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**Published on:** 01 Dec 2003 - International Journal of Selection and Assessment (Wiley-Blackwell)

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### **published in**

International Journal of Selection and Assessment  
2003

### **DOI (link to publisher)**

[10.1111/j.0965-075X.2003.00249.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0965-075X.2003.00249.x)

### **document version**

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

### [Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

### **citation for published version (APA)**

van Vianen, A. E. M., Feij, J. A., Krausz, M., & Taris, R. (2003). Personality factors and adult attachment affecting job mobility. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 11(4), 253-264.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0965-075X.2003.00249.x>

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# Personality Factors and Adult Attachment Affecting Job Mobility

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Past research has revealed that individuals' job mobility is affected by factors such as job satisfaction, specific career enhancing attributes and job availability. This study examined personality factors predicting voluntary internal and external job mobility. Three types of voluntary job mobility measures were studied: dissatisfaction changes, job improvement changes and job rotations within companies. These mobility measures were related to the Big Five personality factors, sensation seeking and adult attachment. Results showed that demographic variables and sensation seeking contributed to the variance in external job changes. Internal job rotations were not related to any of the demographic and personality variables.

## Introduction

Employees' mobility is seen as an important factor for individual development and performance, and for improving organizational performance. Organizations are better able to adapt to changing environments if their employees are flexible and employable in a broader range of jobs and work teams. Among many professional jobs, job change and transition have become a norm whereas stability is seen as the exception (Nicholson, 1996; Nicholson and West, 1988).

Mobility has often been defined and studied in the context of turnover, i.e. external mobility or job changes. Statistics show that throughout their careers, American workers hold an average of eight jobs (Wegmann, 1991). Similar figures are found in other countries, such as the Netherlands (CBS, 1998). This implies that employees leave their jobs seven times, on average, throughout their active career life. Very little, however, is known about

employees' internal mobility or the frequencies of voluntary job rotations.

Internal and external mobility seem different phenomena that are differently valued, but they also have some features in common. From the organization's perspective, the former is classified as flexibility – denoting positive changes; the latter is labeled turnover, often negatively evaluated from the viewpoint of the company. From an individual and psychological perspective, both moves bear resemblance as they involve adaptation of the individual to (at least partly) new environments, and both may have similar loss effects as judged by their peers and supervisors (Riordan and Griffeth, 1995; Weiss, 1990). In some respect, employees who leave their unit for another one in the same organization may be perceived as rejecting their team-mates more than employees who leave the entire organization (Krausz, 2002). Overall, the factors that affect employees' external mobility may, however, be quite comparable to those that affect employees' internal mobility.

The aim of this study was to examine personality antecedents of both employees' external voluntary job changes and their internal voluntary job rotations. Knowledge about the personality factors that affect employees' external and internal mobility is important for companies'

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retention policy. We selected personality components that we assumed to be related to job changes and job rotations: the Big Five Personality Factors, sensation seeking and adult attachment.

Big Five personality measures were included because previous studies showed relationships between (some of) the five personality factors and different work behaviors (De Fruyt and Mervielde, 1999; Seibert and Kraimer, 2001). Although the five-factor model provides a well-accepted taxonomy for understanding the relationships between personality measures and individual work behavior, it is likely that other – less broad – personality constructs are better predictors for job changes and job rotations. People who often change their job might have a need for seeking new challenges, because they quickly feel bored with their current job. A personality construct that particularly refers to the need for change is sensation seeking (Zuckerman, 1979). We therefore included sensation seeking for predicting individual mobility.

Leaving a job or a team means ending relationships with former team members and starting relationships with new ones. Social relationships at work are an important aspect of individuals' job satisfaction and their well being (Taris and Feij, 2001; Winstead, Derlega, Montgomery, and Pilkington, 1995). People are likely to stay longer in their job when they feel attached towards others in their work environment. We therefore examined relationships between adult attachment and (internal and external) job mobility.

Previous studies that examined personality constructs in the context of job mobility measured actual turnover only at one point in time (Barrick and Mount, 1996). Very little research, however, has examined individual differences in job moves during a longer period of time. In this study, we established the number of individuals' external job changes and internal job rotations throughout their careers.

### *Voluntary External Job Changes and Internal Job Rotations*

There are specific reasons why people change their jobs or their work team. Most studies on voluntary turnover were conducted from the perspective of employee turnover as a negative outcome of a mismatch between employees and organizations. These studies found that job satisfaction and affective commitment were predictors of voluntary turnover, i.e. these attitudes were negatively related to turnover (Griffeth, Hom and Gaertner, 2000; Hom and Griffeth, 1991; Krausz, Sagie and Bidermann, 2000; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). From a more positive perspective, voluntary turnover can be conceived of as job changes that are "desired" and/or beneficial for individuals' careers.

