Work values: Their emergence and their consequences for labour market behaviour

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Chapter 5
Peers and their impact on individual voluntary job mobility in the Netherlands
Abstract
In this chapter, we use an event history analysis and data of Dutch employees for the period 1992–2004 to examine whether peers influence voluntary job changes of workers. We find that the social group indeed matters for voluntary job changes of workers. Employees who changed jobs less often as compared to their peers, are more likely to make a future job change than workers who hold a comparable number of voluntary job changes as their social group. However, Dutch employees who changed jobs more often than their peers, are not likely to adapt their behaviour to that of their social group. Important motivators for these job-change-prone employees are the work values ‘having a good pay’ and ‘having an interesting job’.

5.1 Introduction

From the vast amount of theoretical and empirical literature on job mobility we learn that two groups of determinants have to be part of an analysis that explains job changes among employees: (1) the availability of jobs and (2) the individual characteristics of workers (see for instance Blau and Kahn 1981; Blossfeld 1986; DiPrete, De Graaf, Luijkhx, Tahlín and Blossfeld 1997; Kalmijn and Luijkhx 2006; Luijkhx, Kalmijn and Muffels 2006; Neal 1999; Topel and Ward 1992; Royalty 1998). The first group of determinants represents the structural element of job mobility (the jobs that are open to employees). The availability of jobs, however, is a necessary but not sufficient condition for job mobility. Men, women, young employees, older workers, workers with a lower educational level and employees with a higher education – they all differ in their job changing behaviour. Subjective individual characteristics, such as an employee’s job satisfaction (Freeman 1978) and work values (Kanchier and Unruh 1989; our findings in Chapter 3), also matter for voluntary job mobility. However, for a complete analysis of job mobility we believe that a (set of) determinant(s) is missing in the current literature. What people do, is influenced by what other people do (see Veblen (1899), for instance). Therefore, determinants representing the influence of the individual’s peers are lacking in current research on voluntary job changes of workers. With this chapter we seek to contribute to filling this gap in job mobility research.

A study on the influence of peers on individual job mobility is important for two reasons. First, it contributes to filling a gap in job mobility research by testing the effects of peers on job changes among workers. To test the influence of the social group on the individual’s job changing behaviour
correctly and to be able to make causal claims, it is essential to use longitudinal data. In our study, we use data with such a longitudinal design. Second, understanding the workers’ reasons to change jobs is important in the context of increasingly volatile labour markets. The number of employees with stable careers sustained throughout their working lives is decreasing. These unstable employment careers are the result of increased flexibility, leading to higher levels of forced job changes but also to increased voluntary job mobility (Mayer, Grunow and Nitsche 2010). Knowledge of the social group’s influence on individual job mobility helps to clarify why workers change jobs.

The influence of peers on individual behaviour has been studied for a vast number of topics (see for instance Bearden and Etzel 1982; Childers and Rao 1992; Clark and Lohéac 2007; Kaustia and Knüpfert 2011; Woittiez and Kapteyn 1998). The results of these studies strengthen us in our claim that the social group affects the decision of workers to change jobs as well. Support for our claim comes from Higgins’ (2001b) research. She examines the influence of the social environment on the choice of employer of young, recently graduated MBA students. The results of her study show that MBA students tend to work for an employer who reflects the employment choice of the students’ social group. Unfortunately, Higgins’ (2001b) study is limited to one specific group of workers (young, recently graduated MBA students) and is based on cross-sectional data. It is therefore unclear whether her findings on the influence of the social environment also apply to the career choices of other groups of workers than young, recently graduated MBA students. Our data offer the advantage of capturing all dependent employees, regardless of their occupation, and enable us to study job mobility longitudinally. Apart from Higgins’ (2001b) study, the influence of the social group on the decision of workers to change jobs voluntarily has hardly been tested.

