiation by the influence target and thus more likely to elicit positive affect, feelings of indebtedness toward the ingratiator, and biased assessments of the ingratiator's performance. These theoretical arguments lead to the following set of hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1:** Flattery by (a) a top manager toward the CEO or (b) by an outside director toward a fellow director will have a more positive effect on the likelihood of receiving a board appointment where alter



serves on the nominating committee to the extent that the focal manager or director frames flattery as likely to make alter uncomfortable, frames flattery as advice seeking, compliments alter to alter's friend, engages in value conformity prior to flattery, or references social affiliations held in common with alter prior to flattery.

**Hypothesis 2:** Opinion conformity by (a) a top manager toward the CEO or (b) an outside director toward a fellow director will have a more positive effect on the likelihood of receiving a board appointment where alter serves on the nominating committee to the extent that the focal manager or director argues with alter prior to conforming to his or her opinion, conforms to opinions expressed by alter to a third party, engages in value conformity prior to opinion conformity, or references social affiliations held in common with alter prior to opinion conformity.

### Who Engages in Sophisticated Forms of Ingratiation?

Leaders' vocational and socioeconomic backgrounds may also predict the sophistication of their ingratiation behavior. A long line of research in vocational psychology has sought to explain factors affecting peoples' career choices. A theme that cuts across this work is that people with similar behavioral dispositions and skills are drawn to similar occupations and employment settings in "a process involving a matching of self and occupation" (Kidd, 1984: 25; Hambrick and Mason, 1984; Holland, 1997; Hansen and Dik, 2004). This work would imply that people who are more comfortable with and are better skilled in employing interpersonal influence tactics are likely to be drawn to occupations in which engagement in such behaviors is instrumental to task accomplishment.

**Vocational background.** The literature on career choice suggests that a primary psychological mechanism by which skills are matched to the demands of a particular vocation is individuals' self-efficacy beliefs (Lent, Brown, and Hackett, 1994). Self-efficacy beliefs are "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986: 391). Such beliefs are thought to guide people's choices of activities and environments and have been shown to predict academic and career-related choices (Hackett and Betz, 1981; Sadri and Robertson, 1993). We contend that people who believe in their capacity to influence others are more likely to choose jobs whose duties require using interpersonal influence tactics. Three fields in which interpersonal influence tactics are particularly instrumental to task accomplishment and are therefore particularly likely to attract individuals who are competent at using such tactics are politics, law, and sales.

Political scientists have long recognized that politics in many democracies has become more personalized over time (Caprara and Zimbardo, 2004). Political choices increasingly depend on the level of positive affect and liking toward candidates, and in turn candidates have become more concerned with conveying favorable personal images and engendering positive affect among potential voters than with staunchly promoting a political ideology (Edelman, 1988; Caprara and Zimbardo, 2004), which may explain the increasing use of ingratiation tactics in political campaigns (Schütz, 1993). Political psychologists have suggested how electoral candidates use flattery to elicit positive affect and liking

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among key voters and potential donors (Kuklinski, 2001; Brader, 2006; Neuman et al., 2007) and how they exploit similarity-attraction biases by conveying their similarity to potential supporters (Deutsch, 1998). Similar to politicians who use ingratiation to enhance their likeability among the electorate, lawyers use ingratiation to enhance their likeability and trust among jurors and witnesses (Blunk and Sales, 1977; Brodsky and Cannon, 2006). Moderate levels of ingratiation toward a jury during the voir dire and trial can engender positive affect for the lawyer and his or her client, which may lead to a more favorable verdict (Vonk, 2002; Alicke, 2000). Ingratiation also abounds in sales settings, where it is used to influence buyers by getting them to like the salesperson (Brown, 1990; Strutton, Pelton, and Tanner, 1996; McFarland, Challagalla, and Shervani, 2006). Just as politicians and lawyers influence potential voters and legal decision makers to “buy” arguments, salespeople influence consumers to buy products and services through ingratiation behavior. Salespeople’s use of ingratiation is consistent with literature noting the value of interpersonal attractiveness (Ahearne, Gruen, and Jarvis, 1999), similarity (Crosby, Evans, and Cowles, 1990), and liking (Doney and Cannon, 1997) in professional selling, as ingratiation engenders influence by increasing positive affect and liking through triggering similarity-attraction bias.

Because ingratiation attempts that are too obvious will backfire on the ingratiator, politicians, lawyers, and salespeople must be sophisticated in their use of ingratiation. Numerous surveys suggest that most Americans hold a cynical view of politicians, believing many to be corrupt and self-serving (Berman, 1997; Bennett, 1997; Balz, 2007). Thus politicians must be adept at overcoming voters’ intrinsic suspicion and distrust of their motives. Political psychologists have therefore suggested that politicians must learn to overcome cynicism by engaging in sophisticated social influence tactics such as subtly conveying personal values that are held by key voters and potential donors (Kuklinski, 2001; Mondak and Huckfeldt, 2006) or referring to social affiliations held in common with potential supporters (i.e., in speeches or interpersonal interactions) (Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1995; Kuklinski, 2001; Brader, 2006). As discussed above, making common group affiliations salient and engaging in value conformity tends to increase presumptive trust between individuals and reduce suspicion about the motives underlying their behavior by triggering in-group bias, and practical guides give lawyers similar advice (Crawford and Morris, 2005). Because jurors are aware of the attorney’s role as an advocate, their level of suspicion may be heightened. Attorneys should therefore ingratiate themselves with jurors in such a way that jurors do not see their ingratiation ploy as obvious impression management (Suggs and Sales, 1978). Lawyers are advised to employ such ingratiation tactics as “concerned but polite questioning about health of older members of the panel, joking with the panel, and making it known to the members of the panel that they and the attorney have mutual acquaintances or associations through employment or social activities” (Suggs and Sales, 1978: 371). Another vocation that suffers from low levels of trust and high levels of

cynicism is sales. In a recent survey, only 10 percent of consumers expressed any degree of trust in salespeople, which was second only to politicians (9 percent) (Ipsos-Reid, 2003). Hence salespeople, like politicians and lawyers, must be sophisticated in their use of ingratiation. Accordingly, salespeople are advised to match their use of ingratiation tactics to different buyers' orientations (McFarland, Challagalla, and Shervani, 2006) and use flattery judiciously (Strutton, Pelton, and Lumpkin, 1995).

Politicians, lawyers, and salespeople, then, all need to engage in sophisticated ingratiatory behavior to successfully accomplish the duties of their job. Given that people's self-efficacy beliefs, i.e., their judgments of their capabilities to execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances, are a major determinant of their choice of vocation, electoral politics, law, and sales should attract individuals who are capable of engaging in sophisticated forms of social influence that are less likely to be seen as manipulative or as cynical attempts to curry favor. Moreover, once self-selected into their vocation, politicians, lawyers, and salespeople are likely to further hone their ingratiatory skills through experiential and vicarious learning from their own and their colleagues' experiences (Baron and Byrne, 1997). The learning literature (Ramsey, 2005) would suggest that individuals who are relatively practiced at ingratiation and who have received positive reinforcement for skillful ingratiatory behavior (or negative reinforcement for obvious ingratiation) should tend to have acquired a relatively sophisticated style of interpersonal influence behavior characterized by subtle forms of flattery and opinion conformity. As one top manager put it when asked whether and why he was skilled at interpersonal influence, "I've probably always had some skill in that area but I certainly got better at it as a lawyer—you have to suck up to juries and witnesses, and you have to be clever about it . . . [*when asked to elaborate:*] you have to learn how to do it in a non-obvious way." In response to the same question, another top manager with a background in sales noted, "I got good at the art of ingratiation as a salesman . . . you learn that ingratiation works but people are not dumb. If you knock people over the head with it—'my, madam don't you look beautiful today' they won't trust you . . . you have to figure out ways of doing it that don't say 'I am ingratiating you now.'" Accordingly, we expect that top managers and directors with a background in politics, law, or sales will be especially likely to engage in sophisticated forms of ingratiation, which are less likely to be interpreted by the influence target as manipulative or political in intent. This leads to the following set of hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 3:** Top managers who have a background in politics, law, or sales will engage in more sophisticated forms of flattery toward their CEOs; outside directors who have a background in politics, law, or sales will engage in more sophisticated forms of flattery toward fellow outside directors.

**Hypothesis 4:** Top managers who have a background in politics, law, or sales will engage in more sophisticated forms of opinion conformity toward their CEOs; outside directors who have a background in politics, law, or sales will engage in more sophisticated forms of opinion conformity toward fellow outside directors.

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**Socioeconomic background.** The sophistication of leaders' ingratiation behavior may also be influenced by their socioeconomic background. In particular, managers and directors with an upper-class background should tend to engage in more sophisticated forms of flattery and opinion conformity. Members of the upper class acquire social status from birth (i.e., they are born into high-status families), and a long tradition of qualitative research in sociology suggests that members of the upper class are socialized into a subculture that favors certain forms of social interaction and communication (Baltzell, 1958; Jaher, 1982; Palmer and Barber, 2001). One distinctive characteristic of upper-class culture is a normative preference for subtlety in interpersonal communication and an aversion to blunt or especially direct forms of communication (Baltzell, 1958; Burt, 1963; Jaher, 1982; Birmingham, 1987). In effect, displaying a subtle or refined interpersonal style is one way that social elites signal their upper-class status, while blunt forms of speech betray one's lower-class origins (Baltzell, 1958; Jaher, 1982; Birmingham, 1987). Subtlety in upper-class culture, in common parlance, and as defined in the *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (1996: 1898), is characterized by "non-obviousness" in personal expression, "refinement" and "skillfulness" in communication, and, as qualitative and literary sources on upper-class behavior also suggest, it can involve communication that "operates insidiously" (i.e., the motive or purpose of the interaction is disguised) (Baltzell, 1958; Jaher, 1982; Quinn, 1996; Wharton, 1996). The various forms of sophisticated opinion conformity and flattery examined in our study are characterized by subtlety in these various senses of the word. Accordingly, managers and directors who come from an upper-class background should tend to favor the subtle forms of ingratiation discussed above, while avoiding relatively blunt or obvious forms of flattery and opinion conformity. As one manager whom we interviewed put it, ". . . where I come from [an upper-class family in Boston] if you want someone to know you like them you wouldn't just come out and say 'I really like you,' that would be considered boorish or crude . . . unrefined. You'd find a more subtle, less obvious way to communicate that feeling."

Baltzell (1958: 63) described upper-class culture as "a powerful learning environment" and suggested that upper-class norms are perpetuated by "an intricate web of exclusive associations" that create strong socialization pressures (Baltzell, 1958: 49; see also Domhoff, 2002). Having been socialized from birth into a subculture that favors subtle forms of communication, including subtle forms of flattery and opinion conformity, managers and directors with an upper-class background are more likely to have acquired a sophisticated style of ingratiation through social learning. This suggests the following, additional hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 5:** Top managers who have an upper-class background will engage in more sophisticated forms of flattery toward their CEOs; outside directors who have an upper-class background will engage in more sophisticated forms of flattery toward fellow outside directors.

**Hypothesis 6:** Top managers who have an upper-class background will engage in more sophisticated forms of opinion conformity toward their CEOs; outside directors who have an upper-class background will engage in more sophisticated forms of opinion conformity toward fellow outside directors.

## METHODS

### Sample and Data Collection

The survey sample frame for this study included top managers and outside directors from 350 companies randomly selected from the 1,000 largest U.S. industrial and service firms for which archival data were available. If the company had more than eight senior officers, we randomly selected eight to receive the manager survey. To assess interrater reliability of the measures, a separate survey was sent to all CEOs of firms in the sample frame. The surveys were distributed in January 2004. To provide supplementary tests of our theoretical arguments, separate questionnaires were also sent in January 2006 to directors who served on nominating committees in the sample frame of potential hiring firms (this survey is described further below).

We conducted a qualitative pretest for the questionnaires that included detailed interviews with 31 top managers and directors at large and mid-sized U.S. firms (23 were in the survey population). We used feedback from these interviews to refine the format and instructions for the questionnaires, making them easier to complete while also increasing the reliability of responses (cf. Stevens et al., 2005). The cover letter framed the survey as part of a larger program of research on corporate governance and strategic decision making, noting that thousands of managers and directors had participated in previous surveys. Moreover, the project was endorsed by a well-known corporate leader, and two subsequent waves of questionnaires were sent to non-respondents (Bednar and Westphal, 2006; Cychota and Harrison, 2006). Nine hundred and twenty-three top managers, 765 outside directors, and 134 CEOs responded, yielding response rates of 41 percent, 40 percent, and 38 percent, respectively, for the initial surveys.

