

# Master Thesis Human Resource Studies



## **Job-Hopping: Does it benefit or detriment careers?**

A study of the careers of HRS alumni

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## **Abstract**

This mixed methods research aimed to answer whether job-hopping benefits or detracts careers. This question was answered through first answering the following sub questions:

- What is job-hopping?
- Does job-hopping happen more in generation Y than previous generations?
- Why do people switch jobs, especially, in the beginning of their career?
- Is job-hopping a result of a low person-job fit.

Job-hopping has previously been researched, however, no consensus has been established regarding its definition, nor on the implications of job-hopping. In order to learn more about this modern phenomenon data has been collected of 1514 Human Resource Studies Alumni of the University of Tilburg, which resulted in an extensive dataset. The data was gathered through professional social network Linked-In. This dataset was used to perform statistical analyses regarding the research questions. Additionally 26 face-to-face interviews were conducted in order to answer the following research question “*To what extent does job-hopping benefit or detract careers?*” Results demonstrated that *job-hopping* is a multi-faceted phenomenon that is perceived mostly negatively. Despite this prevailing negative perception, there are limited negative consequences for the job-hopping individual. Job-hopping, furthermore, enables numerous beneficial career outcomes, such as career advancements and increases in pay. Therefore, it can be concluded that job-hopping has a more beneficial than detrimental effect on one’s career.

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## 1. Introduction

The workforce is one of the most important elements of an organization, therefore employees can be considered as the biggest resource of an organization (Johari, Yean, Adnan, Yahya, & Ahmad, 2012). Without them, organizations cannot achieve the results they need to stay competitive (Johari, et al., 2012). Traditionally, employees would have a lifelong career at one or maybe two firms, whilst progressing vertically throughout that same company. This lifelong career that used to be the standard in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, is becoming more of an exception than a trend (Farber, 2008; Van den Born, 2009). Nowadays employees manage their own career and go beyond the range or limits of an employer (Arthur, Khapova & Wilderom, 2005). Employees do not stay with one or two employers for the rest of their career anymore. This has led to new theories in which the employee, instead of the company, determines the career path of an individual (Van den Born, 2009).

A form of behavior that resonates with these new career roles is ‘job-hopping behavior’. How job-hopping is described differs significantly per author (Khatri, Budhwar, Pawan & Chong, 1999). However, looking from the perspective of the individual, in general, there seem to be two sides to the job-hopping discussion; the negative, where for example the job-hopper is seen as a disloyal employee, and the positive side, where the job-hopper is more so seen as someone taking charge of their own career, who gains a lot of valuable experience through job-hopping. This contradiction has been demonstrated by CareerBuilder, the biggest American online employment website, through a survey done in 2014. This survey showed that 43% of employers would not even consider hiring an employee that has worked for a limited time in many different positions, whilst 53% of employers mentioned that job-hopping brings about employees with a broad area of proficiency and are quickly adaptable.

The relevance of job-hopping has increased, as suggested in the analysis of Farber (2008), using current population data (CPS data) from 1973 to 2006 from the United States. His analysis demonstrated that, for men in the private sector, long-term employment relationships have become more unusual. He also found an increase in job-hopping, or as he calls it, ‘churning’. Job-hopping appears more among younger employees (Saleem, Noor, Jalil, & Saleem, 2016; Topel & Ward, 1992), which might be the reason why many articles mention “*millennials*, or *Generation Y*”, when discussing job-hopping. Generation Y employees exhibit a trend of no longer working towards a ‘life-long’ job; instead, they prefer to hop from one job to another. They do however value job security, for this provides them with the ability to learn transferable skills that may assist them when job-hopping (Malik &

Khera, 2014; Griffin, 2016). Twenge and Campbell (2008) did extensive research on generational differences in psychological traits and their impact on the workplace. For their research they used a database that consists of 1.4 million people (mostly high school students), who filled in surveys between 1930 and now, regarding personality, attitudes and behavior. Based on this research Twenge and Campbell (2008) state in their practical implications that managers should take into account an increase in job-hopping behavior. Nearly all empirical research persistently describes increased levels of job mobility among new labor market entrants. Earlier research by Gangl in 2003, using European Union Labor Force Survey (EULFS) data of 11 European countries, shows substantial job mobility in the first phase of entering the labor market. In the first year of entering the labor market 10% will already have changed jobs, and by year two this percentage increased to 25%. In the next years to come, up to five years after entering the labor market, 40% will have departed (at least) their first job.

However, there is no consensus on the normative implications of these findings for organizations and employees (Ryan, 2001; Bidwell, 2013). As most research on job-hopping does not spend much attention to why people (increasingly) job-hop, explaining this could assist in understanding how job-hopping might develop in the future (Bidwell, 2013). Companies might be able to use this information to respond to the job-hopper behavior, and maybe even use it to their benefit, giving this research practical relevance. Additionally, this research contributes to the current body of job-hopping literature, by researching the context of job-hopping and in that way, researching the reasons why people job-hop. To be more precise, this research will contribute to the existing knowledge on job-hopping by answering the following central question:

*To what extent does job-hopping benefit or detriment careers?*

This will be examined on the individual level by answering the following sub-questions:

- What is job-hopping?
- Does job-hopping happen more in generation Y than previous generations?
- Why do people switch jobs, especially, in the beginning of their career?
- Is job-hopping a result of a low environmental fit?

This research will be conducted, based on a sample of Human Resource Studies alumni in the Netherlands.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

In the theoretical framework, first the definition of job-hopping will be discussed and established for this research. Then the possible positive and negative sides of job-hopping will be elaborated on, one of them in particular being the connection between salary and job-hopping. Where after the connection between generation Y and job-hopping is considered. Finally personal fits in combination with job-hopping will be examined. In this theoretical framework, four propositions will be drawn up, that will be answered in the parts following the theoretical framework of this research.