In this chapter, we aim to assess to what extent peers affect the decision of workers to change jobs. In our study, an individual’s peers are the workers who have similar characteristics as the individual. As these workers are born in the same time period and have a similar educational level, they are in a comparable phase of their life course. We assume that it is not the social group’s job changing behaviour itself that influences whether the individual worker decides to change jobs. We expect that workers who deviate from their peers’ job mobility are likely to adjust their behaviour to the behaviour
of their peers. People tend to harmonize their actions with the actions of their peers. We assume that the effect of the social group is as influential as contesting the individual desire or aversion to be job-mobile. To test the effects of peers on individual voluntary job mobility, we use longitudinal data from the Dutch Institute for Labour Studies (OSA) on Dutch employees between the ages of 16 and 64 and apply event history analysis.

5.2 Peers and their impact on individual behaviour

As early as the turn of the 20th century, Veblen (1899) revealed that human interactions are important for individual behaviour. Interactions with peers matter for an individual’s decisions, because the actions of ‘others’ with whom people compare themselves function as behavioural rules or as ‘social norms’; they give people guidance on the appropriateness or desirability of behaviour in a given situation (Bicchieri 2006; Coleman 1990; Ellickson 2001; Elster 1989; Horne 2001; Voss 2001; Wiener 1982). An important feature of a social norm is the expectation to comply with the rule. Behaviour that is not in line with the social norm, leads to disapproval by the other members of the social group or to feelings of shame and guilt by the individual. Obeying ‘the rules’, on the other hand, leads to approval by the social group members or to feelings of pride.

The effects of the social group and its behavioural rules on individual action have been tested empirically for a number of topics. Researchers show that peers influence whether individuals buy (publicly or privately consumed) products (of particular brands) (Bearden and Etzel 1982; Childers and Rao 1992), whether individuals participate in the stock market (Kaustia and Knüpfers 2011), give to charity (Andreoni and Scholz 1998), donate to church and how much if offerings are not anonymous (Soetevent 2004), whether adolescents drink alcohol (Clark and Lohéac 2007) or smoke (Huisman and Bruggeman forthcoming), and how happy individuals are with their income (Ferrer-i-Carbonell 2003: 57–75). For labour market behaviour researchers find that workers do not simply care about their own wage payments. They are concerned about the wage payments of their colleagues as well (Akerlof 1982). For female workers, peers even influence if women work (Romme 1990; Woittiez and Kapteyn 1998) and, if so, the number of hours they would like to work (Woittiez and Kapteyn 1998).
Research on job mobility, however, mainly neglected that the social group and its behavioural rules affect workers’ decisions to change jobs. Exceptions are Higgins’ studies (2001a and 2001b). She distinguishes between pressure that has a ‘normative’ nature and influence that has an ‘informative’ character as sources of social influence. The extent to which individuals compare themselves with particular types of people and conform to the expectations of ‘others’ is what Higgins (2001b) labels the ‘normative sources’ of social influence. The ‘informative sources’ of social influence are the individual’s network of advisors, in other words the people of whom the individual ‘accepts information as evidence about reality’ (Higgins 2001b: 258). In her analyses Higgins (2001b) shows that the ‘normative sources’ of social influence especially have a significant effect on the choice of employer, whereas the ‘informative sources’ do not affect this decision significantly.

To be able to make claims about the causal process of the social group’s job changing behaviour affecting individual job mobility, it is necessary to use longitudinal data. In our study, we will apply data with such longitudinal design, to validate earlier findings from cross-sectional research.

The notion that individual behaviour is influenced by opinions and behaviour of the social group is beyond dispute; to test its validity is harder. The ‘others’ are critical in the concept of ‘social group’. In empirical studies on the influence of peers on the individual’s behaviour, the social group is modelled in various manners. One way is to ask individuals about the people who form their social environment (see for instance Woittiez and Kapteyn 1998). Another method to test the influence of the social group is through experiments. In such settings, it is clear what the individual’s group is, because ‘peers’ are explicitly assigned to the participating individuals in the experiment (see for example Falk, Fischbacher and Gächter 2002). An alternative to the previous approaches was suggested by Akerlof and Kranton (2005). They claim that people often think of themselves in terms of social categories. In empirical studies, it means that the individual’s social group is defined as the group of people in the sample who, for instance, are of the same gender, who have the same educational level, who are born in the same time period and who live in

