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**What You See May not be Entirely Negative: An Impression Management  
Approach to Job Insecurity and Its Consequences.**

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Job Insecurity and Its Consequences.

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## ABSTRACT

Drawing upon personal control model (Rothbaum, Weisz, & Synder, 1982) and interpersonal dependence theory (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003), the paper mainly argues that insecure employees tend to apply impression management tactics, including ingratiation (i.e., appearing to be friendly), self promotion (i.e., appearing to be competent) and exemplification (i.e., appearing to be dedicated), to cope with job insecurity. Impression management is essentially a process of indirectly gaining control through impressing powerful others who may have better control of the situation. This link is further strengthened by the high level of interpersonal dependence highlighted by job insecurity. The findings suggest that cognitive job insecurity has differential effects on the three impression management behaviors. In particular, the effect of cognitive job insecurity on exemplification is fully mediated by affective job insecurity. The indirect effect is stronger when employees perceive their supervisors have power to reward and punish. Such indirect effect only exists when employees have a high sense of power. However, cognitive job insecurity influences ingratiation directly and has no effect on self promotion.

**Keywords:** cognitive job insecurity, affective job insecurity, impression management, personal control, interpersonal dependence, sense of power, perceived supervisor power

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954) identifies security as a fundamental need of human beings, and the sense of security operates in a wide variety of settings. In organizational life, people generally prefer to hold a job that offers tenure and protection (Mitchell & Moudgill, 1976). However, to reduce expenditures and raise productivity, it has become more and more difficult for organizations today to provide secure employment. Numerous organizations have gone through downsizing, restructuring and other forms of organizational change. All of these lead to a heightened level of job insecurity among those in the workforce.

Ill effects will follow if the need for job security is not satisfied. It has been documented in the literature that job insecurity will lead to various types of negative effects, including psychological distress (Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995; Hellgren & Sverke, 2003; Roskies, Louis-Guerin, & Fournier, 1993), dysfunctional work behavior (Cheng & Chan, 2008; Kraimer, Wayne, Liden, & Sparrowe, 2005; Lim, 1996), reduced affective and attitudinal attachment to the organization (Ashford, Lee & Bobko, 1989; Davy, Kinicki, & Scheck, 1997). However, several empirical evidences that contradict these main predictions were found in published studies. For example, Brockner, Grover, Reed and Dewitt (1992) find that moderately insecure employees tend to work harder than those highly secure employees. In addition, Pearce (1993) and Wong, Wong, Ngo and Lui (2005) find that temporary workers will exhibit more organizational citizenship behavior than permanent workers whose job security is protected by a long-term contract. In spite of the clearly negative effects caused by job insecurity, these empirical findings

suggest that job insecurity may have positive effects. However, there is still little systematic examination of why employees exhibit these positive work behaviors while suffering from job insecurity.

Furthermore, although it makes intuitive sense that job insecurity activates coping responses, I surprisingly found that few studies empirically examine the problem-focused coping responses to job insecurity. Coping is defined as cognitive and/or behavioral efforts to minimize or tolerate stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and a key mechanism to counteract stressful experience (Aldwin, 2007). However, all the empirically identified coping strategies for job insecurity are all in palliative forms and have no real adaptive coping function (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). For example, Roskies et al. (1993) identify two coping strategies applied by insecure employees: cognitive redefinition and cognitive avoidance. Although not directly measuring JI, Ashford (1988) finds that, in the middle of organizational transition, emotional release is the only effective coping response for employees, among various problem-focused and emotion-focused coping options. Such a huge yet significant research gap cannot be simply accounted for by systematic neglect. Is it because the employees who suffer from job insecurity generally have no idea how to cope with it (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978)? Or is it because researchers failed to take important mechanisms into account?

To fill these two gaps, I develop a model that not only offers the missing coping response to job insecurity, but also explains why and when job insecurity brings positive effects. I primarily draw from the personal control model (Greenberger & Strasser, 1986; Rothbaum, et al., 1982) to examine the coping function of impression management and

then secondarily draw from the interpersonal dependence theory (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003) to further strengthen the link.

My major argument is job insecurity experience activates some seemingly positive work behaviors, driven by impression management concerns, to actively cope with job insecurity. Particularly noteworthy is that it is out of my thesis's scope to examine whether impression management brings actual benefits to the organization. Instead, my focus is to argue that employees will engage in seemingly positive self-presentation to survive in a highly insecure workplace. I argue that when perceiving the likelihood of losing job and/or job features, one may experience involuntary affective reactions such as being worried, nervous and concerned (Huang, Lee, Ashford, Chen, & Ren, 2010). The former perceptual mechanism is labeled as cognitive job insecurity while the latter emotional mechanism is labeled as affective job insecurity (Ashford, et al., 1989; Huang, et al., 2010). It has been established that the effect of cognitive job insecurity on outcome variables is transmitted through affective job insecurity (Huang, et al., 2010; Huang, Niu, Lee, & Ashford, 2011). Consistent with this line of theorizing, I argue that the effect of cognitive job insecurity on impression management behaviors is indirect. Cognitive interpretation of environmental threat creates negative affect, which in turn activates impression management behaviors. In addition, such mediation effect is subject to individual differences and contextual differences. Firstly, drawing from personal control theory, I argue that individuals with a high sense of power, those who perceive themselves as capable of influencing others (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003), are more likely to engage in impression management than those with a minimal sense of

power. Secondly, Interpersonal dependence theory suggest that if the supervisors are perceived as powerful in the organization, the interpersonal dependence on the supervisor will be high, and the level of impression management behaviors will be higher.

The following sections are organized through these objectives: (1) review the literature of job insecurity and show where my model extends the current knowledge, (2) build the theoretical link between job insecurity and impression management, (3) examine the mediating role of affective job insecurity, (4) identify the impression management behavioral patterns applied by insecure employees, and (5) address individual differences and contextual differences.

## **CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

It is generally agreed in the literature that job insecurity emerges as a result of the anticipation of an involuntary job and/or job feature loss (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Hartley, Jacobson, Klandermands & van Vuuren, 1991). It is distinct from actual job loss in such a way that individuals who suffer from job insecurity are still employed, but the future existence of the job is uncertain. In the literature, there are different views about job insecurity. Earlier works on job insecurity mainly regard it as a cognitive or perceptual construct by defining it as “perceived powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation” (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984, p. 438). More recently, the distinction between cognitive and affective job insecurity has drawn researchers’ attention (Huang et al., 2010; Probst, 2003; Reisel and Banai, 2002). Huang et al. (2010) regard cognitive job insecurity and affective job insecurity are two stages of



job insecurity experience and found affective job insecurity plays a mediating role between cognitive job insecurity and its consequences. In the current paper, I adopt the view in this line of research and consider cognitive and affective job insecurity as two separate constructs. At the same time, job insecurity as an experience or a process involves several phases, such as environmental signal interpretation and creation of job insecurity-specific affect and changes in psychological and behavioral outcomes.

### **Cognitive Job Insecurity and Affective Job Insecurity**

As conceptualized by previous literature (Borg & Elizur, 1992; Reisel & Banai, 2002, Huang et al, 2010; Huang et al., 2011), cognitive and affective job insecurity capture different aspects of job insecurity experience. Cognitive job insecurity refers to the perception of the likelihood of negative changes to one's job, (e.g., losing the job or losing desirable job features), whereas affective job insecurity is the affective experience of being worried or emotionally distressed about the potential losses. This conceptualization is consistent with appraisal theories of emotion (Frijda 1989, 1993; Lazarus, 1991) which emphasizes both cognitive and affective aspects of stress experience.

Cognitive job insecurity and affective job insecurity are related concepts but they are different. Even if two employees occupying identical positions perceive identical level of cognitive job insecurity, their level of affective job insecurity may differ. For example, employees with high dispositional anxiety will be more emotional aroused than the employees with low dispositional anxiety when they have similar cognitive judgment

about the potential organizational change (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). Such differences can be captured by affective job insecurity but not by cognitive job insecurity. There are also several other variables playing similar roles in influencing affective job insecurity but not cognitive job insecurity, such as dispositional attributes and economic dependence.

### **Job Insecurity and Its Consequences**

The literature has addressed the effect of cognitive job insecurity from two major perspectives. The first perspective is how cognitive job insecurity directly influences work outcomes and the other perspective is cognitive job insecurity indirectly influences work outcomes through affective job insecurity.

The earlier works on job insecurity draws heavily on cognitive job insecurity but pay less attention to the role of affect. There are considerable research has been undertaken under this perspective. The studies roughly fall into four categories. The first one is the stress-producing effect of job insecurity. The empirical evidence demonstrates that insecure employees suffer more from psychological distress than do secure ones, and insecure ones also report a reduced level of physical health (e.g. Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995; Hellgren & Sverke, 2003; Orpen, 1993). Behavioral consequences, such as performance (e.g., Ashford, et al., 1989; Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996), work efforts (e.g., Brockner, et al., 1992; O'Driscoll and Cooper, 1996) and organizational citizenship behavior (e.g., Pearce, 1993; van Dyne and Ang, 1998) of job insecurity are the second focus of the literature. However, the findings are quite mixed (the above cited two studies

for each behavioral indicator have contrasting findings), and several studies find different types of moderators for the relationship (Jordan, Ashkanasy & Hartel, 2002; Kraimer, Wayne, Sparrowe & Liden, 2005). The third focus is on the attitudinal implications. As reviewed by Sverke, Hellgren, and Naswall (2002), insecure employees may have lower levels of job satisfaction, organizational commitment and organizational trust and higher turnover intention. The main argument behind this is that the perception of insecurity threatens the attachment employees develop to the organization over time (Ashford, et al., 1989; Davy, et al., 1997) and such negative change is reflected by the attitudinal indicators. The last focus is on the emotional reaction to job insecurity (see Huang, et al., 2010 for a review). Emotional reactions to job insecurity are quite similar to the ones related to the uncertainty about the future (Hartley, Jacobson, Klandermands & van Vuuren, 1991). In particular, Jordan, et al. (2002) argue that the perception of job insecurity will lead to lowered affective commitment and job-related tension, and these emotional reactions will in turn lead to negative behavior.

The other perspective highlights the role of affect in mediating the relationship between cognitive job insecurity and its consequences. Huang et al. (2011) find that cognitive job insecurity mediates the relationship between contextual antecedents and affective job insecurity. Cognitive job insecurity is a subjective interpretation of the objective reality (contextual cues of losing job and/or job features) and this interpretation in turn create job insecurity-relevant affect. Recent empirical works (Huang et al., 2010; Huang et al., 2011) have established the mediating role of affective job insecurity for the relationship between cognitive job insecurity and outcome variables, such as job

satisfaction, organizational commitment and somatic complaints, lagged affective job insecurity, employee well being and supervisor rated performance. This is because affective job insecurity tends to be disruptive and has strong psychological and behavioral impacts and therefore may influence various job-related outcomes. However, the studies undertaken both cognitive and affective perspectives are still limited.

### **Job Insecurity and Coping Strategies**

Coping, which is defined as the cognitive or behavioral attempts to manage appraised internal or external demands, is a critical factor between a stressful event and its adaptive or maladaptive outcomes (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). It has two functions: one is to regulate emotions (i.e. emotion-focused coping), and the other one is to resolve the stressful encounter (i.e. problem-focused coping).

Although it is generally agreed that coping is the most important personal mechanism to counteract stressful events (Aldwin, 2007), in the job insecurity literature, I was surprised to find that only a handful of studies were conducted to examine the coping responses of job insecurity. For example, Armstrong-Stassen (1994) finds that one dimension of job insecurity, the perceived threat of job loss, is positively related to both control-oriented and escape-oriented coping (similar with problem-focused and emotion-focused coping respectively), but another dimension of job insecurity, powerlessness to counteract the perceived loss, is negatively related to control-oriented coping strategies. Van Vuuren, Kalndermans, Jacobson and Hartley (1991) find that only avoidance coping responses, such as mental disengagement, are associated with job insecurity perception.

However, Pearlin and Schooler (1978) argue that this type of avoidance response has no real adaptive coping function. Although not directly measuring job insecurity, Ashford (1988) finds that, in the middle of organizational transition, emotional release is the only effective coping response for employees, among various problem-focused and emotion-focused coping options. Roskies, Louis-Guerin & Fournier (1993) find that personality dispositions can cushion as well as aggravate the impact of perceived job insecurity through its impact on two coping strategies. Those who have positive personality attributes such as positive affectivity tend to use cognitive redefinition over cognitive avoidance coping strategies to cope with job insecurity. However, these coping strategies are not problem-focused or assertive and may not be effective in reducing job insecurity over time.

The above review shows that individuals usually cope with job insecurity in a passive way, and such a conclusion cannot be drawn as the insecure employees will apply problem-focused coping strategies. The difficulty of applying problem-focused coping has been empirically confirmed by Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, and Gruen (1986), who found that, in many instances, emotion-focused coping is stable over time but problem-focused coping is much more variable. There are several reasons for this. First, individuals must identify the problem before they mobilize actions to address the problem. Given the fact that job insecurity usually is associated with event uncertainty, time uncertainty and contextual ambiguity (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984), insecure employees may find it difficult to recognize what the problem is in the first place. Secondly, even when the problem is recognized, the individuals may not have relevant

resources, knowledge and experience to solve it. Finally, most of the causes of job insecurity, such as organizational restructuring and technological changes, cannot be modified or eliminated by personal coping strategies.