We examined the representativeness of the sample using Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) two-sample tests and Heckman sample selection models. The K-S test assesses whether the mean and distribution of interval-scale variables are significantly different for respondents and non-respondents. The results of these tests provided no evidence for non-response bias with respect to any of the interval-scale variables measured with archival data (e.g., management experience, market-to-book value, and number of board appointments). We also estimated Heckman models as a multivariate test for non-response bias. The selection equation estimated the likelihood of responding to the survey and included all the independent and control variables measured with archival data, including the measures of managers' and directors' backgrounds discussed below. The selection parameter was non-significant in these models, and the hypothesized results were unchanged from those presented below. Overall, these analyses provided substantial evidence that non-response bias is not confounding our hypothesized results.

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We obtained demographic and biographical data from a variety of sources that have been used in prior research on corporate elites, including *Standard and Poor's Register*, *Dun and Bradstreet's Reference Book of Corporate Management*, *Marquis' Who's Who*, the *Social Register*, corporate proxy statements, and annual company reports (Useem and Karabel, 1986; Broad, 1996; Palmer and Barber, 2001; Burris, 2002; Domhoff, 2002). Data on the gender and ethnicity of top managers and directors were provided by a large management consulting firm. Data on board membership and other characteristics came from proxy statements, and we obtained data on firm performance from COMPUSTAT.

## **Measures**

We used feedback from the pretest interviews to increase the construct validity of our survey measures. We asked participants to comment on each scale item in the questionnaire to identify questions that might elicit a biased response and to check whether respondents interpreted the questions as expected. The scales included multiple response formats to minimize response bias. Moreover, some of the questions in each scale asked respondents to report the number of times a specific behavior occurred, which should enhance construct validity (DeVellis, 1991).

*Amount of flattery and opinion conformity.* To operationalize the level of flattery and opinion conformity, we adapted survey scales that were previously developed and validated by Westphal and Stern (2006, 2007) for a similar sample in an earlier time period (scales are provided in the Appendix). As discussed above, ingratiation involves the use of flattery and opinion conformity in an attempt to gain favor with another individual (Jones and Pittman, 1982; Kumar and Beyerlein, 1991; Ellis et al., 2002; Higgins and Judge, 2004). Thus our survey measures should gauge the ingratiation intent of the focal actor (i.e., the extent to which compliments and agreement reflect an attempt to gain favor with another). Some of the scale items ask directly about intent (e.g., "How often have you made a complimentary remark . . . mainly to gain [his/her] favor?"), and other items gauge intent indirectly. For example, several items ask respondents whether they have made compliments or expressed agreement in ways that somewhat exaggerate or overstate their opinion (e.g., "To what extent have you expressed confidence in [the CEO's] strategic judgment in a way that somewhat exaggerates your actual confidence in [his/her] judgment?"), as classic theoretical perspectives and empirical research suggest that ingratiation routinely involves exaggerating or distorting one's opinions and beliefs in complimenting or agreeing with an influence target (Jones and Pittman, 1982; Kumar and Beyerlein, 1991). Factor analysis with promax rotation indicated that scale items loaded on two factors as expected, with high inter-item reliability for each scale (alphas for the flattery and opinion conformity scales were .89 and .91, respectively), consistent with past research. We were also able to conduct a partial assessment of interrater agreement. Although our theory would suggest that CEOs and fellow directors cannot reliably assess the ingratiation intent of a focal actor, they can nevertheless report on the focal actor's behavior. Thus CEOs

and fellow directors responded to a parallel set of survey items about the focal actor's behavior that excluded references to intent (e.g., "How often has [the manager/director] made a complimentary remark about your insight on a particular strategic issue?"). We assessed interrater agreement using the weighted kappa coefficient, which corrects for agreement between raters that would be expected by chance. Kappas above .75 are usually taken to indicate excellent agreement, and values between .4 and .75 are thought to reflect fair to good agreement (Fleiss, 1981). As shown in the Appendix, kappas ranged from .73 to .90, indicating good to excellent agreement. These high levels of agreement held for both samples (i.e., top-manager-CEO dyads and outside director dyads).

*Sophisticated forms of flattery and opinion conformity.* We developed multi-item survey scales to assess the extent to which top managers and directors engage in each of the specific forms of flattery and opinion conformity that our theoretical argument suggests are likely to be relatively effective in engendering social influence (scales are provided in the Appendix). To reduce response bias, as noted above, each scale included a variety of response formats, and some items ask respondents to indicate the number of times a particular form of flattery or opinion conformity behavior occurred during a specified period of time. Confirmatory factor analysis indicated that items in each scale loaded on the same factor as expected, with high levels of inter-item reliability for each of the seven scales (alphas ranged from .87 to .95). We estimated factor scores for all measures using the Bartlett method. We were also able to conduct a partial assessment of interrater agreement. As noted above, though CEOs and fellow directors cannot reliably assess the ingratiation intent of a focal actor, they can report on the focal person's behavior. Thus the CEO and director surveys included a parallel set of items about the focal actor's behavior that excluded references to intent. Again, kappa coefficients were consistently in the range of good-to-excellent agreement for both samples.

We also conducted a second-order, confirmatory factor analysis of the seven flattery and opinion conformity measures, using the iterated principal factors method. Fit indexes for the measurement model were consistently high, suggesting a strong model fit (CFI index = .98; RMSEA index = .03;  $\chi^2$  was non-significant [ $p$ -value > .20]) (Digman, 1997; Byrne, 2005; DeYoung, 2006). The results of this analysis are consistent with our theory. We argued that managers and directors who have particular vocational and socioeconomic backgrounds should be relatively skilled at sophisticated forms of interpersonal influence behavior (i.e., due to selection factors and social learning), and thus the sophistication of ingratiation can be viewed as a second-order construct that underpins different forms of flattery and opinion conformity. Consistent with this perspective, the second-order factor analysis confirmed that while the different forms of flattery and opinion conformity are logically distinct behaviors (i.e., the survey items load on seven different first-order factors, corresponding to the various forms of sophisticated flattery and opinion conformity), they also collectively represent an

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underlying, behavioral propensity to engage in sophisticated forms of ingratiation (i.e., the first-order factors are significantly correlated with each other and load on a second-order or meta factor that encompasses the various forms of ingratiation behavior). Thus in addition to the primary analyses that estimate each kind of sophisticated flattery and opinion conformity separately, we conducted further analyses that estimate the second-order factor for sophisticated ingratiation.<sup>1</sup>

*Manager and director background.* In the primary analyses, we used a set of dichotomous variables to operationalize managers' and directors' backgrounds. One variable was coded 1 if the individual had previously held a position in sales, a second variable was coded 1 if the individual had previously been employed as a lawyer, and a third variable was coded 1 if the individual had previously held an elected office at the state or federal levels. To measure upper-class background, we created a dummy variable coded 1 if the individual was listed in the *Social Register* and/or attended an exclusive preparatory ("prep") school, with exclusivity designations taken from Palmer and Barber (2001), Useem and Karabel (1986), and Domhoff (1970) (also Levine, 1980). Extensive qualitative and descriptive research in sociology has validated inclusion in the *Social Register* and attendance at exclusive prep schools as valid indicators of upper-class status (Broad, 1996; for reviews, see Baltzell, 1958; Domhoff, 2002), and a long line of quantitative, empirical studies has used these characteristics to indicate such status (e.g., Useem and Karabel, 1986; Ratcliff, 1987; Burris, 1991, 2001; Palmer and Barber, 2001). Moreover, this variable was highly correlated with membership in an exclusive social club ( $p < .001$ ) for managers and directors in our sample, which some authors have suggested provides another indicator of upper-class status (e.g., Baltzell, 1958; Jaher, 1982; Domhoff, 2002). We also included a survey measure of class background that asked respondents to indicate whether they considered themselves to have a middle- or working-class background (with upper class as the omitted category). There was a high level of agreement between the archival measure of upper-class background and responses to the survey question (93 percent), and as discussed below, the hypothesized results were unchanged using the survey measure of class background.

For the primary analyses, we used archival data sources to develop the measures of vocational background but also examined the association between these variables and responses to survey questions that asked respondents to indicate whether they had a background in sales, politics, or law, among other vocations. Again, there was a high level of agreement between the archival measures and responses to the survey questions (96 percent, 98 percent, and 94 percent for sales, law, and politics, respectively). We also developed a set of measures that gauged the number of years that individuals had spent in each field, using archival data supplemented with survey data. We used these measures in supplementary tests of hypotheses 3 and 4, and the results presented below were substantively unchanged.

<sup>1</sup> In this respect, the second-order construct of sophisticated ingratiation is analogous to general intelligence or general knowledge, which have been commonly modeled as second-order constructs that underpin different types of intelligence or knowledge as first-order constructs (e.g., Sternberg et al., 2001; Lynn and Irving, 2002).



*Board appointments.* We developed dichotomous measures to indicate whether the focal manager (or director) was appointed to a particular board ( $x_i$ ) where the CEO (or fellow director) served on the nominating committee at the time of the survey. In the primary analyses, we examined appointments at the 2500 largest U.S. industrial and service firms for which data were available. In separate analyses, we examined appointments at the largest 2000 firms, 1500 firms, and 1000 firms, and the hypothesized results presented below were unchanged. Moreover, in the primary analysis, we examined board appointments over the two-year period following the survey. Further analyses showed that the results were robust to examining board appointments over the subsequent one-year period and three-year period.<sup>2</sup>

**Control variables.** We controlled for behavioral processes that prior research would suggest could be associated with ingratiation, including a survey measure of self-presentation, adapted from a measure developed by Stevens and Kristof (1995) ( $\alpha = .85$ , kappa = .76); a survey measure of friendship between members of the focal dyad (e.g., the focal manager and CEO) (Seidel, Polzer, and Stewart, 2000) (kappa = .86); social interaction between members of the dyad over the prior six-month period ( $\alpha = .85$ , kappa = .80); the number of social affiliations held in common between members of the dyad, using a survey question that asked respondents to indicate shared memberships in professional and non-professional organizations; a survey measure of self-monitoring, using a shortened version of Snyder and Gangestad's (1986) self-monitoring scale (Liden and Mitchell, 1988; cf. Mehra, Kilduff, and Brass, 2001) (alpha = .85).

We also controlled for a variety of factors that could influence board appointments, including using dichotomous variables to indicate whether the focal individual was an ethnic minority or a woman (Hillman, Cannella, and Harris, 2002); the number of board appointments held by the focal person and the number of years the individual has served as top executive at one or more firms in the sample frame; a dichotomous variable indicating whether the focal individual serves as inside director; the number of board appointments held by the other member of the dyad; a set of variables that indicate the vocational background of the potential influence target; survey measures of monitoring and control behavior by directors and the provision of advice and information by directors to CEOs (for the sample of outside directors) (Westphal and Stern, 2007) ( $\alpha = .86$  and  $.89$ , kappa =  $.79$  and  $.81$  for monitoring and advice giving, respectively); and industry-adjusted market-to-book value of the focal individual's firm and the potential hiring firm. We also developed a control variable for board independence at the potential hiring firm that includes 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. Zajac and Westphal, 1996; Pollock, Fischer, and Wade, 2002; Finkelstein, Hambrick, and Cannella, 2009). We combined these variables into a single index using principal components analysis ( $\alpha = .81$ ). Finally, we controlled for the level of flattery and opinion conformity in estimating the

<sup>2</sup> In some cases, the CEO or fellow director who served on the potential hiring board at the time of the survey may depart before the focal individual joins the board. Our preliminary interviews and survey data indicated that directors are sometimes asked to recommend a possible replacement when they announce their intention to leave a board. Although our theoretical arguments apply equally well to this scenario, as discussed further below, we conducted supplemental analyses that controlled for the departure of the CEO (or fellow director) from the potential hiring board after the survey.

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effects of vocational background and socioeconomic background on the use of sophisticated forms of ingratiation.