Overall, individuals evaluate the anticipated outcomes of their work role or work relationship by using two kinds of standards. The first, referred to as the comparison level (CL), is the standard against which the person evaluates

how satisfactory the role is. The second standard, referred to as the comparison level for alternatives (CL<sub>ALT</sub>), includes a comparison between the outcomes experienced by the person in his/her current job and the outcomes associated with available alternative opportunities (Thibaut and Kelley, 1986, p. 21). Hulin (1991, p. 449) described four combinations of current outcomes, affect and behavior. Individuals that *stay* in the job may do so because: (1) the current job outcomes are greater than both CL (i.e. satisfied with the job) and CL<sub>ALT</sub> (i.e. no better opportunities elsewhere), or (2) the current job outcomes are less than CL (i.e. dissatisfied with the job) but greater than CL<sub>ALT</sub>. Individuals that *leave* the job may do so because (3) the current job outcomes are greater than CL but less than CL<sub>ALT</sub> (i.e. better opportunities elsewhere), or (4) the current job outcomes are less than both CL and CL<sub>ALT</sub>.

In this study, we distinguished between the two mechanisms that cause leaving the job, i.e. voluntary job changes. We made a distinction between voluntary job changes due to dissatisfaction with the job and the availability of alternative jobs (mechanism 3), and voluntary job changes only due to the availability of better opportunities (mechanism 4). We will refer to this as *external dissatisfaction change* and *external job improvement change*.

*Internal job rotations* are defined as lateral transfers of employees between jobs and/or teams within an organization. Literature suggests that internal job rotation is linked to a wide range of developmental career variables. Job rotation may enhance employees' development because of the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, it may stimulate employees that have reached their plateau and it may create a workforce with varied work experiences that is of strategic importance for specific companies (see for an overview Campion, Cheraskin and Stevens, 1994).

### *Big Five Personality Factors*

Three personality factors seem particularly relevant for explaining job mobility: Emotional stability, conscientiousness and openness to experience. Emotional stability is associated with not being anxious, depressed, worried and insecure. Conscientiousness concerns being careful, responsible, and organized, and openness to experience is defined as curious, original and broad-minded.

Research demonstrated that voluntary turnover was negatively related to emotional stability and conscientiousness (Barrick and Mount, 1996; George, 1990; Hough, Eaton, Dunnette, Kamp and McCloy, 1990; Judge, 1992). A recent meta-analysis showed that both these personality factors are also positively linked to job satisfaction (Judge, Heller and Mount, 2002). The combination of these literatures together with the notion that job satisfaction is an important predictor of voluntary turnover (Griffeth, Hom and Gaertner, 2000), suggest that employees may

have a dispositional tendency to change their jobs for reasons of dissatisfaction with the job. Hence, we propose:

*Hypothesis 1:* Emotional stability and conscientiousness will be negatively related to the number of external dissatisfaction changes.

We already argued that individuals also change jobs for positive reasons, i.e. for reasons of job improvement. We will, therefore, explore possible relationships between personality factors and *external job improvement changes*. Conscientious employees show responsibility for their job and they tend to be involved in their organization. They are, therefore, less likely to leave the organization for reasons of dissatisfaction. However, conscientious employees are also focused on performance and career advancement. Hence, if they change their job, they do this in order to improve their career options (Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, and Barrick, 1999). A similar logic can be applied to the relationship between emotional stability and job changes. People high on emotional stability are more satisfied and they will therefore not change their job for reasons of dissatisfaction. However, these employees also show confidence in their possibilities to improve their career options elsewhere and they are able to adjust to new environments (Judge et al., 1999). In that case, they will tend to change their jobs for reasons of improvement. Also, people high on openness to experience are likely to seek new challenges. Moreover, Judge et al. (1999) found a positive relationship between openness to experience and occupational status. Hence, we expect:

*Hypothesis 2:* Emotional stability, conscientiousness, and openness to experience will be positively related to the number of external job improvement changes.

Employees perceive internal job rotation as a means to improve their knowledge and skills (Campion et al., 1994). Although internal job rotations are lateral transfers and do not coincide with an increase in salary, they are linked with perceptions of future job improvement. Our hypotheses about relationships between personality factors and voluntary internal job rotation, therefore, resemble those for external job improvement changes. Hence,

*Hypothesis 3:* Emotional stability, conscientiousness, and openness to experience will be positively related to the number of internal voluntary job rotations.

### Sensation Seeking

According to Zuckerman (1979, 1994), sensation seekers value varied, novel, complex and intense sensations and experiences, and they are willing to take physical and social risks for the sake of such experiences. The concept of sensation seeking consists of four dimensions: *Thrill and adventure seeking* (i.e. a desire to engage in physically risky activities), *experience seeking* (i.e. seeking of novel sensa-

tions and experiences through the mind and senses), *boredom susceptibility* (i.e. intolerance for repetitive experiences of any kind), and *disinhibition* (i.e. seeking sensation through unconventional social activities).