Based on the forgoing reasons, insecure employees will consider job insecurity as being out of their personal control, and such an appraisal generally prevents them from practicing problem-focused coping (Klandermans, et al., 1991). However, the current article adopts the theoretical arguments in personal control model (Rothbaum, et al., 1986) and differentiates direct coping strategies from indirect coping strategies. Although direct coping strategies are not likely to have meaningful consequences, indirect coping strategies are likely to emerge. Theoretical reasons are discussed in detail in the next section.

## **CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Two-process Model of Personal Control**

According to Greenberger and Strasser (1986), personal control is a cognitive construct which reflects one's beliefs in the ability to make a change in a desired direction. Personal control is not necessarily tied to any objective situational characteristics. Although individuals may not actually exert changes, their reactions are very much influenced by the belief that they are, in fact, able to do so. When perceiving signs of relinquished control, individuals will first attempt to regain control directly by bringing the external environment in line with their own needs. This attempt aims at changing the environmental characteristics. If such attempts are impossible or

unsuccessful, the individuals are likely to experience a number of withdrawal behaviors, including a decrease in learning, increased stress and depressed affect (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978; Folkman, 1984; Rotter, 1966).

However, this is just one side of the story. Rothbaum et al. (1982), in their influential two-process model of control, suggest that it may not be appropriate to rely on a passive, uncontrollable model to examine decreased personal control. Instead, they argue that the quest for control is seldom abandoned. They identify the process of gaining control as two processes. The first stage is to apply *direct* attempts and try to change the environment to fit self needs. If the direct attempts are impossible or unsuccessful, the individuals are likely to shift to *indirect* methods to effectively shape the self to fit into the external environment.

### **Interpersonal Dependence Theory**

Interpersonal dependence theory argues that the structural dimensions that define an interpersonal interaction largely influence motivational and behavioral patterns in the relationship (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). First, the relationship between two parties can be either dependent or independent. If one's desired outcome is fully or partially governed by the other party, he or she is dependent in the context of the relationship. If not, he or she is independent. Secondly, power and dependence are inextricably related to each other. Power refers to the ability to control others' needs or wants (Keltner, et al., 2003). If the power is equally distributed between the two parties, they are mutually dependent. However, the asymmetry distribution of power implies that (1) the party with relatively less power than the other one will be more dependent in the relationship; (2)

the more dependent party will be more vulnerable within the relationship. In order to mitigate the vulnerability in the relationship, the dependent one tends to intensively detect the responsiveness of the powerful other (Arriaga & Rusbult, 1998) and engage in manipulating certain information about him or herself to receive a favorable evaluation (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003).

### **Personal Control and Interpersonal Dependence**

In order to explain the relationship between job insecurity and impression management, both personal control model and interpersonal dependence are applied to explain the current phenomenon of interest. These two theories hold the same assumption that about the proactivity of human behaviors. The personal control model assumes that individuals are proactive in regaining control. Similarly, interpersonal dependence theory assumes that individuals are proactive in mitigating vulnerability in interpersonal relationships. However, the personal control model alone is not able to capture the interpersonal dynamic that exists in the impression management activities. Since impression management is one of my central interests, a theory in intrapsychic dimension is not in itself adequate to examine the variety of the interpersonal dimension.

Interpersonal dependence theory is able to compensate for such inadequacy. When the insecure individuals are forced to change themselves to fit the environment, the interpersonal dependence created by job insecurity further directs such indirect personal control to the interpersonal dimension. As a result, impression management attempts are likely to emerge during the process of regaining control of job security. Similarly, interpersonal dependence theory alone does not adequately capture the dynamic process



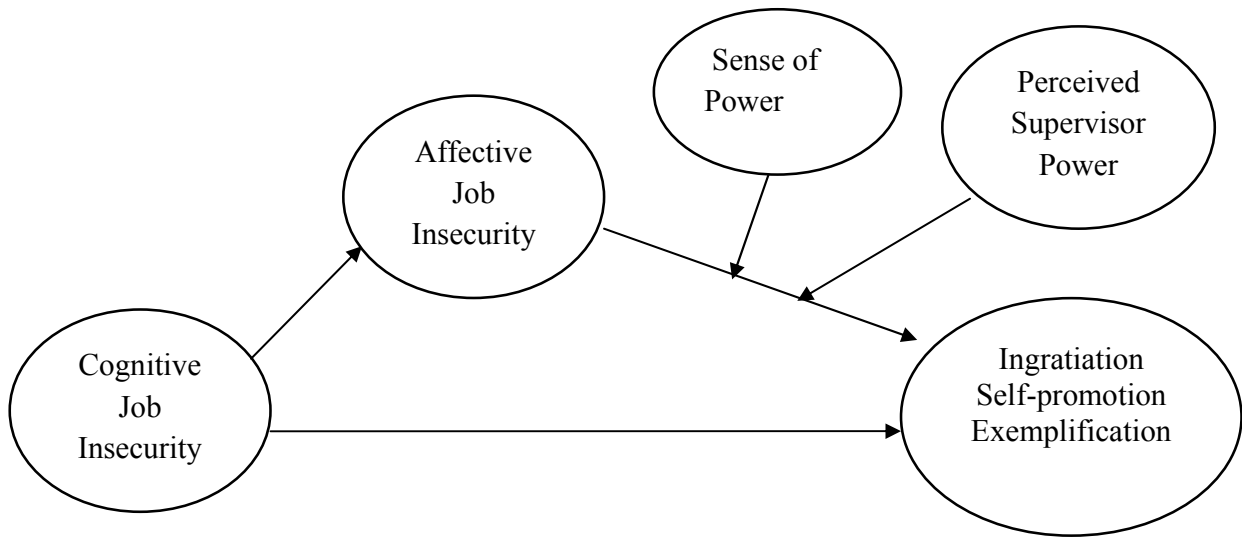
of personal control and the coping function of impression management in the intrapsychic dimension. Therefore, I find it necessary to apply not only personal control model but also interpersonal dependence theory. In the following sections, I will discuss in detail how job insecurity is theoretically linked to impression management on the basis of the integrated theory.

#### **CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH CONCEPTUALIZATION**

In this section, I mainly argue that impression management is a form of problem-focused coping to regain personal control about job insecurity, and this link is further strengthened by the dependence on powerful others. More specifically, we make two major arguments here: (1) most of the causes of job insecurity are out of one's personal control, and impression management is one of the few coping options that remain for the insecure person to use to regain control. However, the perceived ability to control the relationship with supervisors is subject to the individual's sense of power when interacting with others. (2) Job insecurity creates a higher level of dependence on powerful others, and the dependence in turn promotes the impression management attempts. Such dependence is weaker if the supervisors are perceived as powerless in terms of the particular issue at stake. The overall proposed model is presented at Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1**

**Overall Theoretical Model**



**Impression Management Defined**

Impression management refers to the purposeful and strategic efforts to create or manage one's desirable images that are projected to and perceived by a targeted audience (Jones & Pittman, 1982). There are at least two parties involved in impression management activities. One is called *the actor* and the other one is called *the audience* (Leary, 1996). In this paper, the actors are the focal employees who are experiencing job insecurity, while the audience is assumed to be their supervisors. This is because subordinates and coworkers are less likely to control the access to a desirable outcome for the insecure employees, so the impression management attempts geared to them are not as salient as those geared toward supervisors (Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

Impression management sometimes is used interchangeably in the literature with several other labels, such as self-presentation, interpersonal influence, interpersonal power and upward influence. However, as analyzed by Leary and Kowalski (1990) and Barrick, Shaffer and DeGrassi (2009), although these labels are slightly different from each other, they are more similar than distinct, because they all include the same type of actions that attempt to achieve certain ends through tactical or strategic interaction with others. We adopt the label of impression management partially because it is the most commonly used one found in the literature. More importantly, impression management is the most appropriate one in the case of job insecurity and its coping responses, because it captures the purposeful efforts undertaken with a motive to project a specific image to get a certain desired end state.

Researchers have adopted impression management perspective to explain other forms of organizational behavior, including job interview (Ellis, West, Ryan, & DeShon, 2002; Barrick, et al., 2009), issue-selling (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998), performance appraisal (Wayne & Liden, 1995), career success (Judge & Bretz, 1994), and feedback seeking (Ashford & Northcraft, 1992). This line of research suggests the important role played by impression management in organizational settings. In addition to advancing the literature on the problem-focused coping responses to job insecurity, the current study will also contribute to impression management research by uncovering the impression-management profile of insecure employees.

## **Job Insecurity, Controllability and Impression Management**

I will first discuss the theoretical potential of impression management as a problem-focused coping strategy, drawing from personal control model (Rothbaum et al., 1982). According to the first process of personal control model, when individuals find they are unable to change the external environment, they will exhibit some passivity and withdrawal behavior (Rothbaum, et al., 1982). Klandermans et al. (1991) argue that most of the causes of job insecurity are independent of individual coping interventions, such as reorganization, industry decline, economic downturn and technological advancement (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). This is probably why not much empirical evidence about problem-focused coping towards job insecurity is found in the literature.

However, researchers overlooked one indirect but important way to connect these uncontrollable factors to the insecure employees. Regardless of the external environment, the final decisions regarding job and/or job feature loss are made by people within the organization who hold more legitimate power. Although the real causes of job insecurity are uncontrollable, the inherent ambiguity and complexity in the supervisor-subordinate relationship provide employees with ample opportunities for regaining control (Klandermans, et al., 1991; Westphal, 1999). In addition, it is assumed that, if the reason is strong enough, everyone is capable of influencing others to some degree (Pfeffer, 1992).

As suggested by the second process of personal control model, the direct method of regaining control transforms into an indirect method. Impression management brings the

self into line with powerful others' standards and matches the self to the demands of the environment. This implies that indirect efforts to regain control of the situation and to cope with job insecurity are undertaken, through changing of one's self. If the insecure employees convey the right impression to the powerful others in the organization, the insecure employees are less likely to lose their job and/or job features.

### **Job Insecurity, Dependence and Impression Management**

To further strengthen the link between job insecurity and impression management, I draw from interpersonal dependence theory (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003) to argue that job insecurity creates a high level of dependence upon those who are powerful and activates the impression management attempts.

Job insecurity describes the perceived potential loss of desired job and/or job features and at the same time, the perceived powerlessness to counteract such potential loss based on one's own efforts (Greenhalgh & Rosenbaltt, 1984). Such experience activates the awareness of the potential loss of the employment arrangements as they currently exist. The imbalanced distribution of power over the insecure employees' desired outcomes set the tone for the interaction between the two parties: the insecure employees have a certain degree of interpersonal dependence on their supervisors (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). In particular, supervisors are able to provide information that is beyond the knowledge of the insecure employees and can offer a more effective appraisal of the situation. Moreover, supervisors are able to provide concrete assistance when the employees are suffering from job insecurity. Employers may highlight the

specific strategies to solve the problem or, in some cases, they may even have the power to make decisions regarding actual job and/or job feature loss as they relate to the insecure employees. Through strengthening the interpersonal tie with supervisors, the insecure employees are in a better position to protect themselves in an adverse situation.

As argued in the interpersonal dependence theory, the insecure employees' dependence on the supervisors activates more intensive monitoring of the signs of supervisor and responsiveness (Arriaga & Rusbult, 1998). To enhance their own outcome and reduce their vulnerability, the insecure often generate "positive illusion" when the supervisors are present to evoke certain reactions from them (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003).

### **Behavioral Pattern for Impression Management**

In the previous sections, I built the theoretical link between job insecurity and impression management primarily on the basis of the personal control model and secondarily, on interpersonal dependence theory. My major arguments are impression management is an indirect form of coping strategy for job insecurity, and this link is further strengthened by the insecure employees' interpersonal dependence on their supervisors. However, the behavioral patterns of impression management are still unknown. The literature provides a long list of impression management tactics (c.f., Bolino, et al., 2008) and various impression management taxonomies (e.g., Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988; Jones & Pittman, 1982; Wayne & Ferris, 1990; Tedeschi & Mulsberg, 1984) in organizational settings. No matter how the tactics are labeled and classified, one

pattern is certain: each tactic can be linked to a specific, desired image (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Similar to previous studies (e.g., Ferris & Judge, 1991; Judge & Bretz, 1994; Tedeschi & Mulsberg, 1984), my approach of examining impression management tactics is to clarify the desired images when employees are faced with job insecurity and use these images as a starting point to discuss the possible behavioral patterns used for impression management.

Job insecurity implies a context within which the employees' job and/or job features are at stake. It is unknown what the desirable images are in this context. However, it is possible to borrow from other well-established literature such as job interviews (attainment of job) and career success (attainment of job features) to develop my hypothesis. The desired qualities necessary for of obtaining a job and/or job features are similar to the desired qualities required for retaining a job and/or job features. For example, Ellis, et al. (2002) find that the interviewees are seeking to be perceived as competent and likeable in the context of a job interview, and O'Reilly and Chatman (1994) find that people who have worked hard and intelligently have a higher chance of enjoying objective career success, such as high pay and upward mobility. In general, I argue that the insecure employees want to be thought of as solid contributors and/or likeable individuals so that their likelihood of retaining the desirable job and/or job features will be higher.