### **Analysis**

We used logistic regression analysis to test the hypothesized effects of sophisticated forms of ingratiation on the likelihood of receiving board appointments. We conducted the analysis for two samples: dyadic combinations of responding managers and boards where the manager's CEO served on the nominating committee (N = 2466) and dyadic combinations of responding outside directors and boards where a fellow director served on the nominating committee (N = 3386). Because multiple dyads can involve the same individual (manager or director) or the same board, we corrected for non-independence of observations using the "cluster" subcommand in STATA (StataCorp, 2005). In separate models, we randomly selected one observation per cluster, and the hypothesized results presented below were substantively unchanged. We also ran separate analyses at the manager level and the director level using Poisson regression to estimate the number of board appointments. To develop independent variables for these models, we aggregated ingratiation behavior across potential influence targets (i.e., other board members for the sample of directors). Again, the hypothesized results were consistent with those reported below. We tested the hypothesized effects of managers' and directors' backgrounds on sophisticated forms of flattery and opinion conformity using multiple regression analysis, correcting for non-independence of observations using the "cluster" option.

## **RESULTS**

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations are displayed in table 1. There is no evidence for multicollinearity in the models: the highest variance inflation factor (VIF) is less than 10 and the mean VIF is not significantly greater than 1 in all models (Chatterjee, Hadi, and Price, 2000). The use of sophisticated ingratiation tactics was not rare among the managers and directors in our sample. Among individuals who engaged in some level of flattery or opinion conformity during the prior twelve months, more than half (62 percent) used at least one of the sophisticated forms of flattery and at least one of the sophisticated forms of opinion conformity we identified. Table 2 provides the results of logistic regression models of board appointments. The interactions reported in models 3 and 9 provide strong support for hypothesis 1 (Allison, 1977): flattery by a top manager toward the CEO or by an outside director toward a fellow director had a more positive effect on the likelihood of receiving a board appointment where alter served on the nominating committee to the extent that the focal manager (or director) (1) frames flattery as likely to make alter uncomfortable, (2) frames flattery as advice seeking, (3) compliments alter to alter's friend, (4) engages in value conformity prior to flattery, or (5) references social affiliations held in common with alter prior to flattery. The results in models 3 and 9 also generally support hypothesis 2: opinion conformity by a top manager toward the CEO or by an outside director toward a fellow director had a more

Table 1

**Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Coefficients\***

Independent variable	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
<b>Mean</b>			.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	4.36	.11	.14	.24	.00	.00	.19	.18
<b>S.D.</b>			.98	.96	.98	.98	.97	.98	.96	.98	.97	6.49	.31	.35	.43	.93	.89	.39	.39
1. Amount of flattery	.00	.97		.49	.26	.30	.12	.18	.27	.26	.25	.04	.08	.07	-.08	-.03	.06	.16	.02
2. Amount of opinion conformity	.00	.95	.48		.13	.14	.25	.33	.15	.25	.23	.05	.07	.09	-.09	-.04	.05	.15	.03
3. Framing flattery as likely to make alter uncomfortable	.00	.98	.24	.15		.47	.36	.37	.42	.44	.43	.02	-.16	-.08	-.05	-.02	.03	.21	.04
4. Framing flattery as advice seeking	.00	.98	.26	.13	.47		.39	.39	.45	.46	.46	.02	-.23	-.07	-.07	-.03	.02	.28	.03
5. Arguing prior to conforming	.00	.98	.11	.22	.38	.36		.46	.39	.43	.44	.01	-.25	-.10	-.05	-.04	.01	.25	.05
6. Conforming to opinions expressed by alter to third party	.00	.98	.16	.30	.39	.37	.49		.42	.41	.42	.02	-.06	-.11	-.03	-.02	.05	.27	.02
7. Complimenting alter to alter's friend	.00	.95	.25	.13	.44	.46	.37	.40		.43	.45	.03	-.22	-.13	-.06	-.05	.03	.30	.02
8. Value conformity prior to flattery/opinion conformity	.00	.98	.27	.24	.42	.43	.45	.41	.45		.45	.01	-.24	-.12	-.05	-.06	.01	.31	.03
9. Referencing social affil. in common with alter prior to flattery/opinion conf.	.00	.96	.23	.24	.45	.45	.43	.46	.47	.46		.05	-.22	-.17	-.06	-.01	.02	.23	.02
10. Social affiliations held in common	4.40	6.44	.04	.06	.03	.02	.03	.01	.04	.02	.06		-.12	-.10	.25	.14	-.07	.01	.01
11. Ethnic minority	.05	.22	.05	.02	-.15	-.24	-.27	-.08	-.21	-.26	-.20	-.14		-.03	-.12	-.06	.17	.11	-.01
12. Woman	.06	.24	.03	.01	-.09	-.14	-.08	-.12	-.15	-.17	-.20	-.09	-.05		-.08	-.06	.15	.05	.02
13. Friendship tie	.30	.46	-.07	-.09	-.04	-.06	-.04	-.05	-.05	-.06	-.03	.22	-.17	-.15		.29	.04	.08	.02
14. Level of social interaction	.00	.94	-.02	-.02	-.03	-.02	-.03	-.01	-.04	-.04	.00	.15	-.10	-.08	.33		-.04	.07	.03
15. Self-presentation	.00	.89	.08	.07	.02	.03	.01	.04	.05	-.01	-.01	-.04	.14	.08	.02	-.06		.16	-.02
16. Sales/marketing background	.22	.42	.14	.17	.22	.24	.25	.23	.27	.27	.24	.02	.09	.07	.06	.06	.14		.12
17. Alter sales/marketing background	.21	.41	.01	.02	.02	.04	.03	.04	.03	.02	.02	-.01	.00	.01	.02	.02	-.01	.10	
18. Background in politics	.07	.26	.11	.15	.20	.23	.23	.20	.22	.17	.21	-.01	-.02	-.04	.01	.04	.08	.05	.02
19. Alter background in politics	.07	.26	.01	.01	.01	.03	.01	.02	.03	.01	.00	.03	.01	.00	-.02	-.01	-.02	.03	.04
20. Legal background	.16	.36	.16	.12	.25	.26	.28	.22	.23	.22	.29	.00	.05	.08	-.01	.02	.02	-.17	-.03
21. Alter legal background	.12	.33	-.01	.00	-.03	-.04	-.01	-.02	-.05	-.04	-.05	-.01	-.01	-.01	-.02	-.03	-.01	-.02	-.15
22. Listing in <i>Social Register</i> /attendance at exclusive prep school	.12	.32	.19	.17	.18	.17	.20	.11	.16	.21	.17	.11	-.31	-.09	.12	.01	-.13	-.04	.01
23. Alter listing in <i>Social Register</i> /attendance at prep school	.15	.36	.05	.07	-.02	-.01	-.03	-.02	-.01	.00	-.01	.03	.01	-.01	.03	.02	.05	.01	-.05
24. Number of board appts.	.83	.81	-.02	-.01	.01	.00	.00	.02	.01	.02	.01	.03	-.19	-.14	.05	.02	.01	.04	-.01
25. Alter number of board appts.	2.54	1.73	.22	.25	.15	.16	.17	.14	.20	.21	.13	.02	-.01	.00	.01	.05	.13	.00	.02
26. Management experience	8.63	8.25	.02	.04	.08	.11	.07	.08	.08	.10	.09	.04	-.09	-.08	.02	.02	.04	.07	.01
27. Independence of potential hiring board	.00	1.37	-.01	.00	.01	.00	-.02	-.01	-.01	-.02	.01	-.01	.00	-.01	.01	-.02	-.01	.01	.03
28. Market-to-book value—focal firm	.01	.51	-.01	-.01	-.02	-.01	.01	.01	-.01	-.01	.01	.02	.02	.03	-.01	.01	-.01	.01	.02
29. Market-to-book value—potential hiring firm	.01	.43	.00	.01	.00	.02	.00	-.01	.03	.00	-.01	.00	.00	-.01	.00	.01	.02	.02	.02
30. Inside director	.17	.38	.07	.04	.05	.03	.05	.01	.02	.03	.05	.04	-.06	-.05	.18	.21	-.06	.03	.01
31. Self-monitoring	.00	.96	.08	.11	.14	.08	.09	.16	.15	.22	.20	.02	-.05	.16	-.02	.06	.26	.17	.05
32. Monitoring and control	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
33. Provision of advice and information	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
34. Board appointment	.10	.29	.18	.19	.25	.21	.14	.18	.24	.27	.25	.03	-.14	-.18	.09	.04	.04	.17	.02

(continued)

## Influence Behavior

Table 1 (continued)

Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Coefficients*																	
Independent variable	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34
Mean	.14	.16	.21	.22	.13	.14	.85	1.6	12	.00	.01	.01	–	.00	.00	.00	.11
S.D.	.35	.36	.41	.41	.33	.35	1.1	1.3	10	1.4	.55	.42	–	.95	.97	.99	.32
1. Amount of flattery	.13	.02	.18	–.02	.17	.06	.01	.20	.03	–.02	–.02	.01	–	.10	–.08	–.06	.20
2. Amount of opinion conformity	.14	.01	.15	–.01	.15	.06	.02	.22	.04	.01	.01	.01	–	.09	–.11	–.07	.22
3. Framing flattery as likely to make alter uncomfortable	.21	.00	.22	–.04	.16	–.02	.02	.17	.05	–.01	–.01	.01	–	.13	–.09	.03	.23
4. Framing flattery as advice seeking	.22	.02	.24	–.03	.15	–.01	.03	.15	.07	.01	.00	–.01	–	.09	–.08	.02	.18
5. Arguing prior to conforming	.23	.02	.25	–.03	.14	–.03	–.02	.18	.06	.00	–.02	.00	–	.09	–.09	.03	.11
6. Conforming to opinions expressed by alter to third party	.21	.01	.23	–.02	.13	–.02	.01	.12	.09	.02	.02	.01	–	.12	–.07	.04	.19
7. Complimenting alter to alter's friend	.23	.01	.24	–.04	.16	–.01	.01	.16	.07	–.01	.00	.02	–	.14	–.11	.04	.27
8. Value conformity prior to flattery/opinion conformity	.19	.03	.21	–.06	.23	.00	.03	.18	.08	–.01	.00	.01	–	.18	–.11	.03	.28
9. Referencing social affil. in common with alter prior to flattery/opinion conf.	.24	.00	.26	–.04	.21	–.01	.01	.14	.1	–.01	.02	.01	–	.19	–.10	.03	.22
10. Social affiliations held in common	.02	.01	–.02	–.01	.14	.02	.06	.01	.05	.01	.03	.01	–	.01	–.03	.01	.02
11. Ethnic minority	–.03	.02	.06	.01	–.21	.02	–.16	.02	–.04	.01	–.01	.00	–	–.06	.09	.07	–.18
12. Woman	–.07	.01	.10	.00	–.08	.01	–.09	.01	–.03	.02	.01	–.02	–	.19	.11	.07	–.22
13. Friendship tie	.04	–.01	–.03	.01	.07	.02	.04	–.01	.03	.00	–.02	–.01	–	–.03	–.03	.02	.10
14. Level of social interaction	.06	.01	.01	–.01	.04	.02	.05	.04	.03	–.01	–.02	.01	–	.05	.01	.01	.03
15. Self-presentation	.11	.01	.05	–.01	–.15	.08	.02	.12	.07	–.02	–.03	.03	–	.29	–.02	.00	.05
16. Sales/marketing background	.06	.02	–.21	–.01	–.07	–.01	.05	.00	.06	.00	.02	–.01	–	.20	–.07	.04	.21
17. Alter sales/marketing background	.01	.02	–.02	–.17	.02	–.05	.00	.04	–.01	.02	.03	.01	–	.04	–.02	.01	.04
18. Background in politics		.08	.18	.04	.11	–.01	.05	.01	–.24	.01	–.01	.01	–	.08	–.10	.02	.20
19. Alter background in politics	.06		.04	.19	–.02	.11	.01	.04	–.03	.00	–.02	–.03	–	.03	–.01	–.01	.05
20. Legal background	.19	.05		–.03	.03	–.02	.07	–.01	–.25	.01	–.02	.01	–	.14	–.06	.04	.23
21. Alter legal background	.05	.20	–.04		–.03	.03	.01	.08	.01	–.02	–.02	.01	–	.06	–.01	.00	.05
22. Listing in <i>Social Register</i> /attendance at exclusive prep school	.12	–.01	.02	–.01		.09	.07	.01	–.04	.01	–.04	–.02	–	.12	–.08	–.07	.24
23. Alter listing in <i>Social Register</i> /attendance at prep school	.00	.09	–.01	.02	.06		.02	.08	–.01	.02	–.04	–.01	–	.02	.01	.02	.09
24. Number of board appts.	.03	.00	.05	.02	.05	.01		.06	.09	.01	.01	–.01	–	.07	–.06	.09	.16
25. Alter number of board appts.	–.01	.02	–.01	.06	.01	.06	.04		.02	.03	.01	–.01	–	.02	–.01	.01	.09
26. Management experience	–.21	–.03	–.26	–.01	–.03	–.01	.01	.01		–.02	.03	.02	–	.13	–.04	.07	.04
27. Independence of potential hiring board	.00	.01	.00	–.01	.02	.01	–.01	.01	–.01		.01	–.02	–	–.03	.02	.00	.02
28. Market-to-book value—focal firm	–.02	–.03	.01	–.02	–.03	–.05	.02	.02	.01	.00		.02	–	.00	–.04	–.03	.02
29. Market-to-book value—potential hiring firm	.00	–.01	.00	.01	–.01	–.01	.02	.02	.01	–.03	.02		–	.01	.01	–.01	.04
30. Inside director	.02	–.01	–.04	–.02	.06	–.01	.19	.00	.22	–.01	.00	–.01	–	–	–	–	–
31. Self-monitoring	.06	.01	.09	.04	.11	.00	.07	.02	.12	–.02	.01	.00	.03		–.12	.07	.10
32. Monitoring and control	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–.18	–.13
33. Provision of advice and information	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	.19
34. Board appointment	.21	.04	.18	.03	.20	.07	.14	.11	.03	–.03	–.01	–.03	.06	.12	–	.19	

\* Statistics are provided for the sample of top-manager-CEO dyads in the lower half of the matrix (N = 2466) and for the sample of outside director dyads in the top half of the matrix (N = 3386).