There are at least three reasons to assume that sensation seeking extends to the development of employment careers. First, a substantial body of research has demonstrated that sensation seekers are attracted to risky vocations or jobs that offer varied and interesting activities (Oleszkiewics, 1982; Oleszkiewics-Zsurzs and Strelau, 1985; see Zuckerman, 1994, for a review). If a sensation seeker does not find a job risky or stimulating enough, job dissatisfaction may be the result, which may in turn lead to intended or actual turnover (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand and Meglino, 1979; Lee and Mowday, 1987; Taris, Heesink, Feij, Van der Velde and Van Gastel, 1991).

Second, it appears likely that sensation seekers, irrespective of the stimulating properties of their job, feel bored more quickly and tend to change jobs more frequently than low sensation seekers. Thus, even if the characteristics of one's job remain the same, sensation seekers are more likely to change towards another job than others.

Third, particular pathological manifestations of the sensation seeking trait (such as impulsive personality disorders, antisocial tendencies, excessive use of alcohol, absenteeism, et cetera) may interfere with work behavior and career development. Two dimensions of sensation seeking, disinhibition and boredom susceptibility seem particularly related to biologically-based impulsivity (Netter and Hennig, 1995). Disinhibition (Dis) is the need to seek release in uninhibited social activities (for instance, with the aid of alcohol), while boredom susceptibility (BS) is an aversion to repetitive experience, routine work, and predictable or boring people (Zuckerman, 1979, 1994). It follows from the foregoing that sensation seekers will change jobs frequently. In particular those who have high scores on boredom susceptibility and disinhibition are likely to experience a dynamic employment career, in terms of the overall number of transitions, both positive as well as negative ones.

Although these expectations seem theoretically plausible, only a few researchers have explicitly addressed the relationship between sensation seeking and job change. Taris et al. (1991) found no relationship between sensation seeking and actual turnover, but they only studied this relationship in a sample of young adults. Van den Berg and Feij (1991), however, showed that sensation seeking predicted the intention to leave in a sample of job applicants. Finally, Taris and Feij (1999) examined the relationships between sensation seeking and several measures of career mobility and found that sensation seekers were more likely to experience a career trajectory that contained relatively many uncommon career transitions, both positive and negative ones.

To summarize, previous results suggest that measures of sensation seeking, specifically those of boredom suscept-

ibility and disinhibition have positive relationships with the number of positive and negative job transitions. Hence,

*Hypothesis 4:* Sensation seeking, in particular boredom susceptibility and disinhibition will be positively related to the number of external voluntary job changes.

*Hypothesis 5:* Sensation seeking, in particular boredom susceptibility and disinhibition will be positively related to the number of internal voluntary job rotations.

### Adult Attachment

Recent years have witnessed growing interest in attachment theory (Bowlby, 1973, 1988) as an explanation of adult behavior (Blustein, Preziso and Schultheiss, 1995; Hazan and Shaver, 1990; Nelson, Quick and Joplin, 1991). Several studies have examined the relationship between adult attachment and work-related behaviors (Crowell, Waters, Treboux, O'Connor, Colon-Downs and Feider, 1996; Joplin, Nelson, and Quick, 1999; Krausz, Bizman, and Braslavsky, 2001).

Studies of early childhood have initially identified three attachment styles, one is a secure style and the two others represent varieties of insecure attachment. According to Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978), the secure style is characterized by confidence in the availability of significant figures, comfort with closeness and intimacy, interdependence, and trust. Anxious/ambivalent persons are characterized by conflicts between their strong need for intimacy on the one hand and insecurity about the responsiveness of others to their needs and fear of rejection on the other hand. The avoidant style is characterized by insecurity in the intentions of other persons and a preference for emotional distance.

In recent years, evidence has been accumulating in favor of a two-dimensional approach to adult attachment as opposed to the typology of discrete attachment styles (Smith, Murphy, and Coats, 1999). Based on a large factor-analytic study of many attachment scales, Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998) concluded that most measures have an underlying two-dimensional structure: Avoidance and anxious attachment. We choose to refer to these constructs as the secure style (i.e. as opposed to avoidance) and the anxious/ambivalent style.