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11 To assess the ‘normative sources’ of social influence, Higgins asks respondents to complete a questionnaire in which they have to indicate to what extent they compare themselves with different types of people (Higgins 2001b: 266-267).
12 To ascertain the social network of respondents, Higgins asks respondents to indicate who “took an active interest in and concerted action to advance their careers” and to label whether these persons were friends/family or advisors (Higgins 2001b: 268).
the same region as the individual (see Ferrer-i-Carbonell 2003: 57–75). In our study, we approach the social group on the basis of the ‘social categories’ gender, educational level and cohort.

As people tend to conform to the social group’s beliefs and behaviour even when these beliefs and behaviour conflict with their own values (Bardi and Schwartz 2003), we assume that the influence of the social group on job mobility comes to light when the decision of workers to change jobs deviates from the job changing behaviour of the social group. In explicit hypotheses, we expect the following to be the case: employees who have held fewer jobs than their social group, are more likely to change jobs than workers who have held a comparable number of jobs as their peers (hypothesis 1); workers who are more job-mobile than their social group are less likely to change jobs than workers who have made a similar number of job changes as their social group (hypothesis 2).

5.3 The ‘usual’ determinants of job mobility: control variables

The numerous studies on job mobility offer us valuable information on variables we need to control for. *Age* is an important predictor of job mobility, with lower mobility rates for older workers (Groot and Verberne 1997; Neal 1999; Topel and Ward 1992). The *educational level* of workers is related to job mobility as well. Empirical studies, however, show ambiguous results for the direction of the effect (see for instance Greenhalgh and Movratas 1996; Mincer and Jovanovic 1981; Weiss 1984). The contradictory effects seem to be the result of different effects of the educational level for men and women (Blau and Kahn 1981; Royalty 1998; Theodossiou and Zangelis 2009); especially women with lower educational levels tend to change jobs less often (Royalty 1998). Given the substantial differences in careers between men and women, we also control for *gender*. Furthermore, previous experiences of job changes were shown to affect the job changes among workers significantly (Blossfeld and Mayer 1988). We therefore control for the number of previously held jobs. To take the structural element of job mobility into account, we include the *yearly change in the national unemployment rate* as an indicator of the labour market conditions (Blossfeld 1986). Finally, we control for the employee work values. Some authors suggest that a social norm, or a ‘subjective norm’ as they call it, is determined not only by an individual’s
beliefs about how others expect him to act (social normative beliefs) but also by the individual’s personal normative beliefs (Fishbein 1967; Jaccard and Davidson 1975; Pomazel and Jaccard 1976; Schwartz and Tessler 1972; Wiener 1982). These latter beliefs are personal moral standards with respect to a given behaviour, and they are established when a person internalizes expectations of others concerning this behaviour (Wiener 1982). The personal moral standards are comparable to an individual’s values, because values are “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence (Rokeach 1973: 5).” The influence of peers on individual behaviour could thus be incorporated in the individual’s (work) values. There are, however, other authors who state that norms do not incorporate an individual’s (work) values but that these norms could ‘overrule’ an individual’s (work) values. People tend to conform to norms even when the norms are opposed to their own values (Bardi and Schwartz 2003). To assess the relationship between peers’ behaviour and individual voluntary job mobility systematically, we control for individual work values. Some work values put employees at risk of making a voluntary job change whereas other work values withhold employees from changing jobs voluntarily (see our findings in Chapters 3 and 4). Strong preferences for job security withhold workers from changing jobs voluntarily. On the other hand, employees who emphasize the importance of job aspects, such as ‘having a good pay’ or ‘having an interesting job’, are more likely to make a job change. Our ideas on the effects of work values on individual job mobility are based on research findings of Kalleberg (1977) and Freeman (1978). The latter shows that job satisfaction is an important determinant in the decision of workers to change jobs. Dissatisfied employees are likely to search for other jobs and to quit their current job if their search is successful. Kalleberg (1977) demonstrates that job satisfaction is negatively related to work values (and positively related to the perceived type and amount of job rewards). The more workers value a specific job aspect, the more likely it is that this job aspect is not fulfilled in the workers’ current job. The weak fulfilment of the job preferences of employees leads to lower levels of satisfaction with the current job (Kalleberg 1977, 132–133). Workers are therefore more likely to make a job change.
5.4 Data and methods