Table 2

**Logistic Regression Models of Board Appointments\***

Independent variable	Sample of Top-manager-CEO Dyads (N = 2466)						Sample of Outside Director Dyads (N = 3386)					
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
Amount of flattery		0.472** (0.185)	0.446* (0.188)					0.452** (0.165)	0.453** (0.168)			
Amount of opinion conformity		0.588** (0.212)	0.556** (0.213)					0.487** (0.187)	0.482** (0.187)			
Framing flattery as likely to make alter uncomfortable		0.232** (0.073)	0.269** (0.089)					0.138** (0.047)	0.162** (0.057)			
Framing flattery as advice seeking		0.197** (0.073)	0.242** (0.090)					0.129* (0.058)	0.154* (0.071)			
Arguing prior to conforming		0.158 (0.083)	0.153 (0.083)					0.085 (0.055)	0.079 (0.055)			
Conforming to opinions expressed by alter to third party		0.219* (0.089)	0.216* (0.089)					0.173* (0.073)	0.171* (0.074)			
Complimenting alter to alter's friend		0.360** (0.122)	0.396** (0.138)					0.311** (0.097)	0.334** (0.110)			
Value conformity prior to flattery/opinion conformity		0.476*** (0.130)	0.563*** (0.164)					0.346** (0.105)	0.385** (0.121)			
Referencing social affil. in common with alter prior to flattery/opinion conf.		0.366*** (0.109)	0.443*** (0.134)					0.235** (0.078)	0.285** (0.096)			
Amount of flattery × Framing flattery as likely to make alter uncomfortable			0.257** (0.106)						0.169* (0.074)			
Framing flattery as advice seeking			0.325*** (0.100)						0.227** (0.075)			
Complimenting alter to alter's friend			0.332** (0.121)						0.310*** (0.089)			
Value conformity prior to flattery			0.339** (0.137)						0.216** (0.092)			
Referencing social affil. in common with alter prior to flattery			0.346** (0.122)						0.242** (0.098)			
Amount of opinion conformity × Arguing prior to conforming			0.145 (0.096)						0.114 (0.068)			
Conforming to opinions expressed by alter to third party			0.219* (0.096)						0.195** (0.070)			
Value conformity prior to op. conf.			0.321*** (0.103)						0.257*** (0.076)			
Referencing social affil. in common with alter prior to op. conf.			0.332*** (0.095)						0.244** (0.080)			
Level of ingratiation (2nd-order factor)					0.433** (0.152)	0.421** (0.151)					0.383** (0.141)	0.377** (0.141)
Sophistication of ingratiation (2nd-order factor)					0.167** (0.055)	0.172** (0.057)					0.111** (0.041)	0.116** (0.044)
Level of ingratiation × Sophistication						0.136** (0.044)						0.109*** (0.034)

(continued)

## Influence Behavior

Table 2 (continued)

### Logistic Regression Models of Board Appointments\*

Independent variable	Sample of Top-manager-CEO Dyads (N = 2466)						Sample of Outside Director Dyads (N = 3386)					
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
Social affiliations held in common	0.019 (0.010)	0.019 (0.010)	0.018 (0.010)	0.019 (0.010)	0.018 (0.010)	0.018 (0.010)	0.014 (0.008)	0.013 (0.009)	0.013 (0.009)	0.015 (0.009)	0.013 (0.009)	0.013 (0.009)
Ethnic minority	-0.886* (0.416)	-0.822 (0.417)	-0.802 (0.417)	-1.118** (0.434)	-0.888* (0.436)	-0.885 (0.436)	-1.177*** (0.364)	-0.982** (0.365)	-0.999** (0.366)	-1.235*** (0.383)	-1.047** (0.384)	-1.029** (0.384)
Woman	-1.462** (0.543)	-1.193* (0.545)	-1.144* (0.545)	-1.306* (0.526)	-1.187* (0.527)	-1.187 (0.528)	1.080*** (0.319)	0.934** (0.321)	0.915** (0.321)	1.069*** (0.308)	0.929** (0.308)	0.923** (0.309)
Friendship tie	0.663* (0.309)	0.661* (0.309)	0.656* (0.310)	0.674* (0.305)	0.673* (0.306)	0.667 (0.306)	0.654* (0.282)	0.653* (0.283)	0.645* (0.283)	0.668* (0.281)	0.666* (0.283)	0.663* (0.283)
Level of social interaction	0.193 (.167)	0.190 (0.168)	0.184 (0.168)	0.184 (0.155)	0.180 (0.154)	0.177 (0.156)	0.161 (0.150)	0.157 (0.152)	0.146 (0.153)	0.155 (0.142)	0.151 (0.143)	0.149 (0.143)
Self-presentation	0.169 (0.119)	0.167 (0.120)	0.165 (0.121)	0.166 (0.118)	0.163 (0.119)	0.161 (0.119)	0.124 (0.105)	0.122 (0.105)	0.121 (0.105)	0.123 (0.104)	0.122 (0.104)	0.121 (0.104)
Sales/marketing background	0.874** (0.338)	0.787* (0.339)	0.391 (0.340)	0.797** (0.311)	0.738* (0.313)	0.371 (0.312)	0.779** (0.295)	0.716* (0.296)	0.558 (0.297)	0.721** (0.274)	0.680* (0.275)	0.499 (0.275)
Alter sales/marketing background	-0.526 (0.319)	-0.521 (0.320)	-0.500 (0.320)	-0.494 (0.294)	-0.491 (0.296)	-0.488 (0.296)	-0.353 (0.327)	-0.350 (0.327)	-0.348 (0.328)	-0.337 (0.301)	-0.335 (0.302)	-0.339 (0.302)
Background in politics	3.171** (1.029)	2.763** (1.031)	1.464 (1.031)	3.048** (1.004)	2.737** (1.006)	1.449 (1.006)	0.634** (0.224)	0.561* (0.225)	0.359 (0.226)	0.627** (0.220)	0.557* (0.222)	0.357 (0.222)
Alter background in politics	-0.683 (0.445)	-0.681 (0.445)	-0.642 (0.446)	-0.657 (0.424)	-0.654 (0.425)	-0.650 (0.425)	-0.510 (0.279)	-0.506 (0.279)	-0.501 (0.280)	-0.496 (0.271)	-0.491 (0.270)	-0.491 (0.270)
Legal background	0.833*** (0.257)	0.728** (0.258)	0.447 (0.258)	0.799*** (0.249)	0.724** (0.251)	0.444 (0.251)	0.688** (0.222)	0.572** (0.224)	0.322 (0.225)	0.697** (0.225)	0.592** (0.227)	0.333 (0.227)
Alter legal background	0.310 (0.275)	0.310 (0.275)	0.309 (0.275)	0.300 (0.259)	0.297 (0.258)	0.294 (0.258)	0.430 (0.279)	0.427 (0.279)	0.434 (0.280)	0.423 (0.264)	0.421 (0.265)	0.417 (0.265)
Listing in <i>Social Register</i> /attendance at exclusive prep school	1.091** (0.374)	0.966** (0.376)	0.418 (0.376)	1.026** (0.345)	0.897** (0.346)	0.390 (0.346)	1.058*** (0.325)	0.941** (0.327)	0.452 (0.327)	0.984*** (0.301)	0.879** (0.303)	0.421 (0.303)
Alter listing in <i>Social Register</i> /attendance at exclusive prep school	0.512 (0.311)	0.521 (0.312)	0.536 (0.312)	0.511 (0.300)	0.519 (0.302)	0.513 (0.302)	0.351 (0.296)	0.356 (0.299)	0.342 (0.300)	0.344 (0.286)	0.348 (0.288)	0.339 (0.288)
Number of board appts.	0.419* (0.183)	0.415* (0.183)	0.413* (0.184)	0.430* (0.186)	0.427* (0.187)	0.424* (0.187)	0.252* (0.117)	0.250* (0.118)	0.246* (0.118)	0.263* (0.123)	0.262* (0.123)	0.259* (0.123)
Alter number of board appts.	0.215** (0.082)	0.217** (0.083)	0.224** (0.083)	0.199** (0.077)	0.200** (0.077)	0.200** (0.077)	0.186* (0.085)	0.184* (0.084)	0.183* (0.084)	0.174* (0.080)	0.173* (0.079)	0.170* (0.079)
Management experience	0.013 (0.017)	0.014 (0.017)	0.013 (0.017)	0.013 (0.018)	0.015 (0.019)	0.015 (0.019)	0.014 (0.013)	0.014 (0.013)	0.015 (0.013)	0.015 (0.014)	0.015 (0.014)	0.015 (0.014)
Independence of potential hiring board	-0.158 (0.149)	-0.156 (0.149)	-0.152 (0.149)	-0.144 (0.129)	-0.141 (0.130)	-0.138 (0.130)	0.069 (0.135)	0.065 (0.136)	0.059 (0.137)	0.066 (0.122)	0.062 (0.123)	0.059 (0.122)
Market-to-book value—focal firm	-0.205 (0.302)	-0.203 (0.303)	-0.190 (0.304)	-0.202 (0.297)	-0.201 (0.299)	-0.204 (0.300)	0.192 (0.269)	0.189 (0.270)	0.184 (0.270)	0.191 (0.271)	0.187 (0.271)	0.181 (0.271)
Market-to-book value—potential hiring firm	-0.387 (0.261)	-0.384 (0.261)	-0.382 (0.262)	-0.389 (0.252)	-0.384 (0.253)	-0.381 (0.253)	0.211 (0.237)	0.210 (0.238)	0.211 (0.239)	0.212 (0.233)	0.210 (0.235)	0.207 (0.235)
Inside director	0.451* (0.220)	0.448* (0.221)	0.446* (0.221)	0.438* (0.215)	0.436* (0.217)	0.435* (0.221)						
Self-monitoring	0.140 (0.131)	0.144 (0.132)	0.146 (0.132)	0.142 (0.131)	0.145 (0.131)	0.146 (0.132)	0.066 (0.073)	0.068 (0.074)	0.073 (0.075)	0.072 (0.074)	0.073 (0.075)	0.074 (0.075)
Monitoring and control							-0.173* (0.073)	-0.177* (0.075)	-0.180* (0.075)	-0.176* (0.073)	-0.179* (0.074)	-0.177* (0.074)
Provision of advice and information							0.157** (0.059)	0.159** (0.059)	0.163** (0.060)	0.153** (0.055)	0.152** (0.056)	0.150** (0.056)
Constant	2.292** (0.744)	2.111** (0.746)	1.537* (0.747)	2.164** (0.695)	2.010** (0.698)	1.493* (0.698)	1.801** (0.661)	1.692** (0.663)	1.298 (0.666)	1.753** (0.630)	1.645** (0.633)	1.197 (0.633)
Wald $\chi^2$	140.8***	152.2***	204.9***	123.5***	129.8***	150.1***	143.9***	158.1***	202.6***	131.5***	137.8***	158.3***

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; t-tests are one-tailed for hypothesized effects, two-tailed for control variables.

\* Standard errors are in parentheses.