### **What is Job-Hopping?**

Khatri, Fern and Budhwar (2001) defined job-hopping as “an attitude or behavior where employees migrate from one job to another, irrespective of better alternatives or other apparently rational motives” (p.56). According to these authors, job-hoppers go from one job to another, without the prospects of definite growth or other rational motives. It is the impulsiveness, or social influences that makes them look for different work (Khatri et al., 2001). This is in line with older thinking of Ghiselli (1974), who has explained job-hopping as a ‘hobo syndrome’. This ‘hobo syndrome’ is also explained as a periodical “itch” to change jobs. Schmitt, Gooding, Noe and Kirsch (1984) elaborated on this by explaining that ‘hobo’s’ will look for a different job, perhaps because of an itch, but ‘hobo’s’ also evaluate whether their current job or a new alternative one, is more beneficial, which is a rational decision (Schmitt et al., 1984; Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner, 2000). Saleem, et al., (2016) somewhat agree with this rational way of job-hopping, but broaden the definition by explaining that it is a practice of switching jobs frequently, particularly as a means of quick financial gain, career advancement, or just wanderlust. They, suggest that there are two types of job-hopping. The first type links to a craving for new experiences, in which job-hopping is a means to create these new experiences. The other type of job-hopping links to a turnover culture, which can be described as a work-groups’ or individuals’ normative belief of finding turnover behavior appropriate and accepting it as a norm (Iverson & Deery, 1997). Saleem et al.,(2016) explain it as switching jobs ”just because others are doing the same” (p.227).

The amount of variation in the definitions of job-hopping and the lack of a clear definition, might illustrate the difficulty in determining the exact content of this behavior, and to some length, might account for the scarcity of consistent research outcomes. Therefore, this research will start by clearly defining job-hopping in the light of this research. *Job-hopping is the rational, voluntary behavior of frequently switching employers, especially in the*

*beginning of one's career, with the prospects of career advancement.* This definition, which consists of aspects of previously mentioned definitions, includes three important elements:

- 1) the switching behavior is rational;
- 2) the switching behavior is voluntary;
- 3) the switching behavior has occurred frequently.

All three elements are discussed briefly below.

#### *Job-hopping is rational*

Given the difference of opinion of different scholars on whether job-hopping is rational or irrational (an 'itch') behavior, this research will investigate the rational nature of the job-hopping behavior. According to Evans and Over (2013), human rationality comprises of personal and impersonal rationality. *Personal rationality* is goal orientated and defined as: "reasoning or acting in a way that is usually reliable for achieving these goals" (p.7). *Impersonal rationality*, however, is about "reasoning according to some impersonal normative system, such as some version of formal logic" (p.119). According to Evans and Over (2013), both personal and impersonal rationality should be considered when deciding if someone is making a rational decision. Thus, for this research both forms of rationality will be taken into account. Consequently, the first proposition in this research is in line with the thoughts of Schmitt et al., (1984); Griffeth et al., (2000) and Saleem, et al., (2016): *P1: Job-hopping is rational behavior.* This implies the must of reasoning or logic behind a switch and this switch being thought of as a reliable help in achieving some sort of goal, for example career or life advancement.

#### *Job-hopping is voluntary*

When looking at turnover literature a distinction can be made between voluntary turnover, which reflects the employee's decision for turnover, and involuntary turnover, where the decision lies with the employer. (Shaw, Delery, Jenkins, & Gupta, 1998). Only voluntary turnover will be taken into account when researching job-hopping. Consequently, when an employee frequently has been part of involuntary turnover, such as: being fired/ made redundant, it does not fall into the job-hopping category.

#### *Job-hopping occurs frequently*

As discussed above, the turnover should be voluntary, however, a single instance of voluntary turnover does not make it a case of job-hopping. There has to be a sequence of

consecutive occurrences of voluntary turnover, for it to be categorized as job-hopping behavior. However, it is difficult to determine when there is enough voluntary turnover to classify as job-hopping. In 2015, in the Netherlands, a little over 5% of the employees choose to voluntarily leave their company. The percentage of involuntary leaves was higher, with 10% in 2015 (WoltersKluwer, 2016). In 2015, on average, employees spent 10 years with the same employer. Additionally, 1 in 6 employees has worked for the same employer for over 20 years, whilst in parallel, a group the same size have not completed more than a year with their current employer, in 2015 (CBS, 2016). Logically, the tenure for older workers tends to be higher, and in different industries these numbers will also vary. Thus, the average numbers stated above cannot simply be used for this research, as many different age groups and industries are being investigated. Accordingly, changing one's employer within a period of 2.5 years from commencing employment (analogous to one quarter of the average tenure in 2015), whilst occurring on at least three consecutive occasions, will be considered frequently.

### **The negative side of job-hopping**

Job-hopping resonates with negative connotations such as disloyalty, impatience, a short attention span, less productivity and a high possibility for turnover (Tsui, Pearce, Porter & Tripoli, 1997; Fan & DeVaro, 2015), unemployment experiences and decreasing status mobility (Gangl, 2003). Bills (1990) found that employers use someone's job history when making a hiring decision. One of the most important factors in this history is job-hopping, which has a harmful effect on middle and low-status positions. Furthermore, research he conducted in 1999, in the restaurant business, yielded similar results.

Where long-term employment encouraged organizations to invest in the training and development of their employees; the decline in long-time tenure has caused a reticence of these practices (Cappelli, 1999, 2008). Long-term employment has been the base for research about psychological and social contracts that are built based on trust and loyalty (Osterman, Kochan, Locke, Piore, 2002; Rousseau, 1995); the same research has linked short-term employment to less loyalty (Tsui et al., 1997). Being in a long-term employment relationship signals to companies that it is worth investing in training and simultaneously, it signals to the employee to invest in firm-specific skills. The decline in tenure has caused both parties to be less inclined to make such investments (Cappelli 1999, 2008). Fallick, Fleischman & Rebitzer (2006) found a similar negative effect of job-hopping in California's Silicon Valley. They discovered that, although job-hopping leads to a fast reapportionment of resources to more innovative companies, job-hopping diminishes the incentives for companies to invest in new



knowledge, thus hindering innovation. Additionally, this could have negative implications for the employees both carrying this new knowledge, but also those who desire to obtain this knowledge.

Job-hopping can also have a negative effect on organizations, as undesirable employee turnover is one of the largest and most costly problems for organizations (Johari et al., 2012). Not only do organizations lose knowledge when an employee resigns, they will also have to make sure that (good) replacement is found, which can be costly and time-consuming (Johari et al., 2012), making job-hopping a bone of contention for many organizations.