Attempting to be competent and likeable lies at the core of ingratiation and self-promotion respectively. As defined by Tedeschi and Mulsberg (1984), ingratiation is a set of assertive tactics used to manage one's image to be thought of as friendly, attractive or

helpful in order to get approval from those seen as more important. This takes many different forms, including opinion conformity, offering compliments, and rendering personal favors (Jones, 1964). The employees apply these supervisor-focused tactics to enhance their supervisors' subjective evaluation (e.g., supervisor-liking, perception of similarity), which further increase the likelihood of obtaining the desired outcomes (Wayne & Ferris, 1990; Wayne & Liden, 1995). Self-promotion focuses on the impression of competence, and it includes discussing one's accomplishments with pride and directing others to pay attention to one's strengths and talents (Rudman, 1998). The employees highlight their positive attributes through self-promotion to receive approval and to appear competent.

Compared to those regarding self-promotion and ingratiation, there are fewer studies explicitly studying exemplification, but it has been regarded as one aspect of self-promotion (e.g., Barrick, et al., 2009; Wayne & Liden, 1995), because both of them are targeting others' respect and admiration. However, theoretically, I believe that exemplification has some distinct, strategic qualities in impression seeking not found in self-promotion, although the two share the same motive (Ferris & Judge, 1991). The exemplifier tries to convince others that he or she is hardworking, disciplined, and dedicated (Bolino & Turnley, 1999). In contrast, self-promoters draw others' attention to their achievements and rewards. Making a mistake when a job and/or job features are at stake is far more dangerous than when they are not. Therefore, employees are likely to exemplify themselves as "model" employees when their job and/or job features are at stake to avoid negative evaluations.



These impression management tactics, ingratiation, self-promotion and exemplification, are found to be effective in many different organizational settings. For example, during structured interviews, applicants tend to use ingratiation and self-promotion to manage their impressions in front of the interviewers, and these attempts generally lead to a more positive evaluation (Ellis, et al, 2002; Barrick, et al., 2009). In addition, performance appraisal is another important context in which ingratiation, self-promotion and exemplification come into play through influencing supervisors' perceptions and evaluations (Wayne & Ferris, 1990). Following my earlier arguments about job insecurity and impression management, I believe that these tactics will also be chosen by the insecure employees, because the job insecurity context shares common features with previously researched ones: (1) due to an imbalanced distribution of administrative power, focal employees show a certain degree of dependence on the targeted audience; (2) the impressions presented to the supervisors are linked to a certain desired outcome; (3) To gain this outcome, individuals must be evaluated within interpersonal dimension. Therefore, I come to my first hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1: Cognitive job insecurity is positively related to ingratiation (H1a), self-promotion (H1b) and exemplification (H1c).*

### **The Mediating Role of Affective Job Insecurity**

It has been established in the literature about the mediating role of affective job insecurity for the relationship between cognitive job insecurity and outcome variables. For example, Huang et al. (2010) finds that affective job insecurity mediates the

relationship between cognitive job insecurity and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and somatic complaints. Hung et al. (2011) further confirms the mediating role of affective job insecurity with lagged design. A similar mechanism has been proposed by Spector and Fox (2002). They find that environmental cues activate cognitive interpretation, which in turn flows to negative emotional experience and then leads to negative work outcomes.

The underlying mechanism of the above mediation effect draws on Folkman and Lazarus (1984)'s stress coping theory and affective event theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). As explained in Huang et al. (2010), cognitive appraisal of environmental cues creates affect, which in turn influences individual outcomes, such as mental (or physical) strain and coping behaviors (Lazarus, 1991). Cognitive job insecurity calculates the probability of losing job and/or job features. Such appraisal may arouse affective reactions, such as being worried, nervous and concerned. Affective event theory also suggests that employees tend to respond in terms of negative affect after perceiving a negative event in the workplace. The more important and relevant of the event, the more intensive the affect is. As one of the most proximal reactions of cognitive appraisal, affective job insecurity in turn changes people's attitudes and behaviors.

Following a similar logic, I argue that the impact of cognitive job insecurity on impression management is transmitted through affective job insecurity. When employees are worried, concerned and anxious about the likelihood of losing job and/or job features, they find the cognitive appraisal of environmental threats important and relevant. Thus, they are motivated to proactively cope with job insecurity. As argued in previous

hypothesis, impression management is a potentially useful option for insecure employees. The specific impression management tactics for job insecurity include ingratiation, self promotion and exemplification.

*Hypothesis 2: Affective job insecurity mediates the relationship between cognitive job insecurity and ingratiation (H2a), self promotion (H2b) and exemplification (H2c).*

### **Individual Differences in Impression Management: Sense of Power**

Although it is generally assumed that people are capable of exerting influence in the interpersonal encounter (Pfeffer, 1992; Tetlock & Manstead, 1985), in the real world, not everyone is equally likely to engage in impression management behaviors. My previous arguments about personal control suggest that impression management is an indirect way to restore control over job security. However, personal control model also suggests that the perceived ability to control an interpersonal relationship varies among different individuals (Greenberger & Strasser, 1986). The individuals who believe they are capable of influencing others are more likely to engage in impression management behaviors. Some other individuals may believe that interpersonal relationships are out of their control and avoid utilizing impression management behaviors. As a result, a moderator, sense of power, is proposed to capture the variety of individual differences in impression management behaviors.

Sense of power is a learned generalized perception of one's ability to influence others towards a certain end (Keltner, et al., 2003). It is more stable than states that are viable over different situations because it involves developmental attributes based on

one's personal experience, and at the same time, it is also not as stable as personality traits are, because it can evolve over time. According to Mowday (1978), people develop their own sense of power based on their previous interactions with others. An individual is likely to attribute a high sense of power to him or herself when the outcome was changed by his or her influence and attempts to create a desired outcome. In particular, insecure employees who have a high generalized sense of power will be more sensitive to the benefits brought about by impression management and be more optimistic about the ability to successfully make use of impression management (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006). It has been established in the previous section that the effect of cognitive job insecurity on impression management behaviors is transmitted through affective job insecurity. Therefore, I hypothesize that the strength of the mediation effect is subject to the level of sense of power.

*Hypothesis 3: Sense of power moderates the indirect effect of cognitive job insecurity on ingratiation (H3a), self promotion (H3b) and exemplification (H3c) (through affective job insecurity). Specifically, the indirect effect is stronger when the insecure employees have a high sense of power than low sense of power.*

### **Contextual Differences for Impression Management: Perceived Supervisor Power**

The introduction of the current contextual moderator, perceived supervisor power, is driven by the arguments about interpersonal dependence. Perceived supervisor power refers to the amount of power held by the supervisors as perceived by the insecure employees (Aguinis, Nesler, Quigley, & Tedeschi, 1994). Legitimate power represents

the appearance of the power structure within an organization. However, it may or may not be accurately reflecting the actual power structure. Power stems from controlling what others need or want (Farmer & Aguinis, 2005). Even if a person with higher legitimate power, he or she is not necessarily perceived as powerful person in the organization. An example could be some employees go over the head of their immediate supervisor in situations in which he or she is believed not to possess sufficient power over the issue of interest. If the supervisors are perceived as not having sufficient power, the insecure employees' interpersonal dependence on them is largely weakened (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003).

Tedeschi, Schlenker and Linkskold (1972) argue that when choosing the audience for impression management, the major consideration is whether the audience controls the access to the important outcomes. Particularly noteworthy is that such choice is not limited to the formal chain of command. Hence, I am not only interested in the legitimate power granted by the organizational hierarchy, but also in the other four broad bases of power held by the supervisors: reward, coercive, expert, and referent power (French & Raven, 1959; Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1989). Farmer and Aguinis (2005) argue that these five bases of power represent a generalized perception of supervisor power and reflect a weighted and accumulated function of previous power judgments about the supervisors.

More specifically, as discussed before, legitimate power refers to the power conferred upon the role itself. Legitimate power is the ability to urge employees to fulfill role expectations. Reward and coercive power refer to the supervisors' ability to provide rewards as incentives or to administer punishments to seek compliance. Expert power is

based on the perception that the supervisors have some specialized knowledge that the subordinates do not possess. Referent power is more interpersonal and refers to whether the subordinates are willing to identify with or associate with their supervisors.

As a widely accepted way of measuring perceived supervisor power, French and Raven's (1959) five broad bases of power is believed to have captured the full variety of power structures that exist in an organization (Farmer & Aguinis, 2005). Given the fact that impression management involves being instrumental, I argue that if the insecure employees perceive their supervisors are also in powerless positions to counteract job insecurity, the indirect effect of cognitive job insecurity on impression management is weaker. By contrast, if the supervisors are perceived as powerful, the indirect effect is stronger.

*Hypothesis 4: Perceived supervisor power moderates the indirect effect of cognitive job insecurity on ingratiation (H4a), self promotion (H4b) and exemplification (H4c) (through affective job insecurity). Specifically, the indirect effect is stronger when the insecure employees have a high perceived supervisor power than low perceived supervisor power.*

## **CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this chapter, I describe the research setting in which this dissertation was conducted, the data collection sample and procedures, the measures for the variables in my hypothesized model, and the analytic techniques used to test the hypotheses.

## **Research Site**

I collected two waves of data in a property management company for residential buildings in Shen Zhen, China. Property management companies are hired by property owners to provide a wide range of management services, including security, maintenance, utilization and disposition. The company I surveyed is one of the most famous and respected property management companies in Shen Zhen. It has one headquarter and around twenty management centers. These management centers are located in different geographic areas and each of them is responsible for one or several residential properties.

## **Data Collection**

With the assistance of human resource department, I firstly identified 104 supervisors in the company. Then I identified one to four subordinate under each supervisor. If a supervisor has more than four subordinates, I randomly selected four to participate. If a supervisor has four or less subordinates, I invited all of them to participate. On the basis of these principles, I identified 375 focal employees at the end.

On early march in 2011, I visited the company with human resource officers to distribute subordinate questionnaires. I explained the purpose of the questionnaires, assured confidentiality, and answered questions the participants had about the questionnaires. Since the president of the company calls for participation to this research project, the response rate is quite high. During the first wave, I distributed 375 employee questionnaires and 351 of them returned, representing a response rate of 93.6%. After a week, I visited the head office and management centers and distributed 104 supervisor

questionnaires. 97 valid questionnaires were collected back and the response rate is 93.2%. Following a similar procedure, I collected second wave in the middle of June, 2011. As an incentive to their participation to research, each participant received a gift priced at RMB 37 (~HKD43.5) during the second wave data collection. Gifts were distributed by human resource department. 351 employee and 97 supervisor questionnaires were distributed and 330 valid employee questionnaires (94.0% response rate) and 92 valid supervisor questionnaires (94.8% response rate) were returned. At the end, a total of 321 valid supervisor-subordinate dyads (both wave one and wave two completed) were built.

## **Measurement**

The first-wave subordinate questionnaire measured employees' perception about cognitive job insecurity, affective job insecurity, sense of power and perceived supervisor power, and several demographic (control) variables. Their impression management behaviors were rated by supervisors in the second wave. To assure the equivalence of the Chinese and English versions, all of the scales used in the survey instrument were translated into Chinese and then independently translated back into English (Brislin, 1980). Experts in the Chinese language examined the questionnaire to ensure that the items were easily interpretable in Chinese. Table 1 presents a summary of all the items, their corresponding codes used in statistical software and reliability (Cronbach's alpha).

**Cognitive Job Insecurity.** Multiplicative scale developed by Ashford, et al. (1989) was used to measure cognitive job insecurity. 17 items to assess the importance and likelihood of losing each job feature and 10 items to assess the importance and



likelihood of possible negative changes in one's overall job, and 3 items to measure powerlessness. The following formula was applied to compute cognitive job insecurity: Composite JI = sum (importance of job feature × likelihood of losing job feature) + sum(importance of negative changes in total job × likelihood of negative changes in total job) × [perceived powerlessness to resist threat]. All five sub-measures are based on a five point scale, ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5) and *not important at all* (1) to *very important* (5). Reliability ranges from 0.65 to 0.88.

**Affective Job Insecurity.** 10-item measure of affective JI was used at time 1 and time 3, developed by Huang and coauthors (2010). One sample item is "The lack of job security in this company makes me feel very nervous". Affective JI was measured on 5-point Likert-type scales, ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). The Cronbach's alpha is 0.85.

**Impression Management.** Bolino and Turnley (1999) developed and validated five most commonly used impression management tactics. Three tactics, including self promotion, ingratiation and exemplification are relevant to our study context. Each scale was measured by 4 items. Sample items for these three tactics are "talk proudly about your experience or education", "compliment your colleagues so they will see you as likeable", and "stay at work late so people will know you are hard working", respectively. Response choices ranged from *never behave this way* (1) to *often behave this way* (5). The reliability is 0.87.

**Sense of Power.** Sense of power was measured by 8 items developed by Anderson & Galinsky (2006). Respondents are asked to describe their interpersonal power in their

previous interactions with people by using scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* (1) to *Strongly Agree* (7). One sample item is “I can get people to listen to what I say”. The reliability of this scale is only 0.55 after recoding four reverse coded items. A closer investigation reveals that four non-reverse coded items demonstrate a high level of reliability among themselves (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.74). In fact, Liu, Wang, Hui and Lee (in press) and Farh, Hackett and Liang (2007) argue that Chinese respondents have difficulty in interpreting negatively worded items. In order to improve the reliability of the scale, four reverse coded items are dropped and only the non-reverse coded items were used for subsequent analysis.