To examine whether the social group affects the decision of workers to change jobs, we use data of the labour supply panel of the Dutch Institute for Labour Studies (OSA). With this panel the OSA collects data for households of which the main breadwinner is between 16 and 64 years old. All other members of the household are also interviewed, as long as they are in the age category of 16- and 64-year-olds, and as long as they are not in full-time education or compulsory military service. The participants of the labour supply panel are questioned about individual characteristics (like gender and date of birth), household characteristics (such as marital status and number of children), social origin, income or other financial resources, attended education and training, job changes (like the date of job change, the kind of job change and reason to change jobs), and opinions on paid labour and their current job. In April 1985, the OSA started collecting data. The survey was replicated in September of the next year. Since September 1986, respondents have been interviewed every two years about (changes in) their household situation, the labour market situation and/or their opinions. The data on one of our control variables (employee work values) were collected in the 1992 survey. We therefore start our analysis with the data of the 1992 survey and end our window of observation with data of the 2004 survey.\footnote{Of the respondents who were interviewed in the 1992 survey 15% still participated in the 2004 survey. The important advantage of applying event-history models, as we do in this chapter, is that panel attrition is less problematic because individuals remain in the risk set until they exit our observation window. The episodes of the respondents who leave our window of observation are right-censored (Blossfeld, Golsch and Rohwer 2007).}

To make optimum use of the longitudinal character of our data, we employ event history analysis. With this kind of analyses, we predict the ‘risk’ of experiencing an event at a certain point in time with a set of covariates. The event under study in this chapter is the duration of job spells measured in months. The time-dependent process starts at the beginning of a job and ends when respondents change jobs voluntarily, our event of interest, or when the current employment relationships of the respondents stop due to unemployment, a forced job change or any other type of change in the labour market situation (other than voluntary job mobility). The job episodes of these latter types of job endings are right-censored. Interviewees who remain in unemployment, inactivity or self-employment over the entire research period, are not part of the analysis. Respondents who alternate
periods of unemployment or self-employment with paid employment, run the risk, once they are in paid employment, of experiencing a job change. Therefore, respondents who substitute periods of unemployment or self-employment with paid employment, are not excluded from the analysis. The job episodes of employees who hold one job over the entire research period, are right-censored, because the event did not take place during the research period but could possibly occur afterwards. Using this definition of our risk set and strategy of right-censoring, we follow the standard proceedings in event history analysis (see for example Blossfeld, Golsch, Rohwer 2007). To capture the effects of covariates on voluntary job mobility fully, it would be ideal if we had data on the start of the respondents’ labour market careers. With this information we prevent left-censoring of the data, i.e. the starting and ending time of labour market situations before the start of our research period. Unfortunately, the OSA does not collect information on the start of the respondents’ labour market careers. However, we do have data on the start of each registered job. Preparing our data set in line with the abovementioned set-up, our analysis includes over 2,500 respondents (for a presentation of the descriptive statistics, see Table 5.1). A number of respondents experience more than one job change. Our data set therefore contains over 6,000 observations. Since we examine the effects of the covariates for each observation, we have to correct for heterogeneity. We do so by making use of robust standard errors and by including a covariate counting the number of previously held jobs observed from the moment the respondent starts participating in the panel. In our 12-year research period the duration of job episodes could exceed the number of months covering our window of observation. At the start of the participation in the panel survey respondents indicate when their ‘first registered’ job started. A maximum job duration of 539 months (see Table 5.1) represents a loyal employee who continues to work for the organisation where he started his working life.