### **The positive side of job-hopping**

An alternative way to interpret job-hopping is that having experience across (many) different jobs and employers, administers a broadened information and skill set; skills that are valued in the labor market and that can enhance careers (Fan & DeVaro, 2015). It could foster all-round employees who are equipped to succeed, specifically in managerial and executive functions (Fan & DeVaro, 2015). Former work experience profoundly aids the development of new skills (Rosen, 1972). Job-hopping might help employees find a job that best suits their developed skills and needs (Jovanovic, 1979). Halbourne (1995) even takes it a step further; suggesting that it is unrealistic to expect talented employees to maintain the same employer for too long, regardless of the employee being satisfied with the current job or employer, as there are more options for development in switching behavior. Additionally, the switching can also bring about a form of ego-satisfaction (Khatri et al., 2001).

Additional positive mobility effects on careers are positive experience of salary and professional status increases (Mincer, 2012; Keith & McWilliams, 1995). Furthermore, this view of extensive job-hopping among young employees is seen as a crucial mechanism of career development. For instance, Lazear (as cited in Åstebro & Thompson, 2011) made an entrepreneurship model, consistent with his empirical evidence that shows that having experience in many different roles is the most crucial determinant of becoming an entrepreneur. Consequently, job-hopping may increase the chances of entering into self-employment (Åstebro & Thompson, 2011).

The decline in long-term employment has been well documented, however, the reason for this decline is less clear. There has been anecdotal research on the reasons for a decline in long-term tenure, mostly from the organizations' perspective (Faber, 2008; Saleem et al., 2016; Topel & Ward, 1992 etc.), but in this current research, this decline is being viewed from a more individual perspective. Therefore, after examining the positive and the negative-

sides of job-hopping the following proposition is made: *P2: Job-hopping has positive and negative implications for an employee, however, the positive implications outweigh the negative implications for the employee.* This will be further underpinned by the next paragraph on the relationship between salary and job-hopping.

### **Salary and job-hopping**

An important aspect with regards to job-hopping that cannot be ignored when researching its effects, is the effect it has on salary (Fan & Devaro, 2015). As it is such a significant subject for employees, this aspect, is discussed separately. Fan and Devaro (2015) researched this issue in the United States by using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979, which is a longitudinal dataset that follows the lives of American youth born between 1957-1964. They found that work history had (hardly) no effect on salary when it comes to workers with only a high school degree. However, the current salary of employees was negatively correlated with the number of former employers, after controlling for ability, labor market experience, and current job tenure. This negative effect was particularly evident for job experiences shorter than a year, and stronger for employees in their early careers. Fan and DeVaro (2015) also found that this effect is less severe when employees enter the labor market during an economic downturn, as it is more difficult for employers to determine whether the job-hopping occurred due to a bad match or because of the low ability of the employee. Job-hopping due to a bad match is more likely when the match was made during an economic downturn. Additionally, they found that job-hopping college graduates were viewed more negatively, even as disloyal, than job-hopping employees with just a high school degree.

A different study from 2012, surveying Chinese youth between 18-30 years old, however, states the opposite, and argues that job-hopping has a positive effect on salary, status and job satisfaction. The authors found that job-hopping brings about an increase in monthly salary (Ariga, Ohtake, Sasaki, & Wu, 2012). This emphasizes the importance of taking context into account when examining job-hopping.

Career success is commonly defined in terms of promotions and salary (Turban & Dougherty, 1994). Therefore, when determining the effects of job-hopping on employees' careers, the initial focus should mainly be on these objective measures. However, when measuring career success, employees' own perception of career success should also be taken into account (Hall, 1976). Accordingly, Åstebro and Thompson (2011) have used data from Canadian inventors to research why employees would prefer a varied labor market

experience, and found that this comes from a “taste for variety” hypothesis. Non-pecuniary benefits, which can be achieved through a varied labor market experience, were found to be more important to employees than income benefits (such as salary). Judge and Wantanabe (1991) agree that not salary, but the opportunity of extensive options in the labor market, may be the predominant reason for (highly educated) employees to job-hop. Weak support for this relationship between alternative job options and turnover intentions was also found by Khatri et al., (1999), who researched employee turnover in Asia. Moreover, correlations between the intentions to look for alternative employment options and job-hopping have been found (Saleem et al., 2016). People who look for new jobs are more likely to demonstrate job-hopping behavior through changing jobs more frequently than others (Steel, 2002; Tambe & Hitt, 2013; Saleem et al., 2016). Employees that are enthusiastic and actively change their work-situation, tend to change jobs more often, for they search for every alternative available to change their job, and by doing that, increase their salary and skills (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Building on this, perhaps one of the explanations for job-hopping can be found in one’s personal characteristics and preferences, such as openness to experience, impulsiveness, but also in perceived job opportunities (Saleem, Saleem, & Jalil, 2015). The characteristics previously described are in line with how research describes “millennials” or “generation Y” (people born between 1980 and 2001 and graduated from the year 2003). Generation Y tends to be positive, curious and energetic (Francis-Smith, 2004).

### **Generation Y**

Generational differences at work are based on assumed similarities between people born in the same clusters of birth years (Rauvola, Rudolph & Zacher, 2018). Preceding research argues that generations cultivate a ‘shared consciousness’ due to sharing important economic, historical or political events. This evolved into the more practical concept of generational groups, which consists of people born in the same range of birth years and who, therefore, have experienced the same circumstances pertaining to society, whilst growing up. These similarities are expected to influence organizational outcomes and processes (Rauvola et al., 2018). Moreover, generational differences may influence turnover behavior, performance, work attitudes and values as well as motivation. (Rauvola et al., 2018). This is discussed in research, conferences, books and social media platforms amongst other places. Generational research supporters emphasize the importance of considering generational differences.