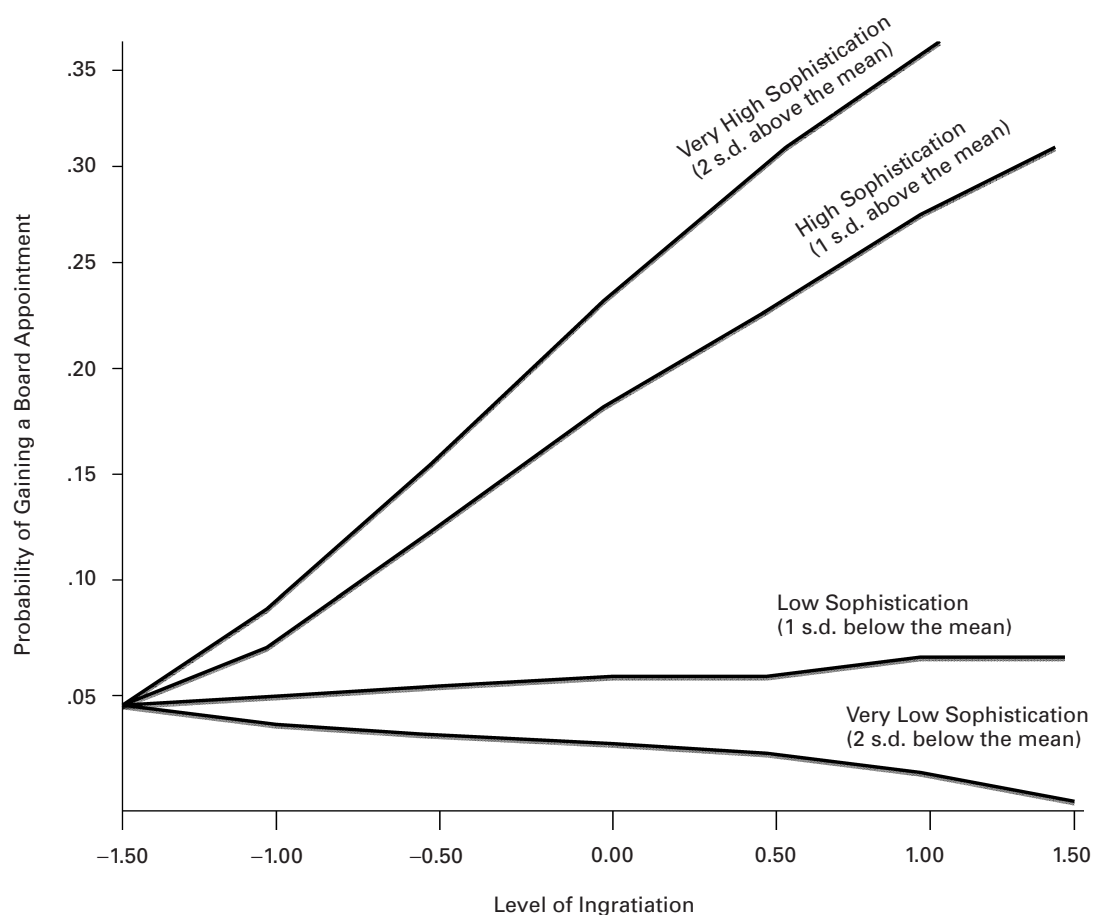
positive effect on the likelihood of receiving a board appointment where alter served on the nominating committee to the extent that the focal manager (or director) (1) conforms to opinions expressed by alter to a third party, (2) engages in value conformity prior to opinion conformity, or (3) references social affiliations held in common with alter prior to opinion conformity. The interaction between the amount of opinion conformity and arguing prior to conforming was non-significant.

As explained earlier, in addition to the primary analyses that estimated each kind of sophisticated flattery and opinion conformity separately, we conducted further tests using second-order confirmatory factor analysis of the seven flattery and opinion conformity measures. As reported in models 6 and 12, the interactions of the second-order construct, which represents an underlying behavioral propensity to engage in sophisticated forms of ingratiation, with the amount of flattery and opinion conformity, are positive and significant for both samples, providing additional support to hypotheses 1 and 2.

The magnitude of the effects predicted in hypotheses 1 and 2 was considerable. For example, complimenting alter two more times during the year in a way that frames the compliment as advice seeking and engaging in opinion conformity two more times by stating an opinion that a common friend or acquaintance told the focal person is held by alter (i.e., rather than simply echoing alter's stated opinion) increased the likelihood of gaining a board appointment where alter served on the nominating committee by 68 percent. Likewise, complimenting alter two more times during the year in a way that frames the compliments as likely to make alter uncomfortable and engaging in two more instances of opinion conformity in which the focal person first references a social affiliation held in common with alter increases the likelihood of gaining a board appointment by 71 percent. By contrast, an analysis of simple effects of the interactions showed that the effect of ingratiation on board appointments is not significant at low levels of sophistication (e.g., one standard deviation below the mean). For example, an increase in two episodes of flattery and two episodes of opinion conformity that involves only one or two of the sophisticated tactics we identified does not significantly increase the likelihood of gaining a board appointment where the CEO (or fellow director) serves on the nominating committee. In fact, at very low levels of sophistication, ingratiation is actually negatively related to board appointments. For instance, an increase in two episodes of flattery and two episodes of opinion conformity that involve none of the sophisticated tactics we identified significantly reduces the likelihood of acquiring a board appointment where the CEO (or fellow director) serves on the nominating committee. The interaction between an outside director's ingratiation toward a fellow director and the sophistication of the ingratiation is displayed graphically in figure 1a, and the interaction between a top manager's level of ingratiation toward the CEO and the sophistication of the ingratiation is depicted in figure 1b. In further analyses, we assessed the hypothesized interactions using the simulation-based methodology described by King and colleagues (e.g., King, Tomz, and Wittenberg, 2000; Holburn and Zelner, 2008). The results of

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Figure 1a. Interaction between level of ingratiation and sophistication of ingratiation (outside director dyads).



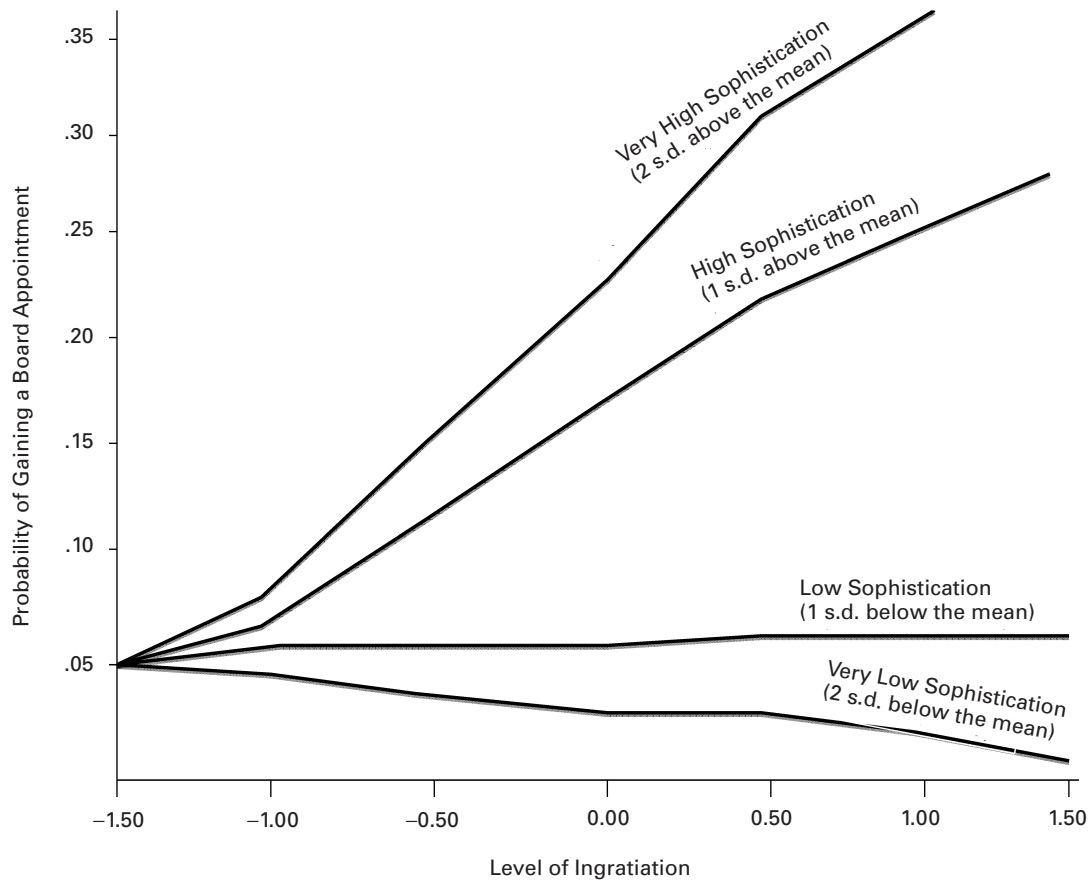
this analysis were very similar to those displayed in the figures. Moreover, as discussed above, the hypotheses were also supported in Poisson regression models that estimated the number of board appointments obtained at other firms (i.e., at the manager/director level). Overall, these results clearly show that the effects of ingratiation on board appointments significantly depend on how managers and directors attempt to curry favor with their colleagues.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 predicted that the backgrounds of top managers and directors will affect their likelihood of engaging in sophisticated forms of flattery and opinion conformity. Specifically, these hypotheses predicted that top managers and outside directors who have a background in politics, law, or sales will engage in more sophisticated forms of flattery and opinion conformity toward their CEOs and fellow outside directors, respectively. The multiple regression models reported in tables 3 and 4 strongly support these predictions: a background in politics, law, or sales increased top managers' and outside directors' likelihood of engaging in each of the sophisticated forms of flattery and opinion conformity.

In models not reported here, we examined how other backgrounds that are common among top managers and outside



**Figure 1b. Interaction between level of ingratiation and sophistication of ingratiation (top manager-CEO dyads).**



directors, such as accounting, engineering, and finance, affect their propensity to engage in sophisticated forms of flattery and opinion conformity. Controlling for the level of ingratiation, we found that top managers and outside directors with backgrounds in accounting, engineering, or finance were much less likely to engage in sophisticated forms of ingratiation than top managers and outside directors with backgrounds in law, politics, or sales. Moreover, individuals with a background in accounting or engineering were significantly less sophisticated in their ingratiation than individuals with a background in finance, who in turn were significantly less sophisticated than individuals with a background in law, sales, or politics. Qualitative evidence from our interviews corroborated these results. When asked "If you wanted to flatter another manager or director, how would you go about it?" only two of the 16 interviewees who had a background in accounting, engineering, or finance mentioned one of the sophisticated forms of ingratiation described in our study (vs. 8 of the 12 interviewees with a background in law, sales, or politics). Managers and directors with backgrounds in accounting, engineering, or finance typically had difficulty answering a follow-up question that prodded them to consider more or less effective ways to flatter someone. One director with an accounting background replied, "I'm not sure what you mean. I would just tell them 'you're the greatest.'"