To test our hypotheses, we estimate a Cox proportional hazard model. With this modelling strategy, we do not need to make a priori assumptions about the shape of the hazard ratio over time (see Blossfeld, Golsch and Rohwer 2007, 223–224).

**Dependent processes**

The dependent variable in our analyses registers whether respondents experience a voluntary job change in comparison with no job change at all.
and transitions from paid employment to any other labour market situation. To judge whether a change in labour market situation was a voluntary job switch, we use the information collected with the OSA-question “If you had a change in labour market situation the past two years, what was the reason for this change?” From a set of 34 reasons, respondents could choose one that applies best to their changed labour market situation. We consider the answers ‘I wanted a job that was more interesting’, ‘I wanted a job that offered more security and better prospects’ or ‘I wanted a job with better pay’ as voluntary (see Appendices, Table B). These reasons start from an individual desire to change jobs and are not forced upon the employee by the firm the employee used to work for. It is therefore reasonable to categorize these changes as voluntary. ‘Reorganization’ and ‘transfer to an equal or less demanding position’ are reasons that involve a forced job change (see also Appendices, Table B). The retrospective nature of the questionnaire opens up the possibility that respondents justify a forced job change as a voluntary one. We are aware that cognitive dissonance could bias the respondents’ answers.

Of the total number of observations under study 41 per cent involves a job change (see Table 5.1). The majority of these job changes are of a voluntary nature. Jobs that end because workers voluntarily decide to leave their current job in order to take up a new job, occur about twice as often as jobs that end because workers are fired (23 versus 11 per cent, excluding seven per cent missing cases). This finding emphasizes the claim that Mayer, Grunow and Nitsche (2010) convey: mobility on the labour market cannot be interpreted easily in terms of labour market uncertainty. Our finding also indicates the relevance of examining the motives for voluntary job changes.

For a number of respondents who change jobs, the reason for their change is not reported. We are therefore unable to classify these changes as either voluntary or forced. Job changes for which the reason is missing, are treated as right-censored.

**Independent variables:**

*Deviance of the individual’s job changing behaviour from the job changing behaviour of the social group*

To test the effect of the social group’s job changes on individual job mobility, we create a variable that represents peers’ job changing behaviour. We create the indicator for the social group’s behaviour out of individual job mobility. Following Akerlof and Kranton’s (2005) thought – people think of themselves
Table 5.1: Descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Missing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job duration in months</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>67.54</td>
<td>87.76</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 6,047

Independent variables (by observation)

Job satisfaction
- Highly satisfied: 0-1 (0.27, 621)
- Satisfied: 0-1 (0.44, 621)
- Not satisfied: 0-1 (0.08, 621)
- Unobserved due to sample design: 0-1 (0.21, 621)

Age: 14-64 (34, 11, 96)

Previous number of jobs: 0-12 (0.86, 1.27, 0)

Peers’ previous number of jobs*
- Negative: 0-2.14 (0.47, 0.14, 111)
- Positive: 0-7.49 (0.33, 0.67, 111)

Change in yearly unemployment rate in % points*
- -1.5 to 2.4 (-0.20, 0.69, 247)

N = 6,047

Independent variables
(by respondent’s first registered labour market situation)

Work values
- Good pay: 1-5 (4.17, 0)
- Job security: 1-5 (4.12, 4)
- Interesting work: 2-5 (4.48, 5)
- Being an expert: 1-5 (3.95, 3)
- Useful for society: 1-5 (3.62, 7)

Gender: 0-1 (0.63, 0)

Educational level
- Primary: 0-1 (0.12, 42)
- Secondary: 0-1 (0.72, 42)
- Tertiary: 0-1 (0.16, 42)

N = 2,656

Types of job changes (by observation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>1,392</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason change missing</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change in jobs</td>
<td>3,541</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of observations: 6,047 (100)

*a Statistics reported for the beginning of the job episode.
in terms of social categories – we define the individual’s social group as those people in the sample who have the same educational level, who are born in the same time period, and who are of the same gender. The job changing behaviour of the individual’s social group is thus represented by the average score on the number of previous voluntary job changes of all people who make up the social group, with the exclusion of the individual for whom we compute the social group mean. By dividing the educational level into three categories (primary, secondary and tertiary education) and by distinguishing five time periods (born in 1968–1976, 1958–1967, 1948–1957, 1938–1947 or 1928–1937) for men and women, we generate 30 different ‘social groups’.