However, there are researchers that have voiced their concern regarding generational research (Rauvola et al., 2018). Opponents of generational research have stated that it is artificial in nature, for it is self-fulfilling. Observed evidence is found by research that assumes generational differences exist. Therefore it is a form of confirmation bias according to Rauvola et al. (2018). In addition, generationalism generates a self-fulfilling prophecy regarding the employees part of a generation. As Rauvola et al. (2018) straightforwardly put it, “If you treat someone like they are lazy, entitled, and narcissistic, it should not be surprising to you if they start to act as such” (p.4). But, not only is generational research a self-fulfilling prophecy, it also neglects other influences that may be related to the passing of time, such as current events and chronological age (Rauvola et al., 2018). Additionally, meta-analytic research propose that generational differences at work are exaggerated (Rauvola et al., 2018).

However, generation Y is mentioned in numerous research regarding job-hopping. This generation, therefore, cannot be overlooked when researching job-hopping behavior. This new generation of workers (generation Y) will replace the older generations (the baby boomers and generation X), which will bring about a generational shift with multiple effects on the workforce (Van den Born, 2009). Myers and Sadaghiani, (2010) identified that the attitudes, expectations, and preferences of generation Y, are different than those of previous generations. Generation Y is smaller than the generation of their predecessors, which will lead to a shrinking workforce with a higher average age of the workers in it. This will lead to a “war” for talent in which new, fast-growing industries are competing with the established industries that will need to find suitable replacement for their retirees (Van den Born, 2009). This war for talent might increase job-hopping, for another company providing better conditions is right around the corner. More importantly, this new generation is culturally more diverse, internationally oriented and seems to have different values and expectations of their working life than the previous generations. They have more definite and personal expectations of their employers and the work they perform. This could impact the way generation Y and organizations deal with one and other. (Van den Born, 2009).

Next to these general perceptions, some negative stereotypes come to light, when researching generation Y. They are said to be needy, disloyal, entitled and casual (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). When generation Y employees do not feel that their career interests will be advanced at a company, they do not feel obliged to stay there (Griffin, 2016). Generation Y creates a bigger distance between themselves and the employer (Dries, Pepermans & De Kerpel, 2008). They realize that the future is uncertain and therefore take nothing for granted.

They search for employers that provide challenging jobs and adequate training to develop and make them 'employable'. This way, they do not have to count on firms providing them with security and stability (Dries, et al., 2008). Moreover, generation Y employees prefer immediate gratification instead of long-term investments of time and effort (Southard & Lewis, 2004). Whilst not being interested in traditions, they search for quick results and are prone to becoming uninterested or frustrated when visible progress is lacking (Griffin, 2016).

Job fulfilment is valued more by generation Y employees than its previous generations. This craving for job fulfilment is often what leads to job-hopping behavior (Griffin, 2016). Furthermore, they prefer special projects to earning a position through paying their dues with standard chores, and often prefer time off to receiving more money. They are constantly negotiating and questioning in their work (Southard & Lewis, 2004). Young employees might start their career at a 'stepping stone', which relates to the theory of career mobility (Scherer, 2004), which assumes that employees go for less challenging jobs that offer an opportunity for fast development. Thus providing employees a chance to experience the working life before settling down (Steijn, Need & Gesthuizen, 2006). This, especially in combination with generation Y's impatience in careers, could explain more frequent job-hopping in the beginning of someone's career.

The increase of job-hopping in recent generations may also be due to the increase in flexible contracts. In the Netherlands 4 out of 10 employees do not have a permanent contract, whereas 10 years ago this figure was 3 out of 10 (CPB, 2016). Employees with temporary contracts often need to change position or job. In anticipation of their departure, some employees choose to leave voluntarily. Moreover, temporary jobs may have less appealing features than permanent contracts (Scherer, 2004; Steijn, et al., 2006). Additionally, the economic situations that generation Y people have experienced in their lives may also contribute to their job-hopping behavior. As most of this generation has experienced many economical fluctuations, including an economic crisis (2008-2013) during their lifetime, their choices in employment might be affected by this. One could expect that for instance that an economic crisis hinders job-hopping behavior due to the availability of less jobs. This is further elaborated on in the research design under context. However, it is proposed that:

*P3: Job-hopping occurs more in generation Y than in previous generations.*

### **Environmental-fits**

Employees are assumed to strive for as high as possible level of job rewards (Sørensen, 1975; Keith & McWilliams, 1995, 1997) and it seems that this is just what they are trying to achieve by hopping from one job to another. Research shows that the similarity

between work preference and the actual features of a job indicate how well someone is at their place in that job (Lewin, 1951). This can be further explained through the *person-environment fit theory*. The person-environment fit theory explains that personal outcomes do not solely come from the employee or from the environment this employee is in, but from the relation between those two (Lewin, 1951). This person-environment fit can be divided into two different fits, namely the person-organization fit and the person-job fit (Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001). The person-organization fit can be defined as the level of consonance between an individual and the organization (Kristof, 1996). Consequently, the person-organization fit is about the individual having the right ‘tools’, such as personal resources, skills, knowledge etc. to further help the organization. But, it is also about the organization being able to offer the right resources, such as a good salary, career advancement opportunities etc., to the employee (Kristof, 1996). Additionally, a good person-organization fit requires that elements of the organization, such as company culture, values and norms, are somewhat in line with the norms and values of the employee (Kristof, 1996). When these norms and values are indeed aligned, it will make the employee feel like he/she fits in with the organization, creating an even stronger person-organization fit (Kristof, 1996).