Adult attachment theory and research suggest that secure persons will seek the variety and challenge of experiencing different environments and the opportunities for development and growth (Collins and Read, 1990; Mikulincer, Florian, and Weller, 1993). Felsman and Blustein (1999) examined the role of attachment for career exploration in late adolescence. They found that adolescents who had the capacity to experience intimate relationships with others were more likely to engage in greater levels of environmental exploration (see also Ketterson and Blustein, 1997). Anxious/ambivalent persons are, despite

their insecurity concerning how others evaluate them, characterized by a strong need to work with others, and they are vulnerable to change and instability (Mikulincer, 1997). Hence, we expect:

*Hypothesis 6:* Secure attachment will be positively related to the number of external voluntary job changes, and anxious/ambivalent attachment will be negatively related to the number of external voluntary job changes.

*Hypothesis 7:* Secure attachment will be positively related to the number of internal voluntary job rotations, and anxious/ambivalent attachment will be negatively related to the number of internal voluntary job rotations.

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

The sample consisted of 213 Dutch employees, 147 men and 62 women (sex of 4 persons was missing), from 18 companies and employed in 34 occupational fields. Participants were tested by an employee selection agency as part of their selection procedure for a job change. Most of the participants (90%) were still employed at the time of their application for another job. The 10% that were unemployed at the time of measurement had left their latest job voluntarily, except for two persons. Age averaged 36 years ( $SD = 8.61$ ) and years of employment averaged 13.5 years ( $SD = 9.29$ ). Regarding education, 117 participants had a bachelor's or master's degree and 96 participants had lower levels of education.

### Measures

To avoid common method variance among measures, we collected data at different points in time. Information about career changes was obtained with self-reports. About ten days before the testing day participants received a career format. They were requested to complete this career format in as much detail as possible and to bring it with them to the testing day. They were informed that the career data would not be incorporated into their test results, but that it was used for research purposes only. Participants were asked about: the total number of their jobs (employers), tenure in each job and the number of job rotations within each organization. An example of the career format concerning one of the person's employers is shown in the Appendix. Participants' other jobs could be described in similar ways. For each *job rotation* participants had to report whether the change was a) on their own initiative, b) on the initiative of their supervisor, or c) involuntary (such as the job dissolved) and whether the change included salary improvement or not. Finally, for each *job change* they had to report whether the change was forced or made voluntarily. In the latter case, people had to indicate the

specific reasons for the job change: a) disappointment about the content of the job, b) disappointment about the company, c) problems with colleagues, d) a better job elsewhere, and e) all other reasons. *External voluntary job change* was operationalized in two ways. First, it was operationalized as *dissatisfaction change*, including voluntary job changes that were based on motives of dissatisfaction (see Appendix reasons 1, 2, or 3). Second, it was operationalized as *job improvement change*, including voluntary job changes in order to improve one's career (reason 4). To exclude new employees who did not have an opportunity to change jobs, all individuals with at least one job change were included (see also Campion et al., 1994) and those who were employed for at least 10 years<sup>1</sup> ( $N = 173$ ). Job changes included *voluntary* changes for all of these persons, thus the sample was not reduced any further. *Voluntary job rotation* was operationalized as any change within a company that did not coincide with an increase in salary level. To exclude new employees who had not had an opportunity to rotate within their company, we examined only those with more than three years of employment ( $N = 182$ ).

The *Big Five Personality factors* included 82 items that were derived from English versions of the Big Five scales, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness to experience (Digman, 1997). The content, convergent and divergent validity of this Dutch version, the RAP5, was tested with a representative Dutch sample with 710 respondents (Van Leest, 1999). Internal consistencies (alphas) of these Big Five scales were .80 (conscientiousness), .85 (emotional stability), and .84 (openness to experience). Scale scores ranged from 1 to 20, and they were converted into normalized standard scores ( $M = 10$ ,  $SD = 3$ ).

*Adult attachment* was measured with 20 items derived from the Group Attachment Scale (Smith et al., 1999), using a 5 point-scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The literature on attachment revealed that attachment should be viewed in terms of two underlying dimensions, which can be labeled as *secure* (or avoidance) and *anxious-ambivalent*. *Secure attachment* indicates being comfortable with relationships and positive views of dependence and closeness in relationships. Examples of items are: "I prefer not to depend on others" (reverse coded) and "I find it easy to get close to others". *Anxious-ambivalent attachment* indicates a desire for closeness but also a fear of rejection by the relationship partner. Examples of items are: "I worry that others will not want me", and "Others want me to be more open than I am comfortable with". The secure attachment scale consisted of 10 items ( $\alpha = .67$ ). The anxious-ambivalent scale also consisted of 10 items ( $\alpha = .77$ ).