To test the effects of the social norms on job mobility, we are not interested in the social group’s job changing behaviour per se but rather in whether the individual’s job changing behaviour differs from the number of job changes their peers have made. We therefore subtract the individual’s number of previous voluntary job changes from the number of voluntary job moves the individual’s social group made in the past. At the start of each calendar year, starting in 1991 up till 2004, we calculate the social group’s average number of previous voluntary job changes. Our ‘social norm’ variable is thus a time-varying covariate. We expect that the effects on job mobility of the social group are different for employees who have held fewer jobs than their social group (the ‘negatively deviating’) from the employees who were more job-mobile than their social group (the ‘positively deviating’). We therefore create two separate indicators: one that represents a negative deviance from peers’ job changing actions and one that indicates whether respondents deviate from their social group’s voluntary job changing behaviour positively.

**Time-constant control variables**

*Age.* The respondents’ age is registered at the beginning of each job episode. Age is thus treated as a time-constant control variable. It means that the respondent’s age is kept constant over the job duration, but it changes

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*14 A large number of respondents started their jobs before January 1991. As the social norm variable is a time-varying covariate and we can only calculate ‘social norms’ on job mobility starting from January 1991, we have to deal with a lot of missing values on the social norm variable. To prevent that quite a few observations are excluded from the analyses, we assume that the social norms are zero for the episodes that start before January 1991. To examine whether our results are biased by the assumption, we ran analyses only for the job episodes we are able to create norms for, i.e. the episodes that start in 1991 or later. These analyses lead to similar results, as far as the significance and the direction of the effect of the social norms are concerned, as analyses for which we assume that the ‘missing episodes’ on social norms are zero.*
between job episodes observed per individual. We analyse the effect of age in a manner comparable to that used by Blossfeld, Golsch and Rohwer (2007) for labour force experience.

**Educational level.** To examine the influence of the educational level on job mobility, we take two dummies into account. One dummy represents respondents for whom primary education is the highest educational level attained. The other dummy is for respondents with a tertiary education. For the majority of respondents secondary education is the highest educational level attained. We therefore use this educational level as our reference category.

**Gender.** By including a dummy for males, we study the gender effect on job mobility.

**Job satisfaction.** On a four-point scale ranging from ‘very dissatisfied’ to ‘very satisfied’, employed respondents indicate in each OSA survey how pleased they are with the job they hold at the time of the interview. The satisfaction with one’s job is only registered for the job at the time of the interview. When respondents report they made a job change in the 1992 survey, we lack data on job satisfaction for these respondents’ first registered job in the 1992 survey. Information on job satisfaction is not observed either for respondents who had more than one job change in the years that pass between surveys. Deleting job changes with unobserved job satisfaction from our analyses would lead to a significant loss of information and would perhaps even lead to biased results. To prevent this, we add a dummy on unobserved values for job satisfaction due to survey design. A limited number of respondents mention they are very dissatisfied with their job. We therefore combine the categories ‘very dissatisfied’ and ‘dissatisfied’ in the dummy ‘not satisfied with one’s current job’. The other two possible answers to the job satisfaction question are ‘satisfied with one’s current job’ and ‘highly satisfied with one’s current job’. ‘Being satisfied with the current job’ is our reference category.

**Number of previously held jobs.** To correct for the number of jobs respondents held in the past, we create a variable based on the data of respondents’ previous job changes. Due to the data structure, we assume that respondents have not had any previous job until we first register their change of jobs.