The second element of the person-environment fit is the person-job fit. This fit is about the abilities of an employee. In order to have a good person job-fit, the abilities of an employee should be aligned with the demands of a job. Moreover, the needs of an employee should fit with the needs that the job can foster (Edwards, 1991). The better this ‘person-job fit’, the more an employee will feel committed to, and is satisfied with, their job. This results in lower turnover intentions or intentions to search for a new job (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005). The opposite is also true, a bad person-job fit, can lead to discontent, turnover intentions and eventually, voluntary mobility (Gesthuizen, 2009). Generation Y employees search for companies with the same values and a fitting company culture, that they believe to help develop and advance their skills (Griffin, 2016). Employees are more inclined to job-hop when they perceive a different organization to be a better employer; providing them with greater rewards or advancements than their current employer, helping their career success (Griffeth et al., 2000). Taken the above into account the following is proposed:

*P4a: A good environmental fit will reduce job-hopping behavior.*

After working for an employer for a certain time, employees develop their job skills, which is likely to result in higher salaries or promotions at the current employer (Gangl, 2003). However, job-hopping might be an even quicker way to attain a better match of skills and job requirements, and through that acquire economic benefits (Gangl, 2003). As

organizational career management is becoming less crucial; it is not a matter of course anymore that employees are directed into a new function within their current organization. It becomes more important for employees to manage their own career, at their current organization or into another organization (Van den Born, 2009); job-hopping is a way of doing that. Jovanovic (1979) argues that environmental fit explains why employees would job-hop more in the early stages of their career. From an organizational point of view, firms learn more about a workers' ability over time and the only way to discover the strength of a certain match is to actually form it and experience it. A wrong fit between employee and firm then is likely to be discovered earlier rather than later (Jovanovic, 1979).

The early stages of a career, or *early career* as Cohen, (1991) calls it, is a stage in which employees enter the working field and start by exploring different career options and functions. As employees in this stage are still discovering varied career options, and in that, their best fit, switching jobs is attractive to them (Super, Savickas, & Super 1996 as cited in Lam, Ng, & Feldman, 2012). As employees become more experienced in their sector, they acquire clarity on what they are willing to compromise on when it comes to career decisions. Over time, this is what helps employees to find well fitted organizations or jobs and to avoid situations where this fit is lacking (Ng & Feldman, 2007). With this in mind, the following proposition has been established: *P4b: People job-hop more in the beginning of their career, for at this stage of their career they are still discovering their needs for a fit.*

### **3. Methods**

This chapter discusses the method for data collection. It will elaborate on the research design, sample, analysis, instruments and finally it will discuss the procedure used for data collection.

#### **Research design**

The main objective of this research is to identify whether job-hopping is detrimental or beneficial for an employees' career. Additionally, this research aimed to identify what job-hopping entails, for there seems to be no consensus to date (Khatri, Budhwar, Pawan & Chong, 1999). Furthermore, this research sets out to investigate whether job-hopping occurs more in generation Y than in previous generations, and whether employees job-hop more in the beginning of their careers. This will be researched by examining the existing literature on job-hopping and adding to this by the use of interviews and statistical analyses. Due to the lack of empirical consensus on this topic, the research will be exploratory in nature and will therefore aim to take an in-depth perspective on job-hopping. This will be done by using a mixed methods design. Four propositions have been formulated to support this process and enable answering the main research question.

As stated previously a mixed methods design was used in which qualitative and quantitative data are given equal status during the collection and analyses. Each proposition will be elaborated on with a prioritisation of either quantitative (dataset analysis) or qualitative (interview data) results or a mixture of both. This in line with the common rationales that Tashakkori & Teddlie, (2010) provide for using a mixed method design. They state that using mixed methods can be useful when the aim of the research is to 'elaborate, further illustrate or clarify results' of a different method. Additionally, they state it is good to use mixed methods when looking for new perspectives on certain phenomenon, which is what this research tried to accomplish with regards to job-hopping. It also expands the range and depth of the research when using different ways of examining a certain phenomenon, resulting in more extensive results (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). This process will be further explained below:

#### *Data collection*

This sequential design was conducted in two main phases. The first phase was creating the dataset, to administer an overview of the career paths of HRS alumni. The process is further explained under procedure. This file was later used for data analyses, however, extensive adaptations of the file were necessary in order to conduct the analyses. The second phase of data collection was conducting (approximately) one hour semi-structured



interviews with 26 HRS alumni to further examine the phenomenon job-hopping. This interview design was chosen to ensure the possibility for an in-depth analysis, showing the context of the reasoning behind certain career choices participants made, making this a form of phenomenological research.

#### *Data analysis*

Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed separately, but each analysis was accorded equal importance in the study. After the data had been analysed separately, the data was analysed together for the purpose of generating inferences and moreover, to substantiate the qualitative data with the quantitative data.

#### *Propositions*

As stated before, the main research question will be answered by means of exploring four propositions. These propositions will be explored by means of qualitative and quantitative methods.

Applying both qualitative and quantitative methods, it was intended to rectify some of the shortcomings of each method. First quantitative data was used to paint a general picture of job-hopping behavior, and to illustrate whether there indeed is a difference in hopping behavior between people classified as job-hopper or as non-job-hopper. Quantitative research may be weaker in displaying the context of a subject (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010), however quantitative data was also necessary to answer proposition *P3: Job-hopping occurs more in generation Y than in previous generations*. This proposition, that examines generational differences, cannot be researched without the use of a large body of data. Therefore it is imperative to use the developed dataset of 1514 alumni, to analyse whether more job-switches and hops occur within generation Y. However, data from the interviews was used to substantiate the outcome of the statistical analyses.

On the other hand qualitative research may include more bias (and is not suitable for statistical analyses or generalisations) (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010), but is imperative when conducting phenomenological research. Therefore *P1: Job-hopping is rational behavior*, *P2: Job-hopping has positive and negative implications for an employee, however, the positive implications outweigh the negative implications for the employee* and *P4a: A good environmental fit will reduce job-hopping behavior* have been researched solely based on the data from the interviews. The last proposition: *P4b: People job-hop more in the beginning of their career, for at this stage of their career they are still discovering their needs for a fit* was

investigated both through data from the interviews and the data from the dataset.

In Table 1 below an overview of methods used for each proposition is provided:

Table 1: *Overview of methods used for different propositions*

<b><i>Proposition</i></b>	<b><i>Method</i></b>
<i>P1: Job-hopping is rational behavior.</i>	Interview data
<i>P2: Job-hopping has positive and negative implications for an employee, however, the positive implications outweigh the negative implications for the employee.</i>	Interview data
<i>P3: Job-hopping occurs more in generation Y than in previous generations</i>	Interview data + Statistical analyses
<i>P4a: A good environmental fit will reduce job-hopping behavior.</i>	Interview data
<i>P4b: People job-hop more in the beginning of their career, for at this stage of their career they are still discovering their needs for a fit.</i>	Interview data + Statistical analyses

In order to ensure the validity and reliability of this research, several measures were taken. Initially, all three researchers were involved the categorization of the interviewees, by discussing and categorizing all interviewees, together. Based on the established criteria for each category, a decision was made, after a consensus within the group was reached on the category of each interviewee. Additionally, a pilot interview with a Tilburg University alumni was conducted to ensure all questions being clear and without possible ambiguity. Furthermore, all interviews were attended by at least two researchers, to ensure that all the interviews were conducted in an identical manner. Finally, all interviews were audio-recorded and later, transcribed, in order to preserve all information gathered during the interviews appropriately.