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Table 3

Multiple Regression Models of Sophisticated Forms of Ingratiation: Sample of Top–manager–CEO Dyads (N = 2466)\*

Independent variable	Framing flattery as likely to make alter uncomfortable	Framing flattery as advice seeking	Arguing prior to conforming	Conforming to opinions expressed by alter to third party	Complimenting alter to alter's friend	Value conformity	Referencing social affil. in common with alter	Sophistication of ingratiation (2nd-order factor)
Amount of flattery	0.050* (0.021)	0.055* (0.022)	0.031 (0.019)	0.039* (0.019)	0.057* (0.024)	0.079* (0.032)	0.068* (0.029)	0.045* (0.019)
Amount of opinion conformity	0.040 (0.021)	0.046 (0.024)	0.043* (0.019)	0.047* (0.019)	0.047 (0.024)	0.068* (0.032)	0.063* (0.027)	0.043* (0.019)
Social affiliations held in common	0.002 (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)	0.002 (0.003)	0.001 (0.002)	0.004 (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)
Ethnic minority	-0.117* (0.052)	-0.146* (0.062)	-0.124** (0.048)	-0.129* (0.051)	-0.119* (0.048)	-0.172** (0.067)	-0.150* (0.059)	-0.113* (0.046)
Woman	-0.103* (0.051)	-0.131* (0.062)	-0.105* (0.046)	-0.111* (0.050)	-0.108* (0.051)	-0.158* (0.069)	-0.140* (0.063)	-0.105* (0.047)
Friendship tie	-0.097** (0.035)	-0.101* (0.041)	-0.083* (0.036)	-0.076* (0.032)	-0.095* (0.039)	-0.119* (0.051)	-0.122* (0.050)	-0.085* (0.035)
Level of social interaction	-0.011 (0.017)	-0.016 (0.020)	-0.011 (0.019)	-0.017 (0.016)	-0.006 (0.022)	-0.032 (0.024)	0.022 (0.027)	-0.017 (0.019)
Self-presentation	0.026 (0.024)	0.024 (0.025)	0.018 (0.020)	0.019 (0.019)	0.017 (0.026)	0.015 (0.039)	0.013 (0.029)	0.019 (0.021)
Sales/marketing background	0.116** (0.041)	0.139** (0.051)	0.112** (0.040)	0.110** (0.041)	0.118** (0.042)	0.168** (0.057)	0.142** (0.049)	0.103** (0.036)
Alter sales/marketing background	0.011 (0.041)	0.045 (0.050)	0.020 (0.043)	0.048 (0.041)	0.057 (0.045)	0.073 (0.057)	0.075 (0.055)	0.046 (0.041)
Background in politics	0.155** (0.059)	0.185** (0.076)	0.169** (0.061)	0.158** (0.062)	0.135** (0.055)	0.195* (0.085)	0.180** (0.067)	0.147** (0.056)
Alter background in politics	0.027 (0.070)	0.087 (0.081)	0.033 (0.061)	0.040 (0.062)	0.095 (0.068)	0.075 (0.092)	0.028 (0.069)	0.048 (0.054)
Legal background	0.156*** (0.046)	0.159*** (0.049)	0.221*** (0.051)	0.128** (0.045)	0.128** (0.043)	0.174** (0.058)	0.173*** (0.051)	0.145*** (0.044)
Alter legal background	-0.067 (0.049)	-0.094 (0.053)	-0.036 (0.049)	-0.044 (0.051)	-0.054 (0.046)	-0.083 (0.062)	-0.080 (0.053)	-0.066 (0.049)
Listing in <i>Social Reg./</i> exclusive prep school	0.111** (0.045)	0.137** (0.058)	0.130** (0.054)	0.069 (0.044)	0.120* (0.052)	0.165* (0.072)	0.094 (0.067)	0.108* (0.047)
Alter listing in <i>Social Reg./</i> excl. prep school	-0.042 (0.039)	-0.014 (0.054)	-0.059 (0.050)	-0.038 (0.040)	-0.035 (0.050)	-0.022 (0.056)	-0.0265 (0.063)	-0.041 (0.040)
Number of board appts.	0.019 (0.027)	0.004 (0.028)	0.003 (0.022)	0.012 (0.023)	0.011 (0.029)	0.044 (0.042)	0.013 (0.032)	0.015 (0.022)
Alter number of board appts.	0.022* (0.009)	0.025* (0.011)	0.026** (0.009)	0.022** (0.008)	0.025** (0.010)	0.030** (0.012)	0.030* (0.013)	0.021* (0.008)
Management experience	0.004* (0.002)	0.005** (0.002)	0.004* (0.002)	0.004* (0.002)	0.004* (0.002)	0.005* (0.002)	0.005* (0.002)	0.004* (0.002)
Self-monitoring	0.036* (0.015)	0.035* (0.017)	0.022 (0.016)	0.041** (0.015)	0.039* (0.019)	0.043* (0.021)	0.052* (0.024)	0.043* (0.017)
Inside director	0.057 (0.034)	0.057 (0.034)	0.051 (0.030)	0.054 (0.033)	0.055 (0.034)	0.060 (0.037)	0.056 (0.034)	0.056 (0.034)
Constant	0.059 (0.045)	0.058 (0.057)	0.077 (0.054)	0.039 (0.045)	0.059 (0.056)	0.085 (0.066)	0.122 (0.064)	0.060 (0.048)
F	12.99***	13.22***	13.42***	12.91***	12.95***	13.76***	13.04***	13.95***
R <sup>2</sup>	.41	.41	.42	.41	.41	.42	.41	.43

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; t-tests one-tailed for hypothesized effects, two-tailed for controls.

\* Standard errors are in parentheses.

Table 4

**Multiple Regression Models of Sophisticated Forms of Ingratiation: Sample of Outside Director Dyads (N = 3386)\***

Independent variable	Framing flattery as likely to make alter uncomfortable	Framing flattery as advice seeking	Arguing prior to conforming	Conforming to opinions expressed by alter to third party	Complimenting alter to alter's friend	Value conformity	Referencing social affil. in common with alter	Sophistication of ingratiation (2nd-order factor)
Amount of flattery	0.045* (0.019)	0.046** (0.018)	0.024 (0.014)	0.032* (0.015)	0.043* (0.018)	0.069* (0.029)	0.057* (0.023)	0.035* (0.015)
Amount of opinion conformity	0.037* (0.018)	0.037 (0.020)	0.031* (0.014)	0.044** (0.017)	0.035 (0.018)	0.067* (0.029)	0.055* (0.024)	0.034* (0.015)
Social affiliations held in common	0.002 (0.003)	0.001 (0.003)	0.002 (0.003)	0.002 (0.003)	0.002 (0.002)	0.001 (0.003)	0.001 (0.002)	0.002 (0.003)
Ethnic minority	-0.104* (0.046)	-0.108* (0.048)	-0.077* (0.034)	-0.095* (0.039)	-0.092* (0.038)	-0.121* (0.055)	-0.101* (0.043)	-0.077* (0.034)
Woman	-0.086* (0.042)	-0.094 (0.049)	-0.075* (0.037)	-0.083* (0.041)	-0.089* (0.042)	-0.114 (0.058)	-0.110* (0.051)	-0.081* (0.039)
Friendship tie	-0.073* (0.031)	-0.069* (0.030)	-0.056* (0.026)	-0.045 (0.025)	-0.072* (0.031)	-0.113* (0.046)	-0.084* (0.038)	-0.061* (0.026)
Level of social interaction	-0.018 (0.017)	-0.022 (0.016)	-0.013 (0.014)	-0.015 (0.013)	-0.013 (0.018)	-0.026 (0.022)	-0.036 (0.023)	-0.016 (0.015)
Self-presentation	0.018 (0.021)	0.009 (0.020)	0.016 (0.016)	0.008 (0.017)	0.011 (0.023)	0.023 (0.037)	0.009 (0.026)	0.009 (0.017)
Sales/marketing background	0.121** (0.039)	0.144*** (0.044)	0.099** (0.033)	0.127*** (0.038)	0.118*** (0.036)	0.175*** (0.051)	0.117** (0.039)	0.099*** (0.031)
Alter sales/marketing background	0.035 (0.035)	0.049 (0.038)	0.034 (0.029)	0.032 (0.030)	0.044 (0.038)	0.061 (0.049)	0.062 (0.044)	0.036 (0.031)
Background in politics	0.092** (0.035)	0.124** (0.048)	0.106** (0.041)	0.107** (0.039)	0.092** (0.037)	0.135** (0.047)	0.106** (0.043)	0.091** (0.035)
Alter background in politics	0.005 (0.040)	0.023 (0.042)	0.014 (0.034)	0.014 (0.035)	0.009 (0.038)	0.017 (0.056)	0.011 (0.043)	0.013 (0.033)
Legal background	0.101** (0.035)	0.105** (0.038)	0.105** (0.035)	0.098** (0.036)	0.090** (0.035)	0.130** (0.046)	0.115** (0.042)	0.099** (0.034)
Alter legal background	-0.062 (0.038)	-0.053 (0.036)	-0.050 (0.034)	-0.045 (0.034)	-0.040 (0.036)	-0.077 (0.051)	-0.048 (0.040)	0.052 (0.035)
Listing in <i>Social Reg./</i> exclusive prep school	0.088* (0.040)	0.086* (0.041)	0.057 (0.036)	0.069* (0.033)	0.096* (0.045)	0.126* (0.057)	0.092* (0.049)	0.075* (0.036)
Alter listing in <i>Social Reg./</i> excl. prep school	-0.017 (0.036)	-0.032 (0.041)	-0.047 (0.034)	-0.039 (0.034)	-0.006 (0.042)	-0.023 (0.054)	-0.012 (0.055)	-0.028 (0.033)
Number of board appts.	0.013 (0.016)	0.006 (0.017)	-0.001 (0.012)	0.006 (0.014)	0.015 (0.015)	0.027 (0.026)	0.005 (0.020)	0.003 (0.012)
Alter number of board appts.	0.021* (0.009)	0.021* (0.009)	0.020** (0.008)	0.016* (0.007)	0.023* (0.010)	0.032* (0.013)	0.037** (0.014)	0.018* (0.008)
Management experience	0.003* (0.001)	0.002* (0.001)	0.002* (0.001)	0.002* (0.001)	0.004* (0.002)	0.004* (0.002)	0.004* (0.002)	0.003* (0.001)
Self-monitoring	0.041* (0.019)	0.040* (0.020)	0.035 (0.019)	0.039* (0.018)	0.042* (0.020)	0.041 (0.023)	0.046* (0.020)	0.041* (0.019)
Monitoring and control	-0.039* (0.018)	-0.038* (0.018)	-0.039* (0.018)	-0.034* (0.017)	-0.041* (0.018)	-0.043* (0.021)	-0.041* (0.018)	-0.040* (0.018)
Provision of advice and information	0.021 (0.018)	0.019 (0.018)	0.022 (0.018)	0.019 (0.017)	0.022 (0.015)	0.018 (0.019)	0.019 (0.018)	0.021 (0.018)
Constant	0.013 (0.041)	0.080 (0.042)	0.062 (0.039)	0.007 (0.035)	0.005 (0.044)	0.033 (0.055)	0.034 (0.057)	0.018 (0.037)
F	14.37***	14.26***	14.33***	14.44***	14.19***	14.75***	13.78***	14.55***
R <sup>2</sup>	.43	.43	.43	.44	.43	.44	.42	.44

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; t-tests one-tailed for hypothesized effects, two-tailed for control variables.

\* Standard errors are in parentheses.

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What other way is there?" When asked if they could think of examples of bad ingratiation, 10 of 12 managers and directors with backgrounds in sales, politics, or law were able to provide at least one example (most could provide multiple examples), and 82 percent of the examples involved someone with a background in accounting, finance, or engineering (as reported by the interviewees). By contrast, most interviewees with a background in accounting, finance, or engineering had difficulty answering this question. For instance, one director with a background in engineering replied, "I'm not sure I follow you . . . I didn't know there was good or bad ingratiation. I guess it's all bad, or maybe it's all good. I don't know."

The results also generally supported hypotheses 5 and 6, which predicted that top managers and outside directors who have an upper-class background will engage in more sophisticated forms of flattery and opinion conformity. Listing in the *Social Register* or attendance at an exclusive prep school increased top managers' likelihood of engaging in all sophisticated forms of flattery and opinion conformity except conforming to opinions expressed by alter to a third party and referencing social affiliations in common with alter prior to flattery or opinion conformity. Outside directors who have an upper-class background were more likely to engage in all sophisticated forms of flattery and opinion conformity except arguing prior to conforming. Moreover, an upper-class background was significantly associated with the second-order factor for sophisticated ingratiation, and this result held for both samples. As noted above, in separate analyses, we used a survey measure of class background, and the results were very similar to those reported in the tables.

In further analyses, we examined whether sophisticated ingratiation significantly mediates the effects of vocational and upper-class background on subsequent board appointments. Specifically, we conducted a product of coefficients test for mediation (MacKinnon et al., 2002). In our initial analysis, we used the Sobel (1982) method for estimating standard errors.<sup>3</sup> This test showed that the measures of sophisticated ingratiation taken together significantly mediate the effects of each background variable on the likelihood of receiving board appointments at other firms (z-statistics for the mediating effects ranged from 2.19 to 2.52). Moreover, the analysis generally provided evidence for full mediation (i.e., after accounting for the mediating effects of sophisticated ingratiation, there was not a residual direct effect of upper-class background or the vocational background variables on board appointments). The results also indicated that the mediating effects of the hypothesized interactions were significantly greater than the mediating effects of the level of ingratiation alone (change in  $\chi^2$  tests were consistently significant at  $\alpha = .05$ ). We also ran separate analyses using standard error estimates recommended by MacKinnon et al. (2002), which have more accurate Type I error rates under certain conditions. The results were substantively unchanged.