**Work values.** On a five-point scale ranging from ‘very unimportant’ to ‘very important’, respondents could indicate the importance they attached to a particular job aspect. Moreover, the questions were asked about people’s
values on ‘a job’ rather than their current job. Since the question on the importance of job aspects was only asked in the 1992 survey, we assume that the work values of respondents are constant over the research period.

**Time-varying control variable**

*Change in percentage points in the unemployment rate.* To examine whether the availability of jobs influences the decision of workers to change jobs, we use the growth in the number of unemployed as an indicator for (the lack of) availability of jobs. The growth in the number of unemployed changes throughout the respondent’s job duration (Blossfeld 1986). We measure the growth in the number of unemployed by the growth in the national unemployment rate. By splitting episodes at the point in time when the growth in unemployment rate changes (at the beginning of each calendar year), we make the job availability variable a time-dependent covariate. The data for the growth in the national unemployment rate are taken from Statistics Netherlands.

### 5.5 Results

By controlling for the usual determinants of voluntary job mobility, we find that workers who change jobs less often than their peers, are at risk of making a voluntary job change.\(^{*}\) The results of our analyses are shown in Table 5.2. The coefficient for ‘negative deviance’ \((\exp(b) = 1.75, \text{ in Model 2})\) reflects that the odds of changing jobs for workers who have held a smaller number of previous jobs than their social group, are 5.75 times larger than for workers who have held a comparable number of previous jobs as their peers. The social norm to change jobs as represented by peers’ job changing behaviour, therefore has a strong impact on workers who do not ‘comply’ with the behavioural rule of changing jobs. The effects of the control variables are in line with previous research. Older workers change jobs less often, whereas dissatisfied workers are more likely to change jobs, and a rise in the national unemployment rate reduces the likelihood of workers to change jobs voluntarily. Workers with a strong preference for ‘having a secure job’ are less likely to change jobs. On the other hand, employees who emphasize

\(^{15}\) In the following discussion of the results, we use the terms ‘voluntary job change’ and ‘job change’ interchangeably.
Table 5.2: The Effect of Social Norms on Voluntary Job Mobility among Dutch Employees, 1992–2004

Cox regression

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender (female, 0 &amp; male, 1)</td>
<td>-.38***</td>
<td>-.37***</td>
<td>-.38***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.06)</td>
<td>(.07)</td>
<td>(.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.01**</td>
<td>-.01**</td>
<td>-.01**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.00)</td>
<td>(.00)</td>
<td>(.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational level: secondary (ref.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.54**</td>
<td>-.44**</td>
<td>-.54***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.16)</td>
<td>(.16)</td>
<td>(.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.08)</td>
<td>(.08)</td>
<td>(.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction: satisfied (ref.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly satisfied</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.08)</td>
<td>(.09)</td>
<td>(.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not satisfied</td>
<td>.48***</td>
<td>.43***</td>
<td>.48***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.11)</td>
<td>(.12)</td>
<td>(.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unobserved due to survey design</td>
<td>1.61***</td>
<td>1.86***</td>
<td>1.60***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.08)</td>
<td>(.08)</td>
<td>(.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work values:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good pay</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>.15**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.05)</td>
<td>(.05)</td>
<td>(.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>-.11**</td>
<td>-.12**</td>
<td>-.11**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.04)</td>
<td>(.04)</td>
<td>(.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having an interesting job</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.14*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.06)</td>
<td>(.07)</td>
<td>(.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being an expert in one’s work field</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.04)</td>
<td>(.04)</td>
<td>(.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a job that is useful for society</td>
<td>-.07*</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.07*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.04)</td>
<td>(.04)</td>
<td>(.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous number of jobs</td>
<td>.35***</td>
<td>.36***</td>
<td>.32***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.03)</td>
<td>(.03)</td>
<td>(.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deviance from voluntary job changing behaviour of social group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative deviance</td>
<td>1.75***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.13)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive deviance</td>
<td></td>
<td>.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.08)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in yearly national unemployment rate</td>
<td>-.22***</td>
<td>-.22***</td>
<td>-.22***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.04)</td>
<td>(.04)</td>
<td>(.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Likelihood</td>
<td>-8,898.7</td>
<td>-8,815.0</td>
<td>-8,898.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>5,224</td>
<td>5,224</td>
<td>5,224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>1,210</td>
<td>1,210</td>
<td>1,210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
Figures in parentheses are robust standard errors.
* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001
the importance of ‘having a good pay’ or ‘having an interesting job’, are more likely to change jobs. A comparison of Models 1 and 2 in Table 5.2 shows that the less job-mobile workers, in comparison with their peers, change jobs at the cost of some individual characteristics. The effect of dissatisfaction with one’s job on the decision to change jobs voluntarily is smaller. Some other individual characteristics are more pronounced when the effect of peers is taken into account. The effect of ‘having an interesting job’ on job mobility is stronger in a model that considers the job changing behaviour of peers.