#### *Context*

In this research design it is important to take context, as defined by Johns (2006) as “situational opportunities and constraints that affect the occurrence and meaning of organizational behavior as well as functional relationships between variable” (p.386.), into account, for it might influence the job-hopping behavior investigated in this research. Johns (2006) explains that a good way to become more adept at reporting contextual information is describing the omnibus context, which entails the occupation (who), the location (where),

time (when) and the rationale (why). Johns (2006) also mentions that doing well-conducted qualitative research, provides great potential of illustrating contextual effects. This study has tried to take the above factors into account, through conducting interviews that show the context of the decisions regarding job-switches. During the interviews, when discussing every single job switch, it was discussed, where they worked, when this was (perhaps in a certain economic time, for instance the financial crisis (2008-2013)), and what the rationale behind the switch was; why did the interviewee switched jobs.

Both job-hoppers as non-job-hoppers were active on the labor market during the financial crisis. This is important to take into account as turnover can be influenced by labor market conditions (Cappelli & Sherer, 1991). As Judge and Wantanabe (1991) explain that the opportunity of extensive options in the labor market, may be the predominant reason for (highly educated) employees to job-hop, it would make sense that the financial crisis can be construed as a job-hopping disabler. A labor market in which the demand for labor exceeds the supply of labor, could then be an enabler of job-hopping. However, turnover research often lacks a concern with context (Johns, 2006; Steel, 2002).

Therefore, in this research unemployment rates are taken into account when comparing generation Y to other generations. As explained above, when unemployment rates are higher in one generation, this might influence turnover behavior. To divide the dataset into generation y and older generations, the moment of entering the labor market and the corresponding unemployment rates are used as bounds of reference. In appendix D the unemployment rates in the Netherlands are displayed. The average unemployment rate for older generations in this dataset was 5.51% and the average for generation Y was 5.47%. Which shows that on a one decimal basis the average would be equal. This indicates that no corrections have to be made for labor market trends regarding these two groups of generations.

## **Sample**

A mixed methods design was employed for this research, thus a differentiation will be made between the sample for the interviews and the sample for the statistical analyses.

### *Dataset analysis*

Tilburg University provided a list consisting of every Human Resource Studies alumnus with a LinkedIn profile. The researcher populated a dataset based upon the information available per LinkedIn profile; career path, various organizations, different functions, and duration.

. This resulted in a dataset of the careers of 1514 HRS alumni.

### *Interviews*

Based on the above mentioned dataset a sample for the interviews was created. The interviews were conducted in collaboration with two fellow researchers, conducting their own research. For this research it was of importance that the sample consisted of job-hoppers, non-job-hoppers and recruiters. The work history of the 1514 HRS alumni in the dataset determined whether they were categorized as a job-hopper, for which two criteria were used.

#### Job-hopper criteria:

- i) the sequence of turnover consists of at least three successive occurrences of turnover; this prevents including employees that had occasional, non-structural turnover (Job hopping does not comprise of isolated career choices).
- ii) each occurrence of turnover occurred maximally within a period of two and a half years from commencing employment (analogous to one quarter of the average tenure in 2015 across the Netherlands), as discussed in the theoretical framework.

When the criteria were not satisfied, the subject was identified as 'non-job-hopper'. Further scrutiny determined whether a participant was categorized as a recruiter. This was determined on the basis of the participant currently working as a recruiter, or had done so in the past three years. Furthermore, as participants in each group were selected randomly, the sample is a stratified random sample. Overall, a total of 26 interviews were conducted.

To ensure the validity and reliability, all data were cross-validated and verified by two other researchers working with the same data. A total of 63 alumni were invited for an interview, of which 26 responded positively, resulting in a response rate of 41.3%. Of the 26 interviewees, five were male (19.2%), and 19 were female (80.8%). This corresponds with the complete dataset in which 26.6% was male and 74.4% of the individuals was female. All respondents were highly educated, as the dataset consisted of alumni of a Dutch university. All interviewees graduated between 1996 and 2012 and are currently between 29 and 47 years of age. An anonymous overview of the interviewees divided into categories can be found in appendix A.

### **Procedure**

The first step of the research process was to enrich the dataset of alumni (which included name, birthday and graduation date), with the details from the Linked-In data, included gender and work history. The goal was to interview between 20 and 30 respondents, of which

approximately a third were grouped as job-hopper, a third as non-job-hopper and a third as recruiter.

All concepts measured were discussed within the research-group. This was performed to establish a consensus regarding what the concepts included and if they were satisfactorily explained. Additionally, the employees who met the requirements of our research sample were to be identified and divided into groups. In collaboration with other researchers, potential participants were randomly selected from those groups. For this research it was important that the groups consisted of employees with multiple job-hops, people with only a few or no job-hops and recruiters. Stratified random sampling was applied to create the final sample.

The potential respondents from this final sample were invited to participate through e-mail and LinkedIn's built-in instant messaging service. When no response was received, a reminder was sent the same way the first invitation was sent. If this reminder did not yield a reaction, no further attempts to make contact with the potential participant were made. Some invitations were declined. Other invitations led to participants wanting to do the interview in writing, which was declined by the researchers. Invitations were sent in groups of approximately 30 at the same time. Two rounds of invitations and reminders were sent until at least 20 interviews were planned. This invitation included a brief explanation of the research, and inquired whether two researchers could conduct the three-part interview, at a time and location of their choosing.

In advance of conducting the interview, respondents were reminded that their answers would be treated anonymously and confidentially and that the interview was being recorded. Furthermore, they were told that they were free to decline answering any question. Finally, the respondents were asked to verbally give consent for participation and the use of the data gathered during the interview, which was audio recorded by the interviewer. All interviews were performed under the supervision of two researchers to enhance validity and reliability.