While our analyses controlled for the two primary forms of directors' contributions to board decision making (i.e., monitoring and control behavior and the provision of advice and

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We conducted this test using a covariance-structure algorithm that permits error terms of equations in the structural model to correlate (see Shaver, 2005).

information) (Hillman and Dalziel, 2003), in separate analyses, we also controlled for a survey measure that gauges the perceived value of a focal director's contributions to the board. This measure is based on a 5-item scale in the CEO and director surveys (e.g., "How would you assess the value of [the director's] contributions to the board?" [Low . . . Modest . . . Somewhat valuable . . . Valuable . . . Highly valuable]) (alpha = .88). The perceived value of a focal director's contributions was not significantly correlated with the sophistication of the director's ingratiation behavior, and when we controlled for this measure in estimating board appointments, the hypothesized results were unchanged.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Mediating effects of CEOs' or directors' recommendations.**

Our theoretical argument suggested that sophisticated forms of ingratiation toward the CEO or a fellow director lead to board appointments by increasing the likelihood that he or she will recommend the ingratiation target for a board seat. To test this argument directly, we followed an analytical approach that was used previously by Westphal and Stern (2006, 2007) for a similar sample in an earlier time period. Two years after the initial surveys, we sent a questionnaire to directors who served on nominating committees in the sample frame of potential hiring firms. The questionnaire asked directors to specify (a) whether one or more fellow directors who served on the board had suggested that someone be nominated for an outside director appointment during the prior two years, and if so, (b) who had made the recommendation(s) and (c) who was recommended. We received responses from at least one director on the nominating committee for approximately 75 percent of potential hiring firms. Using these data, we developed a dichotomous variable that indicated whether the focal manager (or director) was recommended by the CEO (or fellow director) for an outside directorship at the potential hiring firm (i.e., where the CEO or fellow director served on the nominating committee at the time of the survey). Specifically, we coded a dummy variable 1 if the focal manager (or director) was recommended by the CEO (or fellow director) for an outside directorship at the potential hiring firm and 0 otherwise. We then conducted a supplementary analysis to examine whether recommendation by the CEO (or fellow director) significantly mediated the hypothesized effects of sophisticated forms of ingratiation on subsequent board appointments using the product of coefficients test described above. The results are provided in table 5, and except for the interactions between the amount of opinion conformity and arguing prior to conforming, they provide consistent evidence for mediation.

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It might be supposed that narcissism or core self-evaluation could make CEOs and directors more receptive to ingratiation and that these characteristics might also be overrepresented among elites who serve on multiple boards. In separate analyses conducted for the sample of top manager-CEO dyads, however, we controlled for Chatterjee and Hambrick's (2007) archival measure of CEO narcissism and found that the hypothesized results were unchanged. Moreover, Chatterjee and Hambrick's measure was not significantly correlated with the number of board seats held by CEOs in our sample.

As noted above, our preliminary interviews and survey data indicated that directors are sometimes asked to suggest a possible replacement when they announce their intention to leave a board, and this practice appears to have become more common in recent years. To examine whether the effect of ingratiation toward the CEO or a fellow director depends on whether he or she remains on the board or leaves, in separate analyses, we controlled for departure of the CEO or fellow director (i.e., potential ingratiation target) from the potential hiring board within two years following the survey date and

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Table 5

### Mediating Effects of Directors' Recommendations on Board Appointments

Description of Path (all arrows indicate positive effects)	z
<b>Mediating effects for sample of top manager–CEO dyads (N = 1834)</b>	
Amount of flattery × Framing flattery as likely to make alter uncomfortable → Recommendation by the CEO → Board appointment	2.48**
Amount of flattery × Framing flattery as advice seeking → Recommendation by the CEO → Board appointment	3.36***
Amount of flattery × Complimenting alter to alter's friend → Recommendation by the CEO → Board appointment	2.55**
Amount of flattery × Value conformity prior to flattery → Recommendation by the CEO → Board appointment	2.59**
Amount of flattery × Referencing social affil. in common with alter prior to flattery → Recommendation by the CEO → Board appointment	2.68**
Amount of opinion conformity × Arguing prior to conforming → Recommendation by the CEO → Board appointment	0.97
Amount of opinion conformity × Conforming to opinions expressed by alter to third party → Recommendation by the CEO → Board appointment	2.19*
Amount of opinion conformity × Value conformity prior to op. conf. → Recommendation by the CEO → Board appointment	3.44***
Amount of opinion conformity × Referencing social affil. in common with alter prior to op. conf. → Recommendation by the CEO → Board appointment	3.57***
<b>Mediating effects for sample of outside director dyads (N = 2596)</b>	
Amount of flattery × Framing flattery as likely to make alter uncomfortable → Recommendation by fellow director → Board appointment	2.20*
Amount of flattery × Framing flattery as advice seeking → Recommendation by fellow director → Board appointment	2.61**
Amount of flattery × Complimenting alter to alter's friend → Recommendation by fellow director → Board appointment	3.24***
Amount of flattery × Value conformity prior to flattery → Recommendation by fellow director → Board appointment	2.47**
Amount of flattery × Referencing social affil. in common with alter prior to flattery → Recommendation by fellow director → Board appointment	2.52**
Amount of opinion conformity × Arguing prior to conforming → Recommendation by fellow director → Board appointment	0.86
Amount of opinion conformity × Conforming to opinions expressed by alter to third party → Recommendation by fellow director → Board appointment	2.40**
Amount of opinion conformity × Value conformity prior to op. conf. → Recommendation by fellow director → Board appointment	3.29***
Amount of opinion conformity × Referencing social affil. in common with alter prior to op. conf. → Recommendation by fellow director → Board appointment	2.73**

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

found that the hypothesized results were unchanged. Results were also unchanged when we controlled for departures within one year of the survey date. In further analyses, we examined whether the hypothesized effects were contingent on whether the CEO or fellow director left the potential hiring board within one or two years of the survey date using three-way interaction terms (e.g., level of ingratiation × sophistication × departure of alter from potential hiring board). The three-way interaction terms were consistently non-significant.

**Appointments at boards to which the CEO is indirectly connected.** Westphal and Stern (2006) examined the effect of ingratiation toward the CEO on subsequent appointments at boards ( $x_1 \dots x_n$ ) on which the CEO serves as an outside

director and at boards to which the CEO is indirectly connected (i.e., companies where a fellow CEO-director on the nominating committee of  $x_i$  serves as an outside board member). We conducted supplementary analyses to examine whether the effect of ingratiation toward the CEO on appointments at boards to which the CEO is indirectly connected also depends on whether managers engage in sophisticated forms of flattery and opinion conformity. The results of these analyses were very similar to the results displayed in table 2: flattery by a top manager toward the CEO had a more positive effect on the likelihood of receiving an appointment at a board to which the CEO was indirectly connected to the extent that the manager engaged in the sophisticated forms of flattery we identified. The hypothesized interactions were also significant for opinion conformity, with the exception of arguing prior to conforming.

## DISCUSSION

Overall, the results provided strong support for our theoretical framework. The first set of results showed that the effects of ingratiation on board appointments depend significantly on how managers and directors attempt to curry favor with their colleagues. In particular, managers' ingratiation behavior toward their CEOs (or directors' ingratiation behavior toward fellow board members) was more likely to yield a board appointment where alter served on the nominating committee of the board to the extent that the ingratiation comprised the relatively sophisticated forms of flattery and opinion conformity we identified. Results of a supplemental analysis indicated that these effects were mediated by an increased likelihood of receiving alter's recommendation for the appointment. A second set of results addressed the question of who among the corporate elite is most likely to engage in sophisticated forms of ingratiation. These results indicated that managers and directors who had a background in politics, law, or sales were significantly more likely than individuals who had a background in engineering, accounting, or finance to engage in sophisticated forms of ingratiation, while managers and directors who had an upper-class background were more sophisticated in their ingratiation behavior than individuals with a middle- or working-class background.

The findings support our thesis that individuals derive significantly more benefit from ingratiation to the extent that they engage in relatively subtle forms of flattery and opinion conformity, which our theoretical argument suggests are less likely to elicit cynical attributions of motive and more likely to be accepted as sincere statements of opinion or genuine expressions of admiration. In fact, the results indicated that relatively unsophisticated ingratiation does not enhance and can even hurt a person's chances of acquiring board appointments: moderately higher levels of ingratiation that did not include any of the sophisticated forms of flattery or opinion conformity we identified reduced one's odds of gaining a board seat where alter served as director. In suggesting how the effects of ingratiation are contingent on its subtlety, our theory helps explain why field studies of social influence have found mixed evidence that higher levels of ingratiation lead to

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beneficial outcomes for the ingratiation (Kipnis and Schmidt, 1988; Gordon, 1996; Brodsky and Cannon, 2006).

Our theory and findings make several contributions to the literature on corporate leadership and governance and to the literature on interpersonal influence behavior. On one level, our study addresses a gap in sociopolitical perspectives on corporate leadership. In particular, the literature on corporate leadership and governance has given little consideration to how leaders may vary in the skillfulness of their social influence behavior. This gap is also present in the larger literature on interpersonal influence. Field studies of ingratiation, for instance, have hypothesized that individuals derive various benefits from engaging in higher levels of ingratiation, without considering how the consequences of such influence behavior may depend on the skillfulness with which it is deployed. Our theoretical framework provides a way of conceptualizing the skillfulness of leaders' interpersonal influence behavior. Specifically, interpersonal influence behavior is skillful when it is sufficiently subtle that it does not elicit cynical attributions of motive by the influence target. Moreover, our theoretical framework provides a catalogue of specific and subtle influence tactics. Of the nine sophisticated tactics in our framework, eight had a significant influence on board appointments. Only one of the tactics in our framework (arguing with alter prior to engaging in opinion conformity) had a consistently weaker effect on board appointments. Accordingly, the findings confirm that our conceptualization of skillful interpersonal influence behavior strongly predicts the consequences of ingratiation attempts by corporate leaders and thus help explain mixed evidence from field studies that ingratiation leads to beneficial outcomes for the ingratiation.

By addressing the question of who is most likely to engage in skillful social influence, our theory and findings also contribute to political perspectives on corporate leadership and to the larger literature on interpersonal influence. The literature on power and politics in organizations, including research on political behavior by corporate leaders, has focused largely on the consequences of social influence behavior and has given less consideration to what factors might predict who is able to exercise influence effectively. Our theoretical framework and supportive findings address this gap in the literature by suggesting that specific dimensions of leaders' vocational and socioeconomic backgrounds predict the skillfulness of their social influence behavior.

In addition, by examining how sophisticated forms of interpersonal influence behavior increase the likelihood that top managers and directors will obtain board seats at other firms, this study contributes to our understanding of how individuals advance to more central positions in the corporate elite. Managers and directors who acquire additional board seats at large firms assume a more central position in the board interlock network, when centrality is defined in terms of degree centrality or closeness centrality (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). Acquiring an additional board seat does not increase an individual's betweenness centrality if the target of ingratiation continues to serve on the potential hiring board. As noted above, however, in some cases a CEO or fellow



director, in recommending the focal actor for a board seat seeks someone to replace him- or herself on the board. In such cases, the additional board seat increases the ingratia- tor's betweenness centrality, as well as his or her degree and closeness centrality.

Extant theory and research on corporate elites has empha- sized the value of social network ties in gaining access to board seats and acquiring more central positions in the corporate elite (Useem, 1984; Davis, 1993; Domhoff, 2002; Mizruchi and Bey, 2005). The executives and directors in our sample, however, are all structurally advantaged by having colleagues (CEOs or fellow directors) who serve on nominat- ing committees of other boards. Those colleagues are in a position to recommend them for board seats at other firms, thus enabling them to advance to more central positions in the corporate elite. Our theory and findings suggest how those individuals vary in their ability to capitalize on these potentially advantageous social ties. In particular, it appears that top managers and directors are advantaged in securing colleagues' recommendations for board appointments at other firms and in ascending to more central positions in the corporate elite to the extent that they are capable of engaging in relatively sophisticated forms of ingratiation behavior toward colleagues. Thus our study complements prior research by suggesting that the degree to which individuals are advantaged by social ties to powerful colleagues in advancing to more central positions in the corporate elite depends to a significant extent on the sophistication of their influence behavior toward those social ties. The effects of sophisticated ingratiation on board appointments were also statistically stronger in significance and magnitude than the effects of focal firm performance, management experience, or different forms of normatively prescribed director behavior (e.g., providing strategic advice to the CEO on a regular basis or engaging in monitoring and control behavior).