We find no support for our second hypothesis, i.e. workers who are more job-mobile than their social group, are less likely to change jobs than workers who have made a similar number of job changes as their social group. The effect for the ‘positive deviance’ in Model 3 is not significant. It appears that employees who have made more job changes than their social group, do not adjust their behaviour to that of their peers. The job-change-prone workers are not witheld in their actions on the labour market by their peers who change jobs less frequently. A comparison of Models 1 and 3 in Table 5.2 demonstrates that the effects of the control variables are very similar. For workers with a tendency to change jobs frequently the structural and individual elements of job mobility are more important for their job mobility than the job changing behaviour of their peers.

5.6 Conclusions

In this chapter, we have examined whether peers affect the decision of workers to change jobs voluntarily. Since young age groups more often report they have a desire to experience job mobility than older age groups (Mayer, Grunow and Nitsche 2010), it is more and more important to understand why workers are inclined to change jobs. With our study we contribute in two major respects to the literature on job mobility. First, as our data demonstrated, voluntary job changes are very common and occur almost twice as often as involuntary job changes. More than 40 per cent of the observations in our 12-year research period involve a change in jobs. Job changes that stem from a voluntary decision to be job-mobile, occur about twice as often as forced job changes. The prevailing desire among young cohorts to change jobs could be the result of a social norm on being job-mobile among this group of workers. Empirical studies in which the
influence of the social group on individual job changing behaviour is tested, however, are rare, and previous studies in which this is done on the basis of longitudinal data, are nearly non-existent. This study thus contributes to the literature on job mobility in that we assessed (on the basis of longitudinal data) whether peers affect voluntary job mobility.

The second contribution of our study to the literature is that the social group is indeed important for the decision of workers to change jobs voluntarily. After we controlled for the usual determinants of job mobility, we found that Dutch workers who changed jobs less often than their peers, are more likely to make a future job change than workers who made a similar number of job changes as their social group. Our idea that especially individuals whose behaviour deviates from the behaviour of their social group, are likely to change their actions according to the social group’s behaviour, only applies to individual actions that deviate from the actions of the social group negatively. Dutch employees who changed jobs more often than their peers, are not likely to adapt their behaviour to that of their social group. For these job-change-prone workers the determinants that enhance individual mobility, prevail over the social-group effect that would suppress job mobility. Workers who are more job-mobile, seem to be pioneers.

Our findings inform ongoing social stratification and social mobility research by showing that a significant share of observed job mobility is individually motivated. Higher volatility of employment careers is therefore not only a result of increasingly flexible labour markets and more labour market uncertainty, but it is also an effect of the desire of individuals and peers to be job-mobile. Our findings might therefore help to nuance the ongoing scholarly discussion about employment uncertainty and individualization (Blossfeld, Mills and Bernardi 2006).

For human resource managers our findings are informative as well. Matching workers’ current job characteristics to what they value in a job, seems an effective strategy to tie employees to the firm. However, managers should be aware that this strategy is most effective for workers who experienced several voluntary job changes in the past. Especially workers who have changed jobs more often than their peers, use work values as a motivator to change jobs. Less job-mobile peers do not withhold these job-change-prone workers from making job changes.
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