*Sensation seeking* was measured with the Dutch Sensation Scale (Selection version, SBL-s; Van den Berg and Feij, 1988). *Thrill and adventure seeking (TAS)* was measured with 13 items ( $\alpha = .83$ ). These items express a desire to

engage in physically risky activities that provide unusual sensations of speed or defiance of gravity (deep-sea diving, mountaineering, sea sailing, parachuting). *Experience seeking (ES)* was measured with 11 items ( $\alpha = .74$ ) that encompass seeking of novel sensations and experiences through the mind and senses and through social non-conformity (doing yoga, meeting unusual people, roaming about, camping wild, hitch-hiking). *Boredom susceptibility (BS)* was measured with 20 items ( $\alpha = .86$ ) that represent intolerance for repetitive experiences of any kind, including routine work, and boring people (non-routine jobs, unpredictable events and people, living an irregular life, frequent moves). *Disinhibition (Dis)* was measured with 10 items ( $\alpha = .77$ ) describing seeking sensation through (unconventional) social activities like parties and social drinking (wild parties, getting out of hand, drinking alcohol). Scale scores ranged from 1 to 20, and they were converted into normalized standard scores ( $M = 10$ ,  $SD = 3$ ).

The variable *years of employment* was used as a control variable, because the number of job moves may depend on the length of respondents' careers. Furthermore, gender and education were also included in the analyses, because previous studies have shown that these demographics are often related to career mobility. Job improvement changes are less likely for women than for men (Van Vianen and Fischer, 2002) and employees that received higher education change their jobs more often than those who are lower educated (Campion et al., 1994).

## Results

Table 1 displays the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the variables. Correlations among the Big Five personality factors ranged from low to moderately high, with a mean correlation of .27. The average correlation among the sensation seeking scales was .27. As could be expected, the attachment scales correlated negatively with each other ( $r = -.42$ ,  $p < .01$ ). No significant correlations were found between the number of dissatisfaction job changes, job improvement changes and voluntary job rotations.

The demographic variables significantly correlated among each other and with some of the personality and mobility variables. Women and individuals that were higher educated were on the labor market for a shorter period of time than men and those that were educated at a lower level, respectively ( $r = -.20$ ,  $p < .01$ , and  $r = .16$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Gender also significantly correlated with emotional stability ( $r = -.24$ ,  $p < .01$ ), thrill and adventure seeking ( $r = -.23$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and the number of dissatisfaction job changes ( $r = .26$ ,  $p < .01$ ). On average, women had lower scores on emotional stability and thrill and adventure seeking than men, and they changed their job more often for reasons of dissatisfaction. Furthermore,

**Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations**

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Gender	1.30	0.46	—														
2. Education	1.62	0.79	.04	—													
3. Years of employment	13.54	9.29	-.20**	.16*	—												
4. Conscientiousness	10.14	2.78	.03	-.05	-.04	(.80)											
5. Emotional stability	10.39	2.79	-.24**	-.10	-.03	.27**	(.85)										
6. Openness to experience	9.90	2.84	-.10	-.08	.02	-.02	.44**	(.84)									
7. Thrill and adventure seeking	10.37	3.56	-.23**	.08	-.13	.02	.22**	.39**	(.83)								
8. Experience seeking	9.41	2.78	-.05	-.29**	-.04	-.24**	.29**	.54**	.31**	(.74)							
9. Boredom susceptibility	10.53	3.13	-.01	-.21*	.11	-.12	.01	.22**	.29**	.36**	(.86)						
10. Disinhibition	10.46	2.71	.04	-.09	-.40**	-.27**	-.16*	-.01	.22**	.21**	.22**	(.77)					
11. Secure attachment	3.67	0.42	-.09	-.11	-.08	.17*	.13*	.28**	.26**	.08	-.03	.67)					
12. Anxious / ambivalent	2.10	0.49	-.09	.05	.08	-.12	-.25**	-.20**	-.18*	-.11	.13	-.07	-.42**	(.77)			
13. Dissatisfaction changes	0.36	0.58	.26**	.00	-.21**	.08	-.14	-.02	-.11	.00	.17	.20*	.03	.07	—		
14. Job improvement changes	0.58	0.81	-.13	.15	.09	-.04	.07	.03	.11	-.10	-.10	.11	.09	.01	-.10	—	
15. Internal voluntary rotations	1.41	0.87	-.11	-.02	.24**	.03	-.04	.07	.12	.10	-.01	-.04	.10	-.02	-.08	-.05	—

*Note.* Alphas appear on the diagonal in parentheses. Gender ranged from 1 (= male) to 2 (= female); education ranged from 1 (= high level) to 3 (= low level). \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ , two-tailed.



level of education was significantly correlated with experience seeking and boredom susceptibility, indicating that higher educated employees had higher scores on these sensation seeking scales than lower educated employees.

### Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses were tested with Poisson regressions. This regression analysis is a special case of the Generalized Linear Model where the data follows a Poisson distribution that is frequently encountered with count data. Poisson regression uses a log transformation that adjusts for skewness of the distribution (Myers, 1990). Three Poisson regression analyses were performed to examine which predictors were most contributive in explaining variance in the three job mobility indicators when all were entered into the equation. First, we controlled for the influence of *years of employment*. Secondly, we included gender and educational level in the second step of the equation. The results are shown in Table 2.

The control variable *years of employment* did not significantly predict variance in the job mobility indicators. The second step with demographic variables was significant in predicting the number of external dissatisfaction

changes ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 10.41, p < .01$ ) and the number of external job improvement changes ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 7.29, p < .05$ ). The significant b-weights predicting the number of external dissatisfaction changes indicate a tendency for women and lower educated employees to change their jobs more often because of dissatisfaction than men and higher educated employees, respectively. As could be expected, men more often than women changed their jobs for reasons of job improvement. Demographic variables could not explain additional variance in the number of internal voluntary job rotations ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.4, ns$ ).

Hypotheses 1 to 3 predicted relationships between Big Five personality variables and the number of external and internal job changes. However, the increment in explained variance in this step was not significant ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 2.55, ns, \Delta\chi^2 = 1.33, ns, \Delta\chi^2 = 0.63, ns$ , respectively). Hence, these hypotheses were not confirmed.

We hypothesized that sensation seeking would be related to external job mobility (*Hypothesis 4*) and internal job rotations (*Hypothesis 5*). We particularly expected positive relationships between the different job mobility measures and boredom susceptibility and disinhibition. Step 4 in the regression equation added the sensation seeking variables. This set of variables significantly increased the explained

**Table 2. Poisson Regression Analyses Predicting Voluntary Job Change and Voluntary Job Rotations**

	External voluntary job change						Internal voluntary job rotations		
	Dissatisfaction			Job improvement			$\chi^2$	$\Delta\chi^2$	b
	$\chi^2$	$\Delta\chi^2$	b	$\chi^2$	$\Delta\chi^2$	b			
Step 1: <i>Control variable</i>	2.58	—		0.02	—		0.34	—	
Years of employment			-.02			.01			.01
Step 2: <i>Demographic variables</i>	10.41**	10.41**		7.29*	7.29*		0.40	0.40	
Gender			.91*			-.68*			-.05
Education			.49*			-.01			-.02
Step 3: <i>Big Five personality factors</i>	12.96*	2.55		8.62	1.33		1.03	0.63	
Conscientiousness			.09			-.05			.00
Emotional Stability			-.05			.07			-.02
Openness to experience			.04			.08			.01
Step 4: <i>Sensation seeking</i>	24.19**	11.23*		18.87*	10.25*		1.59	0.56	
Thrill and adventure seeking			-.10			.05			.01
Experience seeking			.02			-.16**			.02
Boredom susceptibility			.13*			-.05			-.01
Disinhibition			.15*			.11*			.00
Step 5: <i>Adult attachment</i>	26.52**	2.33		21.47*	2.60		2.19	0.60	
Secure attachment			.60			-.65			.17
Anxious / ambivalent			.50			-.24			-.03

\*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$  for t values (for unstandardized regression coefficients) or  $\chi^2$  (for overall model). Degrees of freedom are 2, 5, 9, and 11 from step 2 to step 5, respectively, after controlling for years of employment. B-coefficients concern the full model in which all independent variables were entered simultaneously. Gender ranged from 1 (= male) to 2 (= female); education ranged from 1 (= high level) to 3 (= low level).

variance in the number of external dissatisfaction changes ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 11.23$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and the number of external job improvement changes ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 10.25$ ,  $p < .05$ ). They did, however, not add explained variance in the number of internal job rotations ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.56$ , *ns*). As hypothesized, disinhibition was significantly associated with both external job mobility measures. A significant contribution was also found for boredom susceptibility predicting the number of external dissatisfaction changes and experience seeking explaining variance in the number of external job improvement changes. Employees with relatively higher scores on disinhibition and boredom susceptibility more often changed their jobs for reasons of dissatisfaction. Furthermore, employees with relatively higher scores on disinhibition, but low on experience seeking more often changed their jobs for reasons of job improvement. These results support hypothesis 4, but they do not support hypothesis 5.

Hypotheses 6 and 7 predicted relationships between the two attachment styles and external voluntary job changes and internal job rotations. However, the increment in variance accounted for by attachment style was not significant for any of the three criterion variables ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 2.33$ , *ns*,  $\Delta\chi^2 = 2.60$ , *ns*,  $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.60$ , *ns*, respectively). Thus, hypotheses 6 and 7 could not be confirmed.