**Perceived Supervisor Power.** Hinkin and Schriesheim's (1989) scale was used to measure perceived supervisor power. The scale measured five bases of power: reward, coercive, legitimate, expert, and referent. Each power scale was measured by 4 items and the scale consists of a total of 20 items on a 7 point scale ranging from (1) *Strongly Disagree* to (7) *Strongly Agree*. Examples of items used include: My supervisor can “increase my pay level” (reward), “make things unpleasant here” (coercive), “provide me with needed technical knowledge” (expert), “make me feel that I have commitments to meet” (legitimate), and “make me feel personally accepted” (referent). The reliability is 0.90.

**Control Variables.** I control for several most commonly used demographic variables in the literature. Gender was coded 1 for men and 2 for women. Age, working experience, tenure with the company and tenure with the current position were reported in years. Education was measured using four categories: middle school or below, high

school or equivalent, bachelor's degree or equivalent, master degree or above, coded 1 through 4, respectively.

**TABLE 1**  
**Summary of Scale Items and Reliability (N=252)**

<b>Software codes</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
<b>Cognitive Job Insecurity (Ashford, et al. 1989)</b>		
	Perceived Importance/Perceived Likelihood of Loss -Job Features	<b>0.82/0.88</b>
JIA1*/JIB1**	1. Your geographic location?	
JIA2/JIB2	2. Your potential to get ahead in the organization?	
JIA3/JIB3	3. Your potential to maintain your current pay?	
JIA4/JIB4	4. Your potential to attain pay increases?	
JIA5/JIB5	5. The status that comes with your position in the company?	
JIA6/JIB6	6. Your current freedom to schedule your own work?	
JIA7/JIB7	7. Your current freedom to perform your work in the manner you see fit?	
JIA8/JIB8	8. Your current access to resources (people, materials, information) in the organization?	
JIA9/JIB9	9. Your current sense of community in working with good coworkers?	
JIA10/JIB10	10. The amount of feedback you currently receive from your supervisor?	

JIA11/JIB11	11. The supervision you receive?	
JIA12/JIB12	12. The physical demands your job places on you?	
JIA13/JIB13	13. The opportunity to interact with the public?	
JIA14/JIB14	14. The variety of tasks you perform?	
JIA15/JIB15	15. The opportunity to do an entire piece of work?	
JIA16/JIB16	16. The significance of your job?	
	17. The extent to which you can tell how well you are doing your job as you do it?	
JIA17/JIB17		
	Perceived Importance/Perceived Likelihood of Loss -Total Job	<b>0.72/0.76</b>
<hr/>		
	1. You may lose your job and be moved to a lower level within the organization?	
JIC1*/JID1**		
	2. You may lose your job and be moved to another job at the same level within the organization?	
JIC2/JID2		
	3. The number of work hours the company can offer you to work may fluctuate from day to day?	
JIC3/JID3		
	4. You may be moved to a different job at a higher position in your current location?	
JIC4/JID4		
	5. You may be moved to a different job at a higher position in another geographic location?	
JIC5/JID5		
JIC6/JID6	6. You may be laid off for a short while?	
JIC7/JID7	7. You may be laid off permanently?	
JIC8/JID8	8. Your department or division's future may be uncertain?	

JIC9/JID9 9. You may be fired?

JIC10/JID10 10. You may be pressured to accept early retirement?

\*Perceived Importance \*\*Perceived Likelihood of Loss

Powerlessness

**0.65**

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1. I have enough power in this organization to control events

POW1 that might affect my job.

2. In this organization, I can prevent negative things from

POW2 affecting my work situation.

3. I understand this organization well enough to be able to

POW3 control things that affect me.

**Affective Job Insecurity (Huang, et al., 2010)**

**0.85**

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1. The lack of job security in this company makes me feel

AJI1 nervous

2. I feel uneasy about my chances for remaining with this

AJI2 company

3. I lose sleep worrying about my future with this company

AJI3

4. I am unhappy with the amount of job security that I have

AJI4 with this company

5. I am tense about maintaining my current job employment

AJI5 status

6. I am very unsure that I can remain employed with this

AJI6 company for as long as I wish

AJI7	7. I am pessimistic about the job security with this company	
AJI8	8. I am troubled by the thought of losing my job	
AJI9	9. I am scared by the thought of losing my job	
AJI10	10. I am worried that this company will fire me any time	
<b>Sense of Power (Anderson &amp; Galinsky, 2006)</b>		<b>0.74</b>
SOP1	1. I can get people to listen to what I say.	
SOP2	2. I can get others to do what I want.	
SOP3	3. I think I have a great deal of power.	
SOP4	4. If I want to, I get to make the decisions.	
<b>Perceived Supervisor Power</b>		<b>0.90</b>
Reward Power		<b>0.94</b>
PSP1	1. Increase my pay level.	
PSP2	2. Influence my getting a pay raise.	
PSP3	3. Provide me with special benefits.	
PSP4	4. Influence my getting a promotion.	
Coercive Power		<b>0.92</b>
PSP5	5. Give me undesirable job assignments.	
PSP6	6. Make my work difficult for me.	
PSP7	7. Make things unpleasant here.	
PSP8	8. Make being at work distasteful.	
Legitimate Power		<b>0.90</b>
PSP9	9. Make me feel that I have commitments to meet.	

PSP10	10. Make me feel like I should satisfy my job requirements.	
PSP11	11. Give me the feeling I have responsibilities to fulfill.	
PSP12	12. Make me recognize that I have tasks to accomplish.	
	Expert Power	<b>0.84</b>
<hr/>		
PSP13	13. Give me good technical suggestions.	
	14. Share with me his/her considerable experience and/or	
PSP14	training.	
PSP15	15. Provide me with sound job-related advice.	
PSP16	16. Provide me with needed technical knowledge.	
	Referent Power	<b>0.88</b>
<hr/>		
PSP17	17. Make me feel valued.	
PSP18	18. Make me feel like he/she approves of me.	
PSP19	19. Make me feel personally accepted.	
PSP20	20. Make me feel important.	
	<b>Impression Management (Bolino &amp; Turnley, 1999)</b>	<b>0.87</b>
<hr/>		
	Self-promotion	<b>0.82</b>
<hr/>		
IM1	1. Talk proudly about your experience or education.	
IM2	2. Make people aware of your talents or qualifications	
IM3	3. Let others know that you are valuable to the organization.	
IM4	4. Make people aware of your accomplishments.	
	Ingratiation	<b>0.78</b>
<hr/>		
IM5	5. Compliment your colleagues so they will see you as	



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	likeable.	
IM6	6. Take an interest in your colleagues' personal lives to show them that you are friendly.	
IM7	7. Praise your colleagues for their accomplishments so they will consider you are a nice person.	
IM8	8. Do personal favors for your colleagues to show them that you are friendly	
	Exemplification	<b>0.81</b>

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IM9	9. Stay at work late so people will know you are hard working.	
IM10	10. Try to appear busy, even at times when things are slower.	
IM11	11. Arrive at work early to look dedicated.	
IM12	12. Come to the office at night or on weekends to show that you are dedicated.	

### **Data Analysis**

I tested my study hypotheses in two interlinked steps as recommended by Preacher, Rucker and Hayes (2007). I firstly examined the mediation hypotheses and then tested the overall moderated mediation hypotheses. Hypothesis 2 tests the mediation effect and hypothesis 3 and 4 test moderated mediation effect. As suggested by Preacher and Kelley (2011), all variables should be based on meaningful metrics to make the mediation and moderation effect interpretable. For example, in the measures I used, the mean of

cognitive job insecurity is 1037.50 and standard deviation is 372.65 due to its multiplicative nature. Such large values may render certain effects meaningless (Preacher & Kelley, 2011). Prior to data analysis, all variables are rescaled to 5-point metric.

**Test of Mediation** Hypothesis 2 suggests an indirect effect between cognitive job insecurity and three types of impression management behaviors, ingratiation, self promotion and exemplification, via affective job insecurity. MacKinnon, Fairchild, and Fritz (2007) review practices of mediation test and recommend a formal significance test of the indirect effect  $ab$ , of which Sobel (1982) test is the most prevalent. Preacher and Hayes (2004) argue that Sobel test is more powerful than the traditional multi-step approach developed by Baron and Kenny (1986) because it directly addresses the mediation. However, there is an important assumption of Sobel test that the indirect effect  $ab$  should be normally distributed. This assumption is difficult to meet because, as suggested by Edwards and Lambert (2007), even if the variables constituting  $ab$  are normally distributed,  $ab$  itself is not normally distributed. Therefore, bootstrapping is recommended. Bootstrapped confidence intervals (CIs) are able to avoid the power problems created by asymmetric and nonnormal distribution of the indirect effect  $ab$  (Preacher and Hayes, 2004). The mediation test in the current study is therefore utilizes both Sobel test and bootstrapping. As a supplement material to Preacher and Hayes (2004), Andrew Hayes developed an SPSS macro with normal theory approach (i.e. Sobel test), bootstrapping approach to obtain CIs and also the stepwise procedure described by Baron and Kenny (1986).

**Tests of Moderated Mediation** Hypothesis 3 and 4 predict a moderated mediation relationship that sense of power and perceived supervisor power moderate the relationship between affective job insecurity and three impression management tactics. James and Brett (1984) defined moderated mediation as a mediation model involving “the addition of a moderator for either the  $m = f(x)$  or  $y = f(m)$  relations, or both” (p. 314). Moderated mediation occurs when a mediation effect is subject to the level of a moderating variable. Preacher, et al. (2007) identifies five different ways that a moderator can influence a mediation effect. In particular, my theoretical model is consistent with their model 3. Model 3 is a model where the path between mediator and dependent variables depends on a moderating variable. In order to test the moderated mediation hypothesis, I again utilized another SPSS macro developed by Andrew Hayes for moderated mediation test supplementing Preacher, et al. (2007). This macro provides a method for probing the significance level of moderated mediation and allows the bootstrapping method.

## **CHAPTER 6 RESULTS**

In the current chapter, I will present the empirical findings for the data collected. I will report sample characteristics, descriptive statistics and correlation, confirmatory factor analysis, results for mediation test and moderated mediation test.

### **Sample Characteristics**

Table 2 summarizes the demographical characteristics of all respondents. Among 321 valid cases, 202 (74.5%) were male, 69 (25.5%) were female and 50 (15.6%) did not

specify their gender. 30 respondents (9.3%) received junior high school or equivalent degrees, 128 (39.3%) received senior high or equivalent, 98 (30.5%) received bachelor or higher degrees and the rest of them (65; 20.2%) did not provide their education background. The mean and standard deviation of age, working experience, tenure in the current company and tenure in the current position are summarized in Table 2.

### **Descriptive Statistics and Correlations**

Table 2 presents means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for all variables. An inspection of the correlations reveals that cognitive job insecurity was positively related to ingratiation ( $r = .21, p < 0.01$ ) and exemplification ( $r = .17, p < 0.05$ ) but not to self promotion ( $r = .03, p > 0.05$ ). Hypothesis 1a, 1b and 1c concern the relationship between cognitive job insecurity and ingratiation, self promotion and exemplification, respectively. Therefore, hypothesis 1a and 1c were supported but hypothesis 1b was not. Results also indicated that cognitive job insecurity was positively related to affective job insecurity ( $r = .21, p < 0.01$ ), whereas affective job insecurity was positively related to impression management behaviors in a similar way with cognitive job insecurity. Affective job insecurity had significant positive effects on ingratiation ( $r = .21, p < 0.01$ ) and exemplification ( $r = .21, p < 0.01$ ) but not on self promotion ( $r = .08, p > 0.05$ ).

Table 2 also indicates a lack of association between control variables and ingratiation, self promotion and exemplification. All of these control variables were not related to exemplification significantly with considerable magnitudes. Becker (2005) recommends the exclusion of unrelated control variables because they may introduce

potential bias to statistical findings. In addition, there are no sufficient theoretical and empirical evidences in impression management literature that these demographic variables lead to different level of impression management behaviors. These low and insignificant correlations suggested that the model was not influenced by demographic variables, including sex, age, working experience, company tenure, position tenure and education. Therefore, these demographic variables were excluded for subsequent analysis.

**TABLE 2****Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Variables**

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Cognitive JI	--											
2 Affective JI	.208**	--										
3 Sense of Power	-.145*	.039	--									
4 Perceived Sup. Power	-.150*	.080	.226**	--								
5 Self Promotion	.026	.084	-.016	.073	--							
6 Ingratiation	.212**	.126*	.043	.099	.543**	--						
7 Exemplification	.168*	.167**	-.032	.048	.389**	.529**	--					
8 Sex	.087	-.050	.027	.101	.001	.037	-.032	--				
9 Age	.037	-.042	.083	.035	-.062	-.040	-.105	.214**	--			
10 Years	.056	-.028	.049	.041	-.042	-.016	-.071	.245**	.825**	--		
11 Company Tenure	.152**	.026	-.018	.013	-.039	-.090	-.090	.009	.630**	.517**	--	
12 Position Tenure	.172**	.017	.003	-	-.035	-.065	-.067	.011	.468**	.359**	.660**	--

				.021									
13 Education	.152*	-.135*	-.218**	.035	.011	-.081	-.031	.289**	.142*	.108	.150**	.007	--
Mean	1,031.50	2.58	4.04	3.58	2.73	2.67	2.39	N/A	31.97	10.50	5.35	3.45	N/A
Std. Deviation	372.653	.619	1.068	.916	.768	.732	.750	N/A	9.024	8.968	5.992	3.867	N/A

N=321. \*\*, Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed); \*, Correlation significant at the 0.05 level.