After conducting each interview, the content was transcribed using the program MAXQDA. Each researcher coded the data of all interviews based on their own themes. Specifically, the data were coded based upon formulated propositions. Additionally, whilst coding, more codes were created as deemed suitable by the researcher. After this process, raw data was verified to ascertain whether certain codes were missing, and also to ensure correct labelling of all data. Finally, the researcher inspected the raw data again to determine if important data or appearing themes were omitted. This coded text was then transferred into an excel file to categorize and bring structure to the data.

## **Instruments**

### *Dataset*

A database was constructed, in order to establish a clear overview of the careers of the HRS alumni. The starting point of this dataset was an excel file with the names, student numbers, graduation dates and (when available) dates of birth of the HRS alumni with a LinkedIn account. The LinkedIn profiles provided the details which further enriched the dataset; gender, different jobs, job duration, employers, period of employment. Each profile was visited separately, after which this information was manually put into the excel file. This resulted in a substantial dataset of 1514 Human Resource Studies Alumni, revealing their career paths. The dataset was used to statistically substantiate the information gathered during the interviews.

### *Interviews*

The interviews that were conducted were semi-structured, based on a general framework, designed and piloted by the three researchers using the data. This general framework included themes to be discussed and several open-ended questions regarding these themes. (See appendix two for an example of the interview outlines). This way the questions were tailored to the interview context/situation, and to the different interviewees. Additionally, this gave room to probe where necessary. The questions were based on the formulation of definitions, which are based on existing research and theory. The interviews served to answer the main research question, and the propositions made in this research. Additionally, statistical analyses were employed to facilitate answering the propositions. All interviews, which lasted approximately one hour, were conducted face to face, in Dutch, by at least two of the researchers, and were recorded and transcribed.

## 4. Results

The results chapter includes the outcome of the data collection and the statistical analyses based on the collected data. The order of propositions, as in the theoretical framework, will be followed. This chapter will end with an overall conclusion. Quotes from the interviewees and statistical analysis were used to validate the outcomes.

From the 26 interviews that were conducted, 4 categories of interviewees were recognised for this research. Based on the original data, 10 interviewees were categorized as job-hopper. However, based on the context discussed during the interviews, 4 of them did not satisfy the criteria for categorization of 'job-hopper' anymore, due to involuntary switches. Some interviewees have double roles, for instance, they can be a non-job-hopper, but also they can also be categorized as a recruiter (see appendix A).

The following four categories were recognized:

Table 2: *Categorization of interviewees*

<i>Category</i>	<i>Amount of interviewees</i>
Job-hoppers	6
Non-job-hoppers	12
Recruiters	8
Ad interim employees / consultants	4

In table 2, below, the average hops and switches of job-hoppers and non-job-hoppers are displayed to illustrate the differences between those employees. The job-hopper group has a higher quantity of hops in the first five years of their career ( $M=3.34$ ) than the non-job-hopper group ( $M=1.52$ ), for the total dataset ( $M= 1.65$ ). They also completed more hops in the most recent five years of their career ( $M=3.19$ ) than the non-job-hopper group ( $M=1.23$ ), for the total dataset ( $M= 1.37$ ). For both groups, however, it can be seen that more hops occur in the beginning of their careers. When looking at the total amount of hops made during a career, job-hoppers have a significantly higher average ( $M=4.78$ ) than non-job-hoppers ( $M=2.14$ ), and for the total dataset ( $M=2.32$ ). In addition to hops, table 2 also demonstrates that job-hoppers switch more ( $M=5.66$ ) compared to non-job-hoppers ( $M=3.57$ ), where this was ( $M=3.72$ ) for the whole dataset.

Table 3: Average hops first and most recent five years, and switches and hops during whole career.

	<b>Job-hoppers N=108</b>	<b>Non-job-hoppers N= 1406</b>	<b>Significance T-test</b>	<b>Total Dataset Comparison</b>
Average hops in first 5 years of career	3.34	1.52	P=.000	1.65
Average hops in most recent five years of career	3.19	1.23	P=.000	1.37
Average switches during whole career	5.66	3.57	P=.000	3.72
Average hops during whole career	4.78	2.14	P=.000	2.32

*Based on Excel dataset*

*\* a hop is a job held for less than 2.5 years (30 months)*

*\* a switch simply is a change of jobs*

### **Defining job-hopping**

When asking the respondents if they were familiar with the term job-hopping, they all confirmed. However, in line with the lack of consensus in literature regarding job-hopping, job-hopping was viewed differently by the different respondents. Appendix B provides an overview of definitions provided during the interviews. This ambiguity surrounding the definition of job-hopping became even clearer when asking people if they consider themselves job-hoppers. Five out of the six interviewees that were categorized as ‘job-hopper’, based on the definition used in this research, agreed with being a job-hopper. But, 1 categorized job-hopper did not identify with being a job-hopper, as the interviewee did not relate to the negative connotations surrounding the term job-hopper (Rnr.6). Moreover, 4 people who were not categorized as job-hopper, did in fact identify themselves as job-hoppers (Rnr.7, 9, 10, 22). No changes were made in the original categorization of job-hoppers and non-job-hoppers based on the personal perceptions of the interviewees of being a job-hopper or non-job-hopper. However, 4 interviewees that were initially categorized as job-hoppers, did not classify as job-hoppers anymore after exploring the context of their switches during the interview (Rnr.24, 25, 19, 26). This was due to external reasons for leaving their jobs, for



example, working on a project that was completed, redundancy, etc. In this case, the hop was not made voluntarily and therefore it does not qualify as job-hopping.

Based on the question, “How would you describe job-hopping” multiple aspects of job-hopping came to light. All interviewees mentioned switching jobs, and more precisely, most, but not all interviewees, mentioned switching organizations, often and fast. Additionally, an aspect of financial gain was mentioned several times. Which is somewhat in line with the definition proposed for this research: ‘the rational, voluntary behavior of frequently switching employers, especially in the beginning of one's career, with the prospects of career advancement’.