In summary, the full model significantly explained variance in the number of external dissatisfaction changes and the number of external job improvement changes, but it did not contribute to predicting internal voluntary job rotations. In particular, results indicated that demographic variables and different dimensions of sensation seeking were related to the number of external voluntary job changes. The b-coefficients in Table 2 do not provide information about the contribution of each of the variables that were significantly related to external voluntary job changes. We therefore estimated their contribution by calculating the product score of the b-coefficient of each significant predictor with the standard deviation of this predictor. The resulting standardized b-coefficients in the equation predicting the number of dissatisfaction changes were .43 for gender (95% confidence interval between .04 and .82), .41 for education (95% confidence interval between .01 and .81), .44 for boredom susceptibility (95% confidence interval between .04 and .83), and .44 for disinhibition (95% confidence interval between  $-.01$  and .85). These results indicate equal weights of these variables in predicting the number of dissatisfaction changes. We also estimated the standardized b-coefficients of the significant predictors related to the number of job improvement changes. These coefficients were  $-.32$  for gender (95% confidence interval between  $-.66$  and .01),  $-.47$  for experience seeking (95% confidence interval between  $-.85$  and  $-.01$ ), and .30 for disinhibition (95% confidence interval between  $-.01$  and .61), indicating that experience seeking contributed most to the variance in the number of job improvement changes.

Finally, in order to have a clearer picture of the (unique) contribution of sensation seeking in explaining variance in the number of external dissatisfaction and job improvement changes we reanalyzed the data entering sensation seeking in the third step of the equation. As can be seen in Table 1, some sensation seeking scales were related to the Big Five personality traits. Thus, putting these trait dimensions before sensation seeking in the regression equation (see Table 2) already captures variance in the dependent variables. In the reanalysis, demographic variables and sensation seeking significantly explained variance in the number of external dissatisfaction changes ( $\chi^2 = 20.66$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and in the number of external job improvement changes ( $\chi^2 = 14.57$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The increase of explained variance in the dependent variables after entering sensation seeking was significant for the number of external dissatisfaction changes ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 10.25$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and nonsignificant for the number of external job improvement changes ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 7.28$ , *ns*). Combined with the results as presented in Table 2, this indicates that a unique part of the variance in sensation seeking that is not shared with variance in the Big Five personality traits increased the explained variance in the number of external job improvement changes.

## Discussion

This study examined job mobility from a personality perspective. The Big Five personality factors, sensation seeking and adult attachment styles were included to predict both external voluntary job changes and internal voluntary job rotations. Moreover, for predicting external voluntary job changes we distinguished between dissatisfaction changes and job improvement changes.

We reasoned that the personality characteristics that affect external mobility would be similar to those that affect internal mobility, because both types of job moves comprise adaptation to new environments and socio-emotional losses. Our results, however, showed that personality characteristics were only related to external mobility measures and not to internal voluntary job rotations. These latter job changes apparently are not dependent on employees' personality characteristics. Employees may perceive the risks, possible loss of social relationships and problems of adaptation of internal job changes as less than those of external job changes.

The Big Five personality factors, emotional stability, conscientiousness, and openness to experience could not explain additional variance in the number of external job changes after controlling for demographic variables. The Big Five Personality taxonomy comprises rather broad personality constructs and it may, therefore, have limited predictive power in explaining actual job moves during a longer period of peoples' careers. This notion is in line with recent findings showing weak relationships between the

five factor personality constructs and employees' retention probability (Mount, Witt, and Barrick, 2000).

External voluntary job changes were related to some demographic variables and sensation seeking. The number of dissatisfaction changes was particularly associated with disinhibition and boredom susceptibility, and these dimensions explained additional variance in this mobility measure beyond and above demographic variables, such as gender and level of education. Thus, women and lower educated employees, and employees that rate relatively high on boredom susceptibility and inhibition tend to change their job more often because they are less satisfied with their current job. These results are in line with previous research. First, some studies have shown that women were less satisfied with their job (Noor, 2002; Hutri and Lindeman, 2002), and that they experienced less stability of occupational career patterns than men (Jepsen and Choudhuri, 2001). Secondly, it has been shown that perceptions of work characteristics influence job satisfaction (Judge, Locke, Durham and Kluger, 1998), and that lower educated employees have less positive perceptions of their job characteristics than higher educated employees. Thirdly, previous studies suggested that intention to leave, actual turnover and career mobility were related to a general sensation seeking factor (Van den Berg and Feij, 1991, 1993) or to a composite measure of boredom susceptibility and disinhibition (Taris et al., 1991; Taris and Feij, 1999).