### Nonindependence Check

In my study context, each supervisor rated up to four subordinates' impression management behaviors. Such nested nature of my data violated the independence assumption of statistical analysis (Hox, 2002). Therefore, I firstly calculated *ICC (1)*, *ICC (2)* (Bartko, 1976) and design effect (Shackman, 2001) for each impression management tactic. The results are summarized in Table 3.

**TABLE 3**  
**Intra-class Correlation**

	Mean	Mean			Design
	Square-	Square-			Effect
	Between	within	<i>ICC (1)</i>	<i>ICC (2)</i>	
Ingratiation	0.729	0.544	0.097	0.253	1.089
Self Promotion	0.543	0.478	0.041	0.120	1.210
Exemplification	0.756	0.626	0.061	0.172	1.133

The results above indicated that (a) only *ICC (1)* for self promotion was smaller than cutoff value 0.05, (b) all *ICC (2)* values were smaller than cutoff value 0.50 and (c) all design effect values were smaller than cutoff value 2.0 (Shackman, 2001; James, 1982). nonindependence

To provide further evidences about , I also conducted a one-way ANOVA.



Following the procedure suggested by Kenny and Judd (1986), I used supervisor codes as independent factor and supervisor-rated impression management behaviors as dependent variables. The results showed that there were no design effect for exemplification and self promotion [ $F(93,202) = 1.136, ns$  and  $F(93,202) = 1.209, ns$ , respectively]. However, ANOVA results suggested a slight rater effect for ingratiation [ $F(93,202) = 1.340, p = 0.045$ ].

These findings suggested that, although ingratiation may suffer from minor bias of nonindependence due to  $ICC(1)$  score and significant  $F$  statistics, its  $ICC(2)$  and design effect indicated that it does not have such problems. Therefore, in general, nonindependence has little influence on the results.

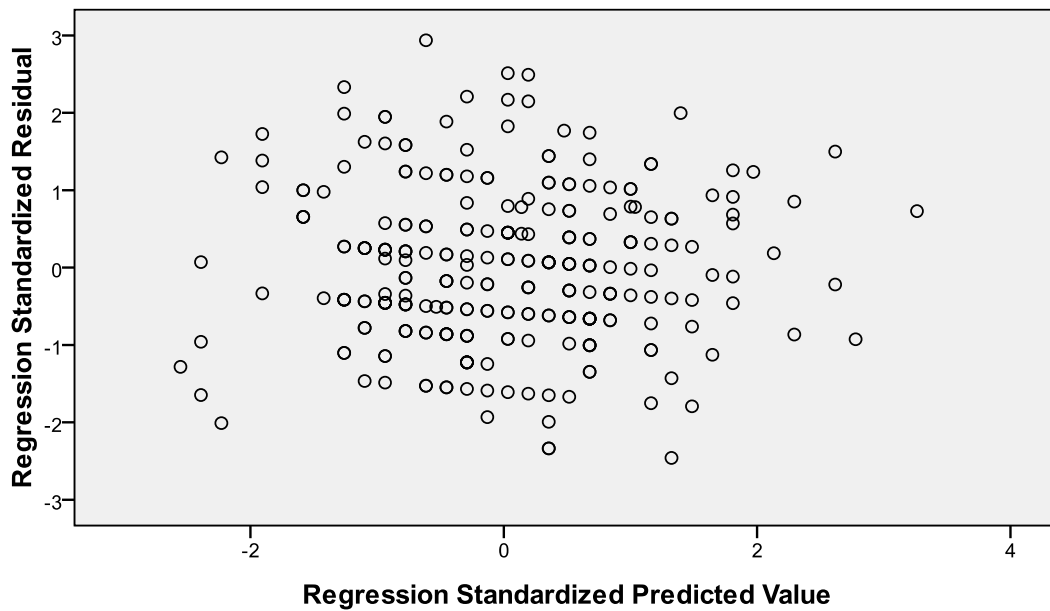
### **Linearity Test**

The data analysis techniques I used make the assumption that the relationship between variables is linear. Violation of such assumption is serious. Fitting a model to data which are nonlinearly related creates predictions in serious error. Following Hair et al. (2008), I firstly plotted the relationship between residuals and predicted dependent variable scores. This is because if independent variable (i.e. cognitive job insecurity) and dependent variables (i.e. impression management behaviors) are linearly related, the residuals and predicted dependent variable scores should be linear as well. As shown in Figure 2-4, there are no obvious curvilinear effects since the overall shape of the plot is rectangular rather than curved.

### **FIGURE 2**

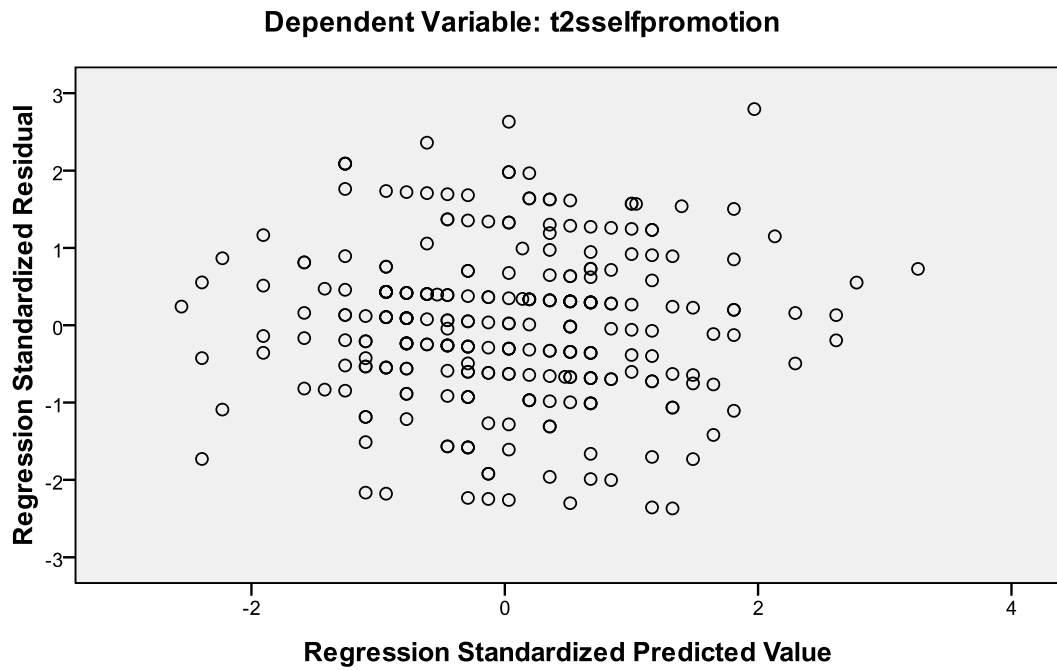
#### **Residual Plot between Cognitive Job Insecurity and Ingratiation**

**Dependent Variable: t2singratiation**



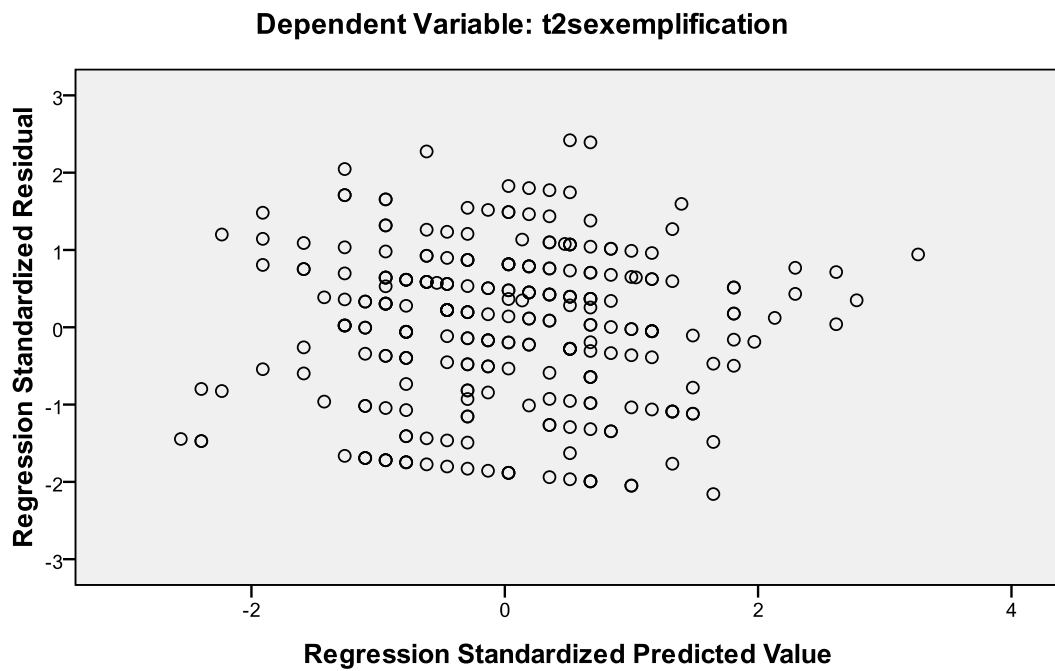
**FIGURE 3**

**Residual Plot between Cognitive Job Insecurity and Self Promotion**



**FIGURE 4**

**Residual Plot between Cognitive Job Insecurity and Exemplification**



### Normality Test

Normality is a fundamentally important assumption in multivariate statistical analysis. In order to assess whether individual variables are normally distributed, I used skewness and Kurtosis indices in SPSS 17.0. Results of skewness and kurtosis of key constructs used in this study are presented in Table 4. According to Kline (2005), assumption of univariate normality is not violated when the skewness index is between -3.0 to 3.0 and the kurtosis index is between -8.0 to 8.0.

**TABLE 4**

#### Univariate Normality Test

<b>Skewness</b>		<b>Kurtosis</b>	
Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error

Cognitive JI	0.89	0.163	1.472	0.324
Affective JI	0.207	0.136	0.098	0.271
Sense of Power	0.251	0.138	0.073	0.276
Perceived Sup. Power	0.401	0.137	0.073	0.276
Ingratiation	0.202	0.146	-0.262	0.291
Self Promotion	0.029	0.146	0.003	0.291
Exemplification	-0.273	0.146	-0.519	0.290

---

### **Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

I used maximum likelihood CFA in AMOS 17.0 to compare three ways of modeling impression management: a null model in which all items loaded on unique factors; a one-factor model in which all items loaded on one common factor; and a three-factor model in which the items designed to measure ingratiation, self promotion and exemplification loaded on three correlated factors. Following a similar procedure, I also conducted CFA for the other multi-dimensional construct, perceived supervisor power. As can be seen from Table 5, three-factor model indicates a better fit than one-factor model for impression management and five-factor model indicates a better fit than one-factor model for perceived supervisor power. As a result, in the subsequent data analysis, I summed items under each dimension to form three types of impression management behaviors (i.e., ingratiation, self promotion and exemplification) and five types of perceived supervisor power (i.e., reward, coercive, legitimate, expert and referent).

**TABLE 5**  
**Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results**

Model	d.f.	$\chi^2$	CFI	RMSEA
Impression Management				
Null Model	66	1682.659	--	--
One-Factor	48	379.791	0.795	0.147
Three-Factor	45	132.448	0.946	0.078
Perceived Supervisor Power				
Null Model	190	4182.551	--	--
One-Factor	167	1651/056	0.628	0.188
Five-Factor	155	425.637	0.932	0.083

**Results of Mediation Test**

Table 6-8 presents the results for Hypotheses 2a, 2b and 2c. With regard to Hypothesis 2, I predicted that affective job insecurity mediates the relationship between cognitive job insecurity and ingratiation (H2a), self promotion (H2b) and exemplification (H2c). The formal two-tailed significance test with normal distribution assumption (i.e. Sobel test) suggested that the indirect effects predicted by H2a and H2b are not significant ( $z = .778$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ;  $z = 1.199$ ; *ns*). Bootstrap results confirmed the Sobel test because 95% CI around these two indirect effects contain zero (-.029 ~ .071; -.016 ~ .094). More specifically, no mediation effect was found for self promotion because neither cognitive job insecurity nor affective job

insecurity is related to self promotion. Although cognitive job insecurity was significantly related to ingratiation, affective job insecurity was not related to ingratiation after controlling for cognitive job insecurity. Therefore, no mediation effect was found for ingratiation. Results for direct effects suggested that cognitive job insecurity has a direct effect on ingratiation.