By extension, our findings suggest that managers and direc- tors with certain vocational and socioeconomic backgrounds are advantaged in acquiring additional board seats and in ascending to more central positions in the corporate elite, at least in part because they are more capable of engaging in sophisticated forms of ingratiation. While prior research on corporate elites has considered how institutional and struc- tural factors have favored certain vocational backgrounds in the process of selecting corporate presidents (e.g., Fligstein, 1987; Ocasio and Kim, 1999), our theory and findings consider how micro-level, interpersonal influence processes advantage individuals with certain vocational backgrounds in ascending to the inner circle of corporate leaders through the acquisition of board appointments. Thus our theory and findings on vocational background, sophisticated ingratiation, and board appointments contribute to the literature on corporate elites by examining a different, micro-level social mechanism by which individuals with certain vocational backgrounds are advantaged in the corporate elite and by exploring how and why vocational background predicts ascendance into the inner circle of corporate leaders, a question that has received little attention in the organizational or sociological literatures on corporate elites. The latter question is important because the

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corporate governance and upper-echelon literatures have provided considerable evidence that the vocational background of corporate leaders has a significant and pervasive influence on how leaders diagnose organizational and strategic problems and on their beliefs and assumptions about corporate strategy, structure, and systems (for an extensive review, see Finkelstein, Hambrick, and Cannella, 2009). Given that the beliefs of corporate leaders who occupy multiple board seats at large firms have a disproportionate influence over decision making about corporate strategy and structure, as noted above, our finding that individuals with certain vocational backgrounds are advantaged in gaining access to multiple board seats at large firms by engaging in sophisticated interpersonal influence behavior has important implications for the literatures on corporate leadership, strategy, and organizational decision making.

Moreover, while a long tradition of theory and research suggests that individuals with an upper-class background are advantaged in acquiring central positions in the corporate elite, this advantage is typically attributed to social network ties among the upper class (Useem, 1984; Domhoff, 2002; Davis, Yoo, and Baker, 2003; Mizuchi and Bey, 2005). That is, individuals with an upper-class background are advantaged by having more connections to people in powerful places who can recommend them for prestigious appointments. Our study suggests another mechanism by which these individuals are advantaged in ascending to central positions in the corporate elite. In our analyses, the relationship between indicators of upper-class status and board appointments was fully mediated by the extent to which individuals engage in sophisticated forms of ingratiation. Apparently, managers and directors with an upper-class background are better able to engage in sophisticated forms of interpersonal influence behavior toward colleagues, which in turn increases the likelihood that they will be recommended for board seats at other firms.

Thus the theory and findings of this study contribute to a growing body of research on micro-level social influence processes in corporate leadership and governance that complements the traditional focus of organization theorists on structural sources of power (e.g., Kipnis and Schmidt, 1988; Wade, Porac, and Pollock, 1997; Westphal, 1998; Porac, Wade, and Pollock, 1999; Fiss, 2006; Fiss and Zajac, 2006; Westphal and Stern, 2007; Westphal and Bednar, 2008). Our study contributes to this emerging paradigm by suggesting how and why leaders vary in the skillfulness of their social influence behavior, while demonstrating that such skillfulness has potentially important consequences for organizations and society by affecting who rises to central positions in the corporate elite.

Future research could extend this study by investigating other possible consequences of engaging in sophisticated forms of ingratiation. For example, top managers who are capable of engaging in sophisticated forms of ingratiation may also exert more interpersonal influence over key external constituents of the firm, including security analysts, large investors, journalists, and public officials. By extension, it would be interesting

to examine whether sophisticated social influence behavior can substitute to some degree for structural advantages. Our findings suggest that executives and directors vary in their ability to capitalize on their social ties and so can be interpreted as suggesting that executives may compensate for structural disadvantages (e.g., fewer social ties) by engaging in more sophisticated forms of ingratiation than their structurally advantaged colleagues. Accordingly, an interesting question for future research is whether there is a tradeoff between the number of one's social ties and one's ability to capitalize on these ties or whether some executives tend to have more ties and are also better at capitalizing on their ties. Future studies might also examine the consequences of skillful flattery and opinion conformity for the influence target. Individuals who occupy central positions in the corporate elite might become the target of ingratiation from a variety of corporate actors, and it would be interesting to examine whether receiving high levels of sophisticated flattery and opinion conformity from a variety of sources affects a leader's judgment on strategic issues or career matters. Moreover, future research might examine variation in the sophistication of other social influence tactics such as self-presentation or self-promotion (Pfeffer, 1981, 1992; Jones and Pittman, 1982; Godfrey, Jones, and Lord, 1986). The efficacy of self-promotion, like ingratiation, may be compromised by cynical attributions of motive. Researchers could extend our theory by exploring the subtle ways in which individuals advertise their abilities or communicate their fitness for a position without appearing to promote themselves. More generally, research on the skillfulness of social influence behavior should lead to richer theories of power and politics in management and organizations.

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### APPENDIX: Survey Scales

All scales instruct respondents to answer for the prior twelve-month period. The text in brackets gauges intent and is excluded from questions used to assess interrater agreement about the focal actor's behavior.

As discussed in the measurement section, we conducted a partial test of interrater agreement by comparing managers'/directors' responses with CEOs' or fellow directors' responses to a parallel set of survey items about the focal actor's behavior that excluded any reference to intent. These items are a subset of all questions in the survey scales. Kappas are displayed below for those items, for both samples.

Survey Item	Interrater Agreement (kappa)	
	Top-mgr.– CEO dyads	Outside director dyads
<b>Amount of Flattery</b>		
1. How often have you made a complimentary remark about [his/her] insight on a particular strategic issue {mainly to gain [his/her] personal support}?	.87	.90
2. How often have you made a complimentary remark about [his/her] success {mainly to gain [his/her] favor}?	.73	.75
3. [ <i>In director survey:</i> ] How often have you made a complimentary remark about [the director's] contributions to the board {that somewhat overstates your actual opinion of [his/her] contributions}?	.80	.84
4. [ <i>In manager/CEO survey:</i> ] To what extent have you expressed confidence in [the CEO's] strategic judgment {in a way that somewhat exaggerates your actual confidence in [his/her] judgment}?	.82	.83
5. [ <i>In director survey:</i> ] How often have you praised [the director] for [his/her] strategic judgment {in a way that somewhat exaggerates your actual confidence in [his/her] judgment}?	.80	.79
6. [ <i>In the CEO survey:</i> ] How often have you praised [the CEO] for [his/her] contributions to the company {in a way that somewhat overstates your actual opinion of [his/her] contributions}?		
<b>Amount of Opinion Conformity</b>		
1. In talking to [the CEO/director], to what extent have you expressed an opinion on a strategic issue that you believed to be held by [him/her] {even when you did not completely share [his/her] opinion}?	.81	.83
2. In speaking with [the CEO/director], how many times did you express attitudes and/or opinions that you believed to be held by [him/her] {mainly to gain [his/her] personal support}?	.82	.86
3. How many times did you express a point of view on a strategic issue {even though you expected that it was not shared by [the CEO/director]}? [ <i>reverse-scored</i> ]		
4. In conversations with [the CEO/director], to what extent have you voiced an opinion that you expected would be held by [him/her] {although you did not completely share the opinion}?		
<b>Framing Flattery as Likely to Make Alter Uncomfortable</b>		
1. In complimenting [this person], how often have you prefaced the remark by acknowledging that [the person] is likely to find the complement embarrassing {mainly so they don't interpret your comment as an attempt to curry favor}?	.77	.78
2. In complimenting [this person], to what extent have you first mentioned that [the person] may find the remark embarrassing {mainly so they don't interpret your comment as an attempt to curry favor}?	.80	.80
3. In complimenting [this person], to what extent have you acknowledged that the compliment may be embarrassing to [him/her] (e.g., "I don't want to embarrass you but . . ." or "this will probably embarrass you but . . .") {mainly so they don't interpret your comment as an attempt to gain their support}?	.79	.82
4. In complimenting [this person], how often have you begun by saying that what you have to say might make the [the person] uncomfortable {so they don't interpret your comment as currying favor}?		
5. When you compliment [this person], to what extent have you prefaced your remarks by saying things such as "I don't want to embarrass you but . . ." or "I know you won't want me to say this but . . .," or "you're going to hate me for saying this but . . .," {mainly so they don't interpret your comment as an attempt to gain their support}?		

(continued)



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Survey Item	Interrater Agreement (kappa)	
	Top-mgr.– CEO dyads	Outside director dyads
<b>Framing Flattery as Advice Seeking</b>		
1. How often have you complimented [this person] by asking them for advice on how you could replicate their success (even though you do not necessarily need or want their advice)?		
2. How often have you complimented [this person] by asking them how they got good at something?	.83	.87
3. In complimenting [this person], to what extent have you solicited their advice on how to replicate their success?	.81	.86
4. How many times have you asked [this person] how they got good at something (mainly to compliment him or her)?		
<b>Arguing prior to conforming</b>		
1. How often have you argued with [this person] prior to agreeing with them (even though you knew you would eventually concede to [his/her] point of view)?		
2. After [this person] states an opinion, to what extent have you raised one or more opposing points of view before agreeing with [him/her] (i.e., in order to appear objective)?	.72	.74
3. How often have you challenged [this person's] opinion prior to agreeing with them (mainly so they don't think you are trying to curry favor with them)?	.73	.76
4. After [this person] states an opinion, to what extent have you challenged their point of view before conceding to their opinion (mainly to appear objective)?	.75	.74
<b>Conforming to Opinions Expressed by Alter to Third Party*</b>		
1. In conversations with [this person], how often have you stated an opinion that you believe is shared by [him or her] (because a common friend or acquaintance told you that [he or she] holds a similar opinion)?		
2. How often have you expressed an opinion that you believe is shared by [this person] (because a common friend or acquaintance told you in a separate conversation that [he or she] holds this opinion)?		
3. How frequently have you found out an opinion held by [this person] through conversations with a common friend or acquaintance and then expressed this opinion in conversations with [him or her]?		
4. How many times have you learned of an opinion held by [this person] by talking to a mutual friend or acquaintance, and then later voiced the same or similar opinion when talking to [him or her]?		
<b>Complimenting Alter to Alter's Friend†</b>		
1. In talking with someone who is a friend of [this person], how often have you made complimentary remarks about [him or her] (mainly to gain [his/her] personal support)?	.83	.87
2. How often have you said positive things about [this person] in talking with someone who is a friend of [him or her] (mainly to gain [his/her] favor)?	.84	.85
3. To what extent have you said positive things about [this person] to one of their personal friends (mainly to make [this person] aware that you think highly of them)?		
4. To what extent have you praised [this person] in conversations with [his or her] friend (figuring that the compliment will eventually be passed on to [him or her])?		
<b>Value Conformity Prior to Flattery/Opinion Conformity</b>		
1a. In conversations with [this person], I often begin by mentioning something that I believe strongly in (and that I expect [he or she] strongly believes in too). [Followed by open-ended question:]	.86	.90
1b. Describe what you have mentioned in conversations with this person (that you believe strongly in).		
2. How many times have you begun conversations with this person by expressing your commitment to something (e.g., a cause or code of conduct) (that you think is likely to resonate with [his or her] values)?	.87	.91
3a. Before complimenting [this person] or expressing agreement with [him or her], I often begin by mentioning a personal belief or conviction (that is important to me, and that I believe [he or she] will relate to.) [Followed by open-ended question:] 3b. Describe what belief or conviction you have mentioned in these conversations.		

(continued)

## Influence Behavior

*continued*

Survey Item	Interrater Agreement (kappa)	
	Top-mgr.– CEO dyads	Outside director dyads
<b>Referencing Social Affiliations in Common with Alter Prior to Flattery/Opinion Conformity</b>		
1a. How many times have you begun conversations with [this person] by mentioning a group or organization with which you are affiliated {that you believe [he or she] is also affiliated with}? [Followed by open-ended question:] 1b. What group(s) or organization(s) have you mentioned?	.84	.84
2a. In talking with [this person] I often begin by mentioning my involvement in a group or organization {that I believe [he or she] participates in}. [Followed by open-ended question:] 2b. What group or organization do you mention?		
3. Before complimenting [this person] or expressing agreement with [him or her], I often mention a group or organization that we both are affiliated with.	.82	.80
* Interrater agreement could not be assessed for this scale.		
† Kappas for items in this scale are based on a random sample of top-manager and director dyads at the same firm in which the other manager/director is a friend of alter (N = 776 top-manager dyads and 741 director dyads).		