The number of job improvement changes was also related to gender and dimensions of sensation seeking. Women had fewer job improvement changes than men, which corroborates previous studies showing that women are underrepresented at higher job levels (Van Vianen and Fischer, 2002). Experience seeking and to a lesser extent disinhibition could explain additional variance in the number of job improvement changes after controlling for the effect of gender and Big Five personality traits. Employees who are less likely to seek sensation through nonconforming behaviors (e.g. use of drugs) and unusual preferences (e.g. preference for experimental music) but rather through, for instance, parties and social drinking, were the ones who more often changed their jobs to improve their position. Apparently, these employees tend to be conventional on the one hand and they have a need for social outbursts on the other hand: Prototypical of the manager who likes to stay in a comfortable hotel where he can find a good glass of whisky in the bar.

This study was the first one to examine possible relationships between mobility and adult attachment styles. However, after controlling for demographic variables and the other personality variables, adult attachment styles did not contribute to the prediction of internal and external voluntary job changes. Thus, whether or not people feel confident regarding their relationships with others this does not affect their decision to change their job or not. Social relationships at work are important, but

individuals apparently do not feel restrained (or driven) by them in making career decisions. Our results support the instrumental basis for organizational behavior as presented in the Thibaut and Kelley model (Thibaut and Kelley, 1986; Hulin, 1991). This model assumes that individuals' work role attachments serve instrumental functions, and not – as we hypothesized – interpersonal functions.

Voluntary turnover research has emphasized that people's ability to acquire alternative employment is highly determined by (1) the job availability on the job market (Hom, Caranikas-Walker, Prussia, and Griffeth, 1992; Trevor, 2001), and (2) the attitudes of significant others (Eby and Russell, 2000). Given the strong evidence for these factors predicting turnover it is noteworthy that we found significant relationships between some dimensions of sensation seeking and external mobility. Future studies should examine *how* sensation seeking and instrumental career decisions as proposed in the Thibaut and Kelly model, are related. This model suggest that sensation seeking may not only affect the evaluation of current work outcomes (as being higher or lower than the comparison level) but it may also affect expectations about the availability of alternative opportunities and their outcomes (i.e. processes concerning the comparison level of alternatives). Individuals' career behavior may be less influenced by the actual job availability on the job market, but rather by their perceptions of the job availability.

There are, of course, limitations to the present study. First, career data was obtained through self-reports and in the context of personnel selection. We have, however, good reasons to believe that these self-reports were highly reliable. Participants were informed about the confidentiality of the career data and they were precise in completing the detailed career format that they needed to return before the testing day. This brings us to a second limitation of the study, that is that most of our participants intended to change their job at the time of measurement. This may have caused restriction of range, since mainly individuals who were already show to be mobile were involved. If this is true, our results can be considered as conservative and thus as an underestimation of actual relationships between sensation seeking and career mobility.

To the best of our knowledge, this study was the first one that addressed the possible relationships between specific personality characteristics and both internal and external job mobility. Moreover, contrary to other studies, individuals from different organizations and backgrounds were involved. Our findings carry significant theoretical and practical implications. First, it has proven to be relevant to distinguish between different external job change motives, i.e. dissatisfaction changes and job improvement changes. The demographic and psychological factors that are related to dissatisfaction changes are somewhat different from the ones that are associated with job improvement changes. Second, if more is known about the psychological determinants of different mobility motives, organizations are

better able to influence their employees' mobility, i.e. to reduce negative mobility (turnover) and to increase mobility for the benefit of the individual and the organization. It is noteworthy that dimensions of sensation seeking turned out to be related to external mobility. Therefore, our results contradict the conclusion reached by Day, Bedeian and Conte (1998, p. 2084) that "there is little reason to believe that certain personality types will be more likely to exit an organization than others". This study and those of others (e.g. Kilduff and Day, 1994) provide evidence that some personality factors are better predictors of mobility than others.

### Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank the anonymous reviewers and the editor for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. We thank Peter Dekker for his assistance concerning the analyses, and we thank Katja Hoorn and Barbara van Lodensteijn for collecting the data.

### Note

1. Average years of employment was 2.87 ( $SD = 2.65$ ) for employees who were in their first job and were employed for less than 10 years.

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### Appendix

#### Example of one page of the career format

1. Start of your job at this employer ..... (Year)
2. Job title: .....
3. Use the following scheme to indicate any moves you made within this company.

	Move 1	Move 2	Move 3	Move 4
This move was made:				
a. on the initiative of my supervisor	0	0	0	0
b. on my own initiative	0	0	0	0
c. involuntary (e.g. job dissolved)	0	0	0	0
My salary:				
a. increased	0	0	0	0
b. decreased	0	0	0	0
c. remained the same	0	0	0	0

Why did you leave this employer?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>0 Involuntary (e.g. job dissolved)</p> <p>0 Voluntary, because of:</p> | <p>1 disappointment about the content of my job</p> <p>2 disappointment about the company</p> <p>3 problems with my colleagues</p> <p>4 a better job / position elsewhere</p> <p>5 other reasons</p> |
|---|--|

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