Hypothesis 2c is supported. Sobel test suggested a significant indirect effect ( $z = 2.289; p < 0.05$ ). Consistent with results with normal distribution theory, bootstrap results also indicated a significant indirect effect since 95% confidence interval does not contain zero (.013 ~ .142). The indirect effect was positive as I hypothesized (.07). An inspection of direct and total effects showed that there was a significant relationship between cognitive job insecurity and exemplification ( $t = 2.398, p < 0.05$ ) but after controlling for the mediator, affective job insecurity, the relationship was not significant ( $t = 1.63, ns$ ). This finding was consistent with the steps suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) and suggested a full mediation effect. Thus, the mediation effect of affective job insecurity on the relationship between cognitive job insecurity and exemplification was confirmed by Sobel test, bootstrapping and Baron and Kenny (1986) steps. Hypothesis 2c was supported with robust evidences.

**TABLE 6**  
**Regression Results for Simple Mediation-Ingratiation as Dependent Variable**

Variable		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	
Direct and Total Effects						
Ingratiation regressed on cognitive JI	b (YX)	.266	.088	3.036	.003	
Affective JI regressed on cognitive JI	b(MX)	.254	.075	3.373	.009	
Ingratiation regressed on affective JI, controlling for cognitive JI	b(YM.X)	.069	.083	.834	.405	
Ingratiation regressed on cognitive JI, controlling for affective JI	b(YX.M)	.249	.090	2.754	.006	
		<i>LL 95%</i>	<i>UL</i>			
	<i>Value</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
Indirect Effects with Normal Distribution	.018	.023	-.027	.062	.778	.437
		<i>LL 95%</i>	<i>UL 95%</i>	<i>No. of</i>		
	<i>Data</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>Resamples</i>
Bootstrapping Results for Indirect Effects	.018	.017	.025	-.029	.071	5000



**TABLE 7**

**Regression Results for Simple Mediation-Self Promotion as Dependent Variable**

Variable		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	
Direct and Total Effects						
Self promotion regressed on cognitive JI	b (YX)	.036	.100	.363	.717	
Affective JI regressed on cognitive JI	b(MX)	.254	.075	3.373	.001	
Self Promotion regressed on affective JI, controlling for cognitive JI	b(YM.X)	.126	.095	1.338	.1825	
Self Promotion regressed on cognitive JI, controlling for affective JI	b(YX.M)	.004	.103	.040	.968	
		<i>LL 95% UL</i>				
	<i>Value</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
Indirect Effects with Normal Distribution	.032	.027	-.020	.085	1.199	.231
		<i>LL 95% UL 95% No. of</i>				
	<i>Data</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>Resamples</i>
Bootstrapping Results for Indirect Effects	.032	.032	.028	-.016	.094	5000

**TABLE 8**

**Regression Results for Simple Mediation-Exemplification as Dependent Variable**

Variable		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	
Direct and Total Effects						
Exemplification regressed on cognitive JI	b (YX)	.221	.092	2.400	.017	
Affective JI regressed on cognitive JI	b(MX)	.250	.075	3.323	.001	
Exemplification regressed on affective JI, controlling for cognitive JI	b(YM.X)	.281	.085	3.298	.001	
Exemplification regressed on cognitive JI, controlling for affective JI	b(YX.M)	.151	.092	1.632	.104	
		<i>LL 95% UL</i>				
	<i>Value</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
Indirect Effects with Normal Distribution	.070	.031	.010	.131	2.289	.0221
		<i>LL 95% UL 95% No. of</i>				
	<i>Data</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>Resamples</i>
Bootstrapping Results for Indirect Effects	.032	.032	.028	.013	.142	5000

### **Results of Moderated Mediation Test**

Since the test of moderated mediation hypothesis is based on a found mediation effect in the first place (Preacher, et al., 2007), I tested the moderated mediation hypotheses for exemplification but not for ingratiation and self promotion. That is, only Hypotheses 3c and 4c are tested.

With regard to Hypothesis 3c, I predicted sense of power moderates the indirect relationship between cognitive job insecurity and exemplification (through affective job insecurity). In particular, the effect was stronger for people with high sense of power. As presented in Table 9, the interaction term between sense of power and affective job insecurity was not significant ( $t = 1.258, ns$ ), which suggested that slopes are not significantly different from each other when the level of sense of power is different. In sum, such finding precluded the possibility of a significant moderated mediation effect.

A closer investigation of the coefficients for high (+ 1 standard deviation) and low (- 1 standard deviation) conditions suggested that the slope of high condition and moderate condition were significantly different from zero ( $t = 1.902; p = 0.057; t = 1.978; p < 0.05$ ) but the slope of low condition was not significantly different from zero ( $t = 1.038, ns$ ). These results suggested that the indirect effect of cognitive job insecurity on exemplification (through affective job insecurity) was significantly different from zero only when sense of power was high.

I plotted these simple slopes following conventional procedures. As shown in Figure 5, simple slopes were consistent with my hypothesized pattern. When sense of power is high, there was a slightly positive relationship between affective job insecurity and exemplification (simple slope = 0.45,  $p < 0.05$ ). When sense of power is low, the relationship was not that salient (simple slope = 0.18, *ns*).

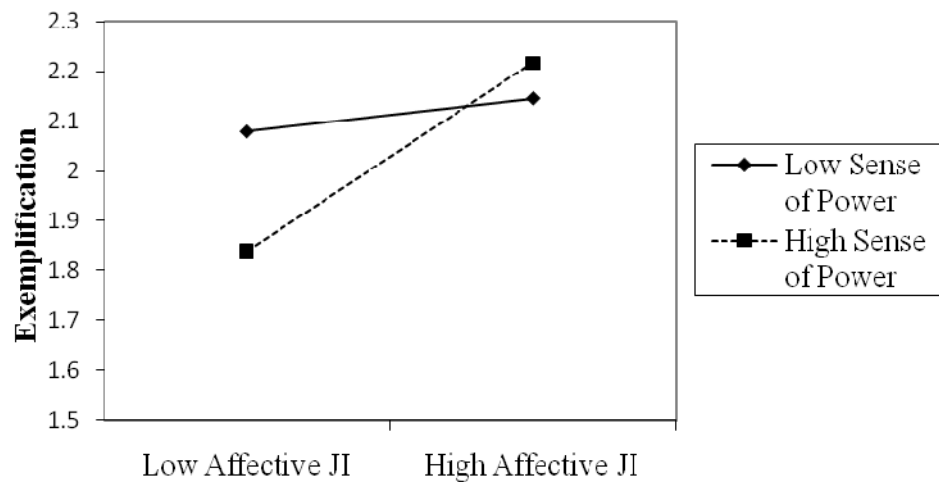
**TABLE 9****Regression Results for Moderated Mediation-Sense of Power as Moderator**

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Affective JI				
Constant	2.230	.127	17.628	.000
Cognitive JI	.207	.079	2.633	.009
Exemplification				
Constant	2.670	.946	2.822	.005
Cognitive JI	.178	.099	1.810	.072
Affective JI	-.262	.375	-.700	.485
Sense of Power	-.318	.236	-1.347	.180
Affective JI × Sense of Power	.134	.093	1.434	.153
Indirect				
Sense of Power	Effect	<i>SE</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
-1 SD	.030	.029	1.038	.299
M	.059	.023	1.978	.048
+1 SD	.088	.046	1.902	.057

\* Notes: Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported.

**FIGURE 5**

**Moderating Effect of Sense of Power**



Hypothesis 4c tests the moderating role of perceived supervisor power on the mediational influence of affective job insecurity on the relationship between cognitive job insecurity and exemplification. I firstly tested a generalized perception of employees' perceived supervisor power, which includes reward, coercive, legitimate, expert, and referent power. The results showed that there is no significant interaction between affective job insecurity and such generalized perceived supervisor power ( $t = 1.605, ns$ ). This is possibly because not all five broad bases of supervisor power were equally important when choosing target audience. Some bases of power may be more relevant than others. Since the conformational factor analysis indicates that five-factor model is statistically better than one-factor model, I tested each perceived supervisor power separately. Table 10-14 summarize the results for moderated mediation. Reward and coercive power moderated the indirect

effect as predicted ( $t = 1.983$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ;  $t = 1.756$ ;  $p = 0.081$ ) but there was no moderation effects found for legitimate, expert and referent power. Following a similar procedure as I did for sense of power, I plotted interaction effects for five bases of perceived supervisor power in Figure 6-10.

Consistent with my expectations, employees with high perceived supervisor reward power (simple slope = 0.40;  $p < 0.05$ ) had significantly different slope from those with low one (simple slope = 0.14; *ns*). Such finding suggested that the strength of indirect effect between cognitive job insecurity and exemplification was stronger in high moderator condition than in low moderator condition. Table 10 also displays the conditional indirect effect (i.e. moderated mediation effect) at three values of the perceived supervisor reward power: one standard deviation below the mean (-1 standard deviation), the mean, and one standard deviation above the mean (+1 standard deviation). As can be seen from Table 10, the indirect effect only exists when the perceived supervisor reward power is moderate and high ( $z = 2.210$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ;  $z = 2.368$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Similarly, When perceived supervisor coercive power was high, the relationship between affective job insecurity and exemplification was positive (simple slope = 0.41;  $p < 0.05$ ) in Table 11. When perceived supervisor coercive power was low, the slope was not significantly different from zero (simple slope = 0.15, *ns*). The indirect effect was most salient for moderate and high condition of perceived supervisor coercive power ( $z = 2.212$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ;  $z = 2.289$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

Figure 6 shows that employees with low perceived supervisor reward power tend to be less responsive to job insecurity than the other group. That is, there was no relationship between affective job insecurity and exemplification. In contrast, there was a significant and positive relationship between affective job insecurity and exemplification for employees who perceive a high supervisor reward power. Similar pattern was found for coercive power as well in Figure 7.

However, no significant moderation effects were found for perceived supervisor legitimate, expert and referent power as shown in Table 12 to 14. That is, employees who perceived high supervisor legitimate, expert or referent power are not significantly different from the other group who perceive low ones in terms of the indirect effect of cognitive job insecurity on exemplification. As shown in Figure 8-9, although slope for high condition is not significantly different from slope for low condition, the relationship between affective job insecurity and exemplification is slightly stronger in high condition than in low condition for both legitimate and expert power. Figure 10 suggests that the relationship is almost identical for high condition and low condition of referent power.



**TABLE 10**  
**Regression Results for Moderated Mediation-**  
**Supervisor Reward Power as Moderator**

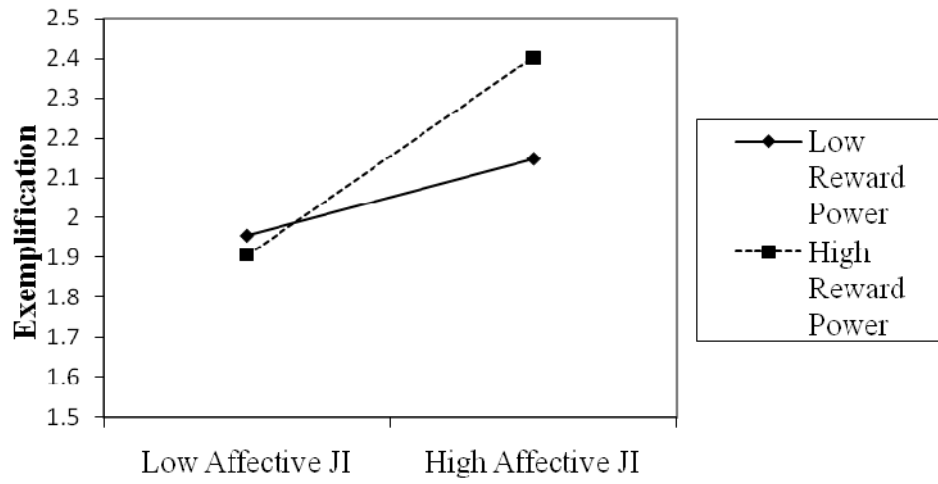
Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Affective JI				
Constant	2.171	.123	17.612	.000
Cognitive JI	.251	.075	3.330	.001
Exemplification				
Constant	2.185	.509	4.297	.000
Cognitive JI	.169	.092	1.842	.067
Affective JI	-.093	.195	-.474	.636
Sup.Reward Power	-.270	.167	-1.619	.107
Affective JI × Sup. Reward Power	.126	.064	1.983	.049
Indirect				
Sup. Reward Power	Effect	<i>SE</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
-1 SD	.024	.032	.746	.455
M	.066	.030	2.210	.027
+1 SD	.108	.046	2.368	.018

\* Notes: Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported.

**FIGURE 6**

**Moderating effect of Supervisor Reward Power**

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**TABLE 11**  
**Regression Results for Moderated Mediation-**  
**Supervisor Coercive Power as Moderator**

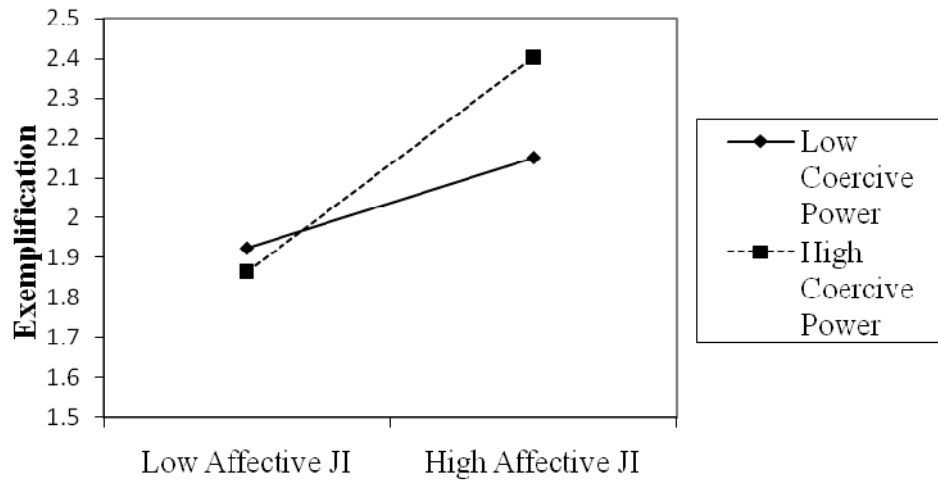
Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Affective JI				
Constant	2.171	.123	17.612	.000
Cognitive JI	.251	.075	3.330	.001
Exemplification				
Constant	2.267	.611	3.713	.000
Cognitive JI	.185	.094	1.975	.050
Affective JI	-.138	.239	-.575	.566
Sup.Coercive Power	-.283	.192	-1.470	.143
Affective JI × Sup.Coercive Power				
Power	.130	.074	1.756	.081
Indirect				
Sup.Coercive Power	Effect	<i>SE</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
-1 SD	.028	.032	.876	.381
M	.067	.030	2.212	.027
+1 SD	.106	.046	2.288	.022

\* Notes: Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported.

**FIGURE 7**

**Moderating Effect of Supervisor Coercive Power**

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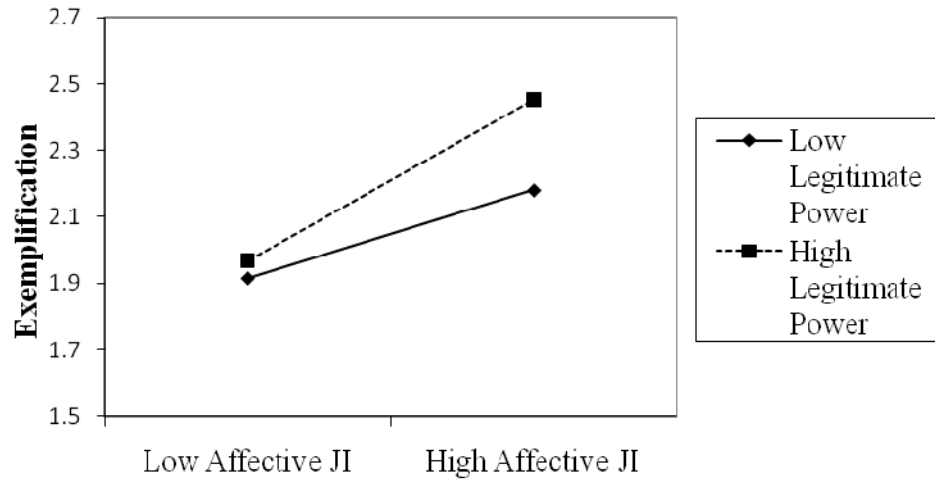


**TABLE 12**  
**Regression Results for Moderated Mediation-**  
**Supervisor Legitimate Power as Moderator**

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Affective JI				
Constant	2.171	.123	17.612	.000
Cognitive JI	.251	.075	3.330	.001
Exemplification				
Constant	1.920	.631	3.042	.003
Cognitive JI	.179	.092	1.945	.053
Affective JI	-.035	.245	-.143	.886
Sup.Legitimate Power	-.151	.201	-.751	.454
Affective JI × Sup.Legitimate Power				
Power	.091	.076	1.198	.233
Indirect				
Sup.Legitimate Power	Effect	<i>SE</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
-1 SD	.034	.034	.999	.318
M	.061	.029	2.108	.035
+1 SD	.089	.043	2.070	.038

\* Notes: Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported.

**FIGURE 8**



**Moderating Effect of Supervisor Legitimate Power**

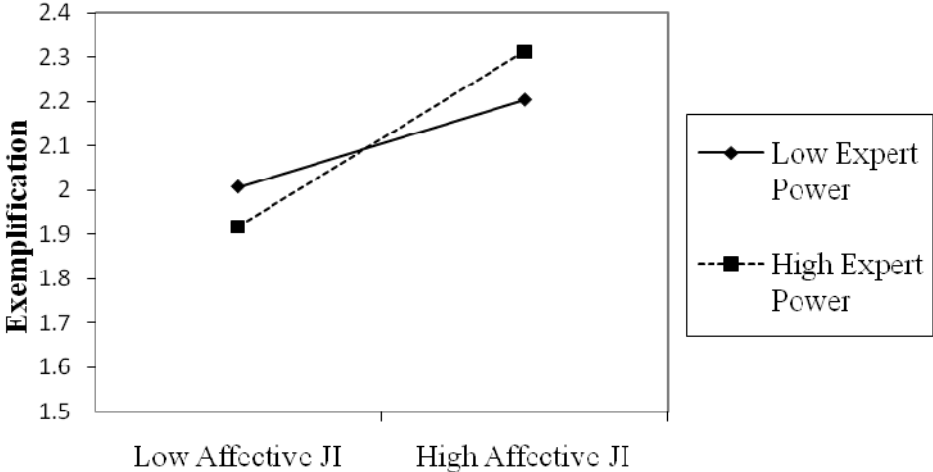
**TABLE 13**  
**Regression Results for Moderated Mediation-**  
**Supervisor Expert Power as Moderator**

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Affective JI				
Constant	2.171	.123	17.612	.000
Cognitive JI	.251	.075	3.330	.001
Exemplification				
Constant	2.200	.712	3.089	.002
Cognitive JI	.165	.094	1.757	.081
Affective JI	-.041	.267	-.155	.877
Sup. Expert Power	-.204	.176	-1.164	.246
Affective JI × Sup. Expert Power	.082	.066	1.237	.218
Indirect				
Sup. Expert Power	Effect	<i>SE</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
-1 SD	.045	.033	1.375	.169
M	.073	.032	2.316	.021
+1 SD	.101	.047	2.160	.031

\* Notes: Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported.

**FIGURE 9**

**Interaction Plot for Supervisor Expert Power as a Moderator**





**TABLE 14**  
**Regression Results for Moderated Mediation-**  
**Supervisor Referent Power as Moderator**

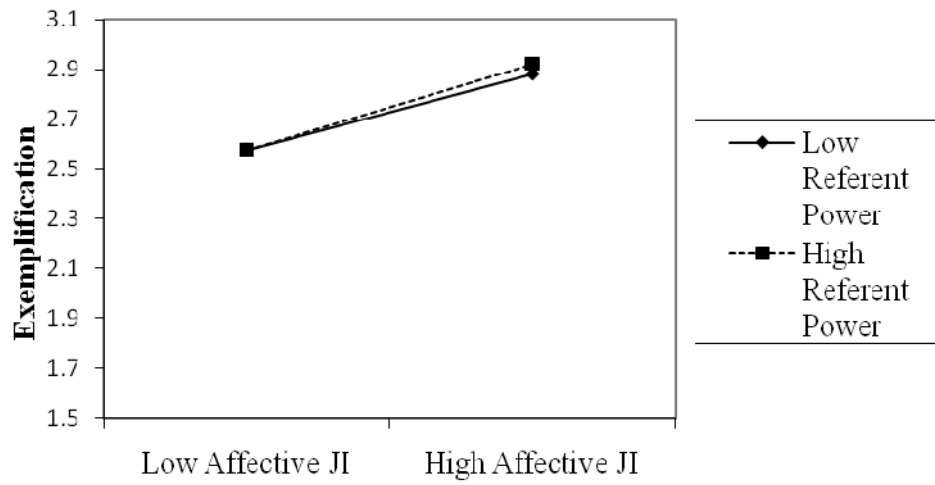
Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Affective JI				
Constant	2.171	.123	17.612	.000
Cognitive JI	.251	.075	3.330	.001
Exemplification				
Constant	1.557	.679	2.292	.023
Cognitive JI	.152	.093	1.633	.104
Affective JI	.209	.251	.832	.406
Sup. Referent Power	-.034	.147	-.230	.818
Affective JI × Sup. Referent				
Power	.0173	.057	.304	.762
Indirect				
Sup. Referent Power	Effect	<i>SE</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
-1 SD	.065	.036	1.835	.067
M	.072	.032	2.217	.027
+1 SD	.078	.043	1.829	.067

\* Notes: Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported.

**FIGURE 10**

**Moderating Effect of Supervisor Referent Power**

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## CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION

### Summary of Findings

Drawing upon personal control model and interpersonal dependence theory, I proposed a model which provides an interpersonal perspective about how employees cope with job insecurity. As predicted, findings suggest that cognitive job insecurity has a positive impact on two impression management tactics, ingratiation and exemplification, but not on self promotion. More specifically, the effect of cognitive job insecurity on exemplification is fully mediated by affective job insecurity. Among sense of power and five bases of perceived supervisor power, such indirect effect is found to be moderated by supervisor reward and coercive power perceived by employees but not others. In addition, affective job insecurity did not mediate the relationship between cognitive job insecurity and ingratiation. Instead, cognitive job insecurity increases ingratiation directly.

In general, my findings address two important knowledge gaps in the literature of job insecurity. Firstly, the paper, as a first attempt, provides a theory-based explanation that employees' positive work behaviors when experiencing job insecurity are due to impression management concerns. Secondly, the paper finds that insecure employees engage in indirect coping strategies through managing impressions projected in powerful others because direct coping efforts to the stressful encounter may not have meaningful consequences.

In organizational practice, managers should be aware of employees' impression management behaviors because one possible reason behind is they have job insecurity. It has been documented in the literature that job insecurity has many serious negative consequences. Organizations will benefit from identifying subordinates' job insecurity as early as possible and take actions to provide assistance.

### **Theoretical Contributions**

The first, also the most important, theoretical contribution of the current paper is I established and confirmed the theoretical link between cognitive job insecurity and impression management behaviors. As I predicted, my results found that cognitive job insecurity is positively related to lagged ingratiation and exemplification rated by supervisors. Drawing upon personal control model and interpersonal dependence theory, my theoretical model argues that such positive association is due to (1) persistent attempts of gaining control and (2) asymmetric power distribution. However, different from my prediction, there is no relationship between cognitive job insecurity and self promotion. This is probably because items of self promotion asked supervisors to rate employees' frequency of verbal presentations about one's achievement and success. Such verbal presentation may be less frequently used by Chinese people because the shared value in the traditional Chinese culture is to be humble about past accomplishment (Wan, et al., 2007).

My paper not only advances the knowledge in job insecurity literature, but also contributes to impression management literature by finding a new motive and a

new context for impression management. As reviewed in earlier sections, previous impression management research studied how people are motivated to apply impression management tactics in job interview, career success, issue selling and performance appraisal. I found that impression management can also be motivated by the need of reducing work stress.

In addition, answering research call of Huang, et al. (2011), I applied both cognitive and affective conceptualizations. The moderate correlation between cognitive and affective job insecurity indicate that the two concepts are not redundant. I found the mediating role of affective job insecurity for exemplification. This finding goes beyond Huang et al. (2010) and Huang et al. (2011) through studying a new behavioral outcome that was transmitted through affective job insecurity. However, the mediation effect of affective job insecurity is only found for exemplification but not for self promotion and ingratiation. These findings suggest an interesting way to look at the relationship between job insecurity and three impression management behaviors separately.

Firstly, the experience of affective job insecurity suggests that employees find potential losses serious and relevant and is the most immediate reactions when perceiving a threat (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). The full mediation effect of job insecurity for exemplification indicates that employees tend to exemplify themselves as hardworking and devoted when they feel imminent potential losses. As shown in the previous section, after controlling for affective job insecurity, there is no relationship between cognitive job insecurity and exemplification. That is, if

employees were not emotionally aroused, they will not cope with job insecurity through exemplification. As a result, exemplification is a phenomenon motivated by affective reactions.

Secondly, the direct relationship between cognitive job insecurity and ingratiation shows that if employees perceive a potential loss (i. e., cognitive job insecurity), even if such perception does not lead to any affective reactions, they will still engage in ingratiation. This is possibly because maintaining a good relationship with supervisors is long term oriented tactic and such accumulation of social resources is also helpful in the future (Bolino, et al., 2008). Therefore, employees who anticipate a potential loss will engage in ingratiation even if such loss is not imminent.

Thirdly, since promoting one's own past success (i.e. self-promotion) is not consistent with Chinese cultural values, neither cognitive job insecurity nor affective job insecurity is correlated with self promotion in my study context. As a result, no mediating effect was found for self-promotion. As a result, there is no mediating effect. In sum, cognitive job insecurity has differential effects on ingratiation, self promotion and exemplification due to the theoretical and contextual reasons argued above. In particular, cognitive job insecurity has a direct effect on ingratiation, no effect on self promotion, and an indirect effect on exemplification.

Another important contribution of the current paper is I found individual difference (i.e., sense of power) and contextual difference (i.e., perceived supervisor

power) of the mediation mechanism. Two important boundary conditions of the theoretical model are identified.

More specifically, the moderating role of sense of power is theoretically supported by personal control model. People with high sense of power tend to regard impression management as something they can control but this may not be true for people with low sense of power. However, moderated mediation test of sense of power fails to confirm the prediction because the interaction term between sense of power and affective job insecurity is not significantly related to exemplification. Therefore, sense of power does not moderate the indirect effect. However, a closer investigation of different level of sense of power reveals that the insignificant interaction term does not necessarily disapprove the theory about sense of power as an important individual difference in my study. The results show that the positive indirect effects exist only when sense of power is moderate (i.e. mean) or high (i.e. +1 standard deviation). When sense of power is moderate or high, employees are sensitive about the benefits brought by improving impressions and more optimistic about the outcomes of impression management. In contrast, people with low sense of power may not see there is a possibility in interpersonal dimension so no indirect effect of cognitive job insecurity on exemplification was found. Therefore, it can be concluded that although sense of power is not a moderator according to my results, it is still a potentially useful individual difference to study the relationship between job insecurity and impression management.

The generalized perceived supervisor power combining five major power bases shows no moderation effect on the indirect effect of cognitive job insecurity on exemplification. This is possibly because these five power bases play different role. Analyzing five power bases separately, the results show that two types of perceived supervisor power, reward power and coercive power moderate the indirect effect of cognitive job insecurity on exemplification. The findings suggest that if employees perceive their supervisors have high reward and coercive power, the indirect effect is stronger than they do not have such perception. The ability to reward and punish is more relevant to the case of job insecurity because the possession of these two types of power indicates that the supervisor has the power to control important resources that are out of the reach of employees. As a result, employees are more motivated to impress supervisors with high reward and coercive power. However, as shown by results, legitimate, expert and referent power are less relevant. A theoretical reason behind is these bases of power are less instrumental. As discussed in the session of hypothesis development, legitimate power refers to the ability to urge employees finish job requirements; expert power refers to the knowledge base about the job domain; and referent power refers to whether supervisor is someone employees want to identified with. Employees' judgment about whether a particular supervisor is an appropriate target audience for impression management may not base on these types of power. Although not statistically significant, a slightly stronger positive main effect when these bases of power are high rather than low suggests that a generally high supervisor power is helpful in initiating exemplification.



## **Limitations and Future Research**

The theoretical contributions made by the current paper should be considered in light of several limitations and future researches should address these limitations. Firstly, the data was collected in mainland China so findings may not be generalized to other contexts. Future research can replicate my study in western countries. Especially the positive association between cognitive job insecurity and self promotion was not found in the current study context but such relationship may hold in western countries due to cultural reasons.

Secondly, the current paper found cognitive job insecurity influences ingratiation, self promotion and exemplification in three different ways. My theory did not differentiate among these three tactics. However, the results suggest that, although all three tactics aim to form positive images that are useful to address job insecurity, insecure employees do have different understandings about the use of each of them. Future theorizing efforts should further examine how the nature of impression management tactics influences the choice of insecure employees. For example, future researches can introduce temporal perspective to examine short term use and long term use of impression management tactics towards job insecurity. In addition, they can also compare the cost and benefit of different impression management tactics in the context of job insecurity.

Thirdly, to my knowledge, the scale of sense of power has never been used and validated in China. My result confirms Liu, et al. (in press) and Farh, et al. (2007) that Chinese people have difficulty in interpreting reverse coded items. The

current study should conduct pilot study to examine the reliability and validity of the scale for the study context. Dropping items from an established and validated scale is not recommended for future replications. Instead, future replications should modify the items, avoid the use of negatively worded statements and re-validate the modified scale in Chinese context.

Fourthly, the lagged outcome variable design strengthens causal inference but it is still not sufficient to conclude causality. It is difficult to rule out possible alternative explanation of engaging in impression management behaviors. Future researches can experimentally manipulate job insecurity and impression management.

Fifthly, the current paper only examines the theoretical link from job insecurity to impression management. My finding only indicates that insecure employees will apply impression management tactics. A promising future research direction is to examine whether impression management can effectively reduce job insecurity and improve other outcome variables.

Last but not the least, the current paper opens up a new line of potential research which examines the indirect way to control job insecurity. As argued in the paper, job insecurity is usually caused by factors that are out of personal control. However, it does not necessarily mean that people will abandon the quest for control. Impressing the immediate supervisor is one of many ways to indirectly control job insecurity. Some other potential directions include building a pool of

internal/external social capital, relying on union for problem solving, and improving competency level for the job, etc.

## **CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS**

My paper found that out of impression management concerns, insecure employees exhibit some work behaviors that make them look positive, such as ingratiation and exemplification, to cope with potential job and/or job feature losses. These findings are unusual in the literature of job insecurity because most known consequences of job insecurity are negative. Although impression management may not be positive organizational behavior, it should be regarded as positive attempts to take control of work and life. Even with a work stress as uncertain and uncontrollable as job insecurity, people still demonstrate proactivity to cope with it.

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## APPENDIX: CHINESE TRANSLATIONS OF MEASURES

### 1. Cognitive Job Insecurity Ashford, et al., (1989)

Assume for a moment that each of the following events could happen to you; how important to you personally is: Response choices ranged from (1) *Very Unimportant* to (5) *Very Important*

AND Looking to the future, what is the probability that changes could occur—changes you don't want or might disagree with that would negatively affect each of these items Response choices ranged from (1) *Negative Change Very Unlikely* to (5) *Negative Change Very Likely*

Maintaining your current pay?

收入稳定?

Maintaining opportunities to receive periodic pay increases

有定期加薪机会?

The freedom to schedule your work

能自由安排工作进度?

The freedom to perform your work in the manner you see fit

能自由决定工作的方法?

A sense of community in working with good coworkers

有友好融洽的同事?

The quality of supervision you receive

上司的领导素质良好?

**A job where you do an entire piece of work from start to finish**

所做工作是完整的(即一件任务自始至终都是由我负责)?

**A job that has significant/important impact on others**

所做的工作对他人有较大的影响力?

**A job in which you can tell how well you are doing as you do it**

对所做的工作,我可以得知我自己干得怎样?

**You will be moved to a lower level within the organization**

您可能离开本职并到下一级的岗位工作?

**You will be moved to another job at the same level within the organization**

您可能离开本职并到同级的其它岗位工作?

**You will be moved to a different job at a higher position in your current location**

您可能被调离本职并到高一级岗位工作(工作地点不变)?

**You will be moved to a different job at a higher position in another geographic location**

您可能被调离本职并到高一级岗位工作(工作地点改变)?

**Your future pay will be reduced**

您的收入水平将会下降?

**Your department or division's future will be uncertain**

您的部门发展前景可能不明朗?

**You will be pressured to accept early retirement**

您可能被迫提前退休?

You will be pressured to work fewer hours

您可能被迫减少工作时间（工资也随之减少）？

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements: Response choices ranged from (1) *Strongly Disagree* to (5) *Strongly Agree*

I have enough power in this organization to control events that might affect my job.

在公司中，我有足够的权力控制与我工作有关的事情。

In this organization, I can prevent negative things from affecting my work situation.

在公司中，我能避免不利的事发生在我工作中。

I understand this organization well enough to be able to control things that affect me

我对公司很了解，所以我能控制对我有影响的事。

## **2. Affective Job Insecurity Huang et al. (2010)**

Please think about your current employer and circle the number that best describes your feelings. Response choices ranged from (1) *Strongly Disagree* to (5) *Strongly Agree*

The lack of job security in this company makes me feel nervous

公司欠缺工作保障使我紧张

I feel uneasy about my chances for remaining with this company

我对自己能长期在公司工作的机会感到担忧

I lose sleep worrying about my future with this company

我因为担心自己在公司的前景而失眠

I am unhappy with the amount of job security that I have with this company

我不满意公司给我的工作保障的程度

I am tense about maintaining my current job employment status

我对自己能否维持自己目前的就业状况感到紧张

I am very unsure that I can remain employed with this company for as long as I wish

我对公司是否会如我希望的那样长期雇我感到很不确定

I am pessimistic about the job security with this company

我对自己在公司未来的工作保障感到很悲观

I am troubled by the thought of losing my job

可能会失去工作的想法使我心烦

I am scared by the thought of losing my job

可能会失去工作的想法使我感到恐惧

I am worried that this company will fire me any time

我担心公司随时都可能辞退我

### **3. Impression Management Bolino & Turnley, (1999)**

Please describe how frequently you have used each of the strategies described in the last 6 months while at work. Response choices ranged from (1) *Never behave this way* to (5) *Often behave this way*

Self-promotion

Talk proudly about your experience or education.

会自豪地谈起你过去的经历或受过的教育

**Make people aware of your talents or qualifications**

令大家发现你的天分或特长.

**Let others know that you are valuable to the organization.**

令大家知道你在这个公司是有价值的

**Make people aware of your accomplishments.**

令大家知道你的成就

**Ingratiation**

**Compliment your colleagues so they will see you as likeable.**

称赞你的同事令他们喜欢你

**Take an interest in your colleagues' personal lives to show them that you are friendly.**

关心同事的个人生活令他们认为你是朋友

**Praise your colleagues for their accomplishments so they will consider you are a nice person.**

赞赏同事所取得的成就令他们认为你是个好人

**Do personal favors for your colleagues to show them that you are friendly**

帮助同事令他们觉得你很友善

**Exemplification**

**Stay at work late so people will know you are hard working.**

工作到很晚这样别人就知道你是一个很努力工作的人

**Try to appear busy, even at times when things are slower.**

令大家认为你很忙，尽管有的时候是你不是很忙

**Arrive at work early to look dedicated.**

早点开始工作这样别人会知道你很勤奋

**Come to the office at night or on weekends to show that you are dedicated.**

晚上或者周末你也会来工作这样别人会认为你很认真

### **Intimidation**

**Be intimidating with coworkers when it will help you get your job done.**

想把工作做好则会在必要时表现得咄咄逼人

**Let others know that you can make things difficult for them if they push you too far.**

让别人知道如果惹到你的话你会让他们也不好过

**Deal forcefully with colleagues when they hamper your ability to get your job done.**

如果同事妨碍到你的工作的话就要表现得强势一些

**Deal strongly or aggressively with coworkers who interfere in your business.**

用强势的态度来对待干扰你工作的同事

**Use intimidation to get colleagues to behave appropriately.**

使用强硬的方式来令同事行为恰当

### **Supplication**

**Act like you know less than you do so people will help you out**

表现出好像你知道得很少这样别人就会帮助你

**Try to gain assistance or sympathy from people by appearing needy in some area.**

为了得到大家的协助或者同情，在某些方面会表现得很需要帮助

**Pretend not to understand something to gain someone's help.**

假装不懂一些东西以得到某人的帮助

Act like you need assistance so people will help you out.

表现得需要帮助这样大家会帮助你

Pretend to know less than you do so you can avoid an unpleasant assignment.

表现得比自己实际知道的要少这样你就可以避免一些令人烦恼的任务

#### **4. Sense of Power Anderson & Galinsky (2006)**

In rating each of the items below, please use the following scale (1) *Strongly Disagree* to (7) *Strongly Agree*

In my relationship with others:

I can get people to listen to what I say.

我能够令别人听我的话

My wishes do not carry much weight.

我的意愿似乎没什么分量

I can get others to do what I want.

我能令别人做我想要的事

Even if I voice them, my views have little sway.

有时候即使我说出来，我的观点也无济于事

I think I have a great deal of power.

我认为我在人际关系方面有一定的能力

My ideas and opinions are often ignored.

我的想法和观点常常被人忽略

Even when I try, I am not able to get my way.

即使我很努力尝试了，也无法达成愿望

If I want to, I get to make the decisions.

如果我愿意的话，我可以成为那个做决定的人

## **5. Generalized Perceived Supervisor Power Hinkin & Schriesheim (1989)**

In rating each of the items below, please use the following scale *(1) Strongly*

*Disagree* to *(7) Strongly Agree*

My supervisor can . . .

Reward Power

Increase my pay level.

为我加薪

Influence my getting a pay raise.

为我涨工资

Provide me with special benefits.

提供某些特定的福利

Influence my getting a promotion.

影响我升职



### Coercive Power

Give me undesirable job assignments.

让我做不想做的任务

Make my work difficult for me.

令我的工作很难做

Make things unpleasant here.

令我工作得不愉快

Make being at work distasteful.

使工作成为一件痛苦的事情

### Legitimate Power

Make me feel that I have commitments to meet.

令我觉得我该尽我的义务

Make me feel like I should satisfy my job requirements.

令我觉得我应该完成工作要求

Give me the feeling I have responsibilities to fulfill.

令我觉得我有责任

Make me recognize that I have tasks to accomplish.

使我意识到我还有任务在身

### Expert Power

Give me good technical suggestions.

为我提供工作上的技术指导

**Share with me his/her considerable experience and/or training.**

和我分享他丰富的经验和/或受过的培训

**Provide me with sound job-related advice.**

为我提供适用的工作方面的建议

**Provide me with needed technical knowledge.**

教我需要的工作上的知识

**Referent Power**

**Make me feel valued.**

令我觉得自己有价值

**Make me feel like he/she approves of me.**

令我觉得他/她认同我

**Make me feel personally accepted.**

令我觉得我被接受了

**Make me feel important.**

令我觉得自己很重要