### *Rationality*

One important aspect in this definition is the rationality of the behavior. This rational aspect, however, did not come up spontaneously when interviewees described job-hopping. Only a few interviewees responded to this question with a form of rationality in their answer. When they did, it almost always involved financial benefits resulting from the hop. For example: “*Snel switchen van baan, voor het snelle gewin, zonder goed te kijken naar de inhoud van het werk dat je leuk vindt*”(Rnr. 9) or “*Binnen een jaar/ snel switchen voor meer salaris*”(Rnr.16, 17, 26). However, after probing, there always was some form of logic or reason behind the different switches made by the job-hoppers. These rational decisions were sometimes guided by aspects in their private lives, such as having children, re-locating etc. But also by desiring something different or better. For example, Job-hopper 5 preferred enhanced development opportunities: “*Nou ik wilde daar eigenlijk binnen het team doorgroeien (..), maar ik wist dat daar voorlopig geen functie vrij kwam. (..) Ehm, ja en toen ben ik gaan nadenken, van als ik dan moet gaan, dan maar zo. Plus het feit dat ik het werk nog steeds super leuk vond, en ik had heel veel mensen zien vertrekken die dat niet meer hadden*”(Rnr. 5) The fact that she actively thought about her choice and found reasoning behind her decision displays a rational aspect, however probing was needed to bring up rationality in the conversation. Moreover, many interviewees (including non-job-hoppers) mentioned rational aspects when probing about job-hopping. Some interviewees even stated that job-hopping means ‘taking charge of your career’, which is a rational decision. “*Job-hopper betekent voor mij dat je eigenlijk kritisch kijkt naar hoe vind ik het juiste werk in mijn ontwikkeling. De werkgever is dan niet leiden, maar het werk dat je wilt doen*”(Rnr. 21). and “*Positief is eigenlijk dat je je eigen regie neemt over je loopbaan, dus dat je zelf de beslissing neemt om ergens anders te gaan kijken op het moment dat jij vindt dat dit nodig is*” (Rnr. 20).

Moreover, when asking the job-hopper group directly if their different hops were all rational decisions, they almost all answered yes "*Op het moment dat je dingen ongepland doet dan overkomt het je en dan ben je misschien met 20 dingen tegelijkertijd bezig en dan doe je dus eigenlijk een paar dingen niet goed. Dan gaat het mis. Ik ben heel erg van mening dat focus helpt, dus richt je op iets wat, wat je kunt doen. Doe dat goed en doe dan de volgende stap*" (Rnr.23). Moreover, the interviews demonstrated no support for irrational interpretations (the 'itch') of job-hopping. The 'itch', that is explained by different authors as job-hopping where employees migrate from one job to another, irrespective of better alternatives or other apparently rational motives, was not mentioned by any of the job-hopper interviewees. All of them described a process in which they cogitate on the decision of leaving an organization for another one.

So overall job-hopping is not per se perceived as a rational process, nevertheless, job-hoppers do experience their hops as rational decisions that take them to a further step in their career. Therefore, this is in line with the first proposition that job-hopping is rational behavior, even though this might not be a general perception regarding job-hopping.

### **Job-hopping, positive or negative?**

#### *Negative*

Some negative aspects were voiced spontaneously when describing job-hopping, such as not being able to stay at the same place for a longer period of time, not knowing what one wants. But when probing more about other possible negative associations, most interviewees expressed a lot of negative associations such as malfunctioning, being a negative influence for the company, including disloyalty were mentioned, even by the job-hoppers themselves. Interestingly though, most concrete negative responses were aimed at the negative effects for companies: "*De organisatie lijdt eronder*" (Rnr.15), "*Negatief is dat voor de organisatie en vanuit de werkgeverskant je juist jong talent wilt binden en boeien in plaats van dat ze snel weggaan*" (Rnr. 20). However, multiple interviewees did mention a negative effect for the job-hoppers' image. Recruiter 5 mentioned that "*Alles korter dan een jaar is een big failure of er moet echt een duidelijke reden zijn vanuit het bedrijf, anders heb je niet goed nagedacht. De job-hoppers die ik aan tafel heb, zijn ook vaak niet de beste kandidaten*" (Rnr. 14). Recruiter 7 mentioned that: "*Job-hoppers geven de baan niet een kans en zijn er weer snel op uitgekeken. Zij hebben dan vaak niet alle mogelijkheden benut binnen de organisatie en handelen uit puur financiële motieven*" (Rnr. 17). According to them, negative consequences of job-hopping might lead to not being selected during an interview due to having a 'bad' résumé and therefore not to be taken seriously on the job-market. Job-hoppers also mentioned

negative image consequences: *“Bedrijven denken dat je niet kunt of wilt binden. Je doet maar wat en hebt geen visie of richting. Ze verwachten dat je meteen weer weg zal zijn”* (Rnr. 1), *“Je wordt minder serieus genomen op de arbeidsmarkt, want mensen kennen je meerwaarde niet”* (Rnr.3). However, something that almost all interviewees agreed on, job-hopper or non-job-hopper, was the fact that job-hopping should only be regarded negatively when you know the entire story. There may be many reasons for someone to switch jobs frequently and it is of great importance to know the context behind the hops. Recruiter 1 mentioned: *“de term job-hopper ja. ik heb daar niet meteen negatieve associaties mee, nee. Het gaat natuurlijk om de reden, dat is altijd”* (Rnr. 2). Recruiter 7, who had strong negative associations with job-hopping, mentioned: *“Er kunnen natuurlijk heel veel legitieme redenen zijn om van baan te wisselen. Dus het is het beste denk ik om per persoon te bepalen. Je kan moeilijk op basis van een cv die stempel er op drukken. Het is natuurlijk wel een vraag of het verhaal naar boven komt, als je iemand ziet”* (Rnr. 17). Recruiter 8 had a similar opinion: *“Als ik een CV voor me krijg, en ik zie dat iemand in een korte tijd heel veel verschillende werkgevers heeft gehad, ga ik daar wel vragen over stellen. En het is heel erg afhankelijk van de toelichting die je krijgt of ik het dan positief of negatief vind”* (Rnr. 18).

This is in line with the fact that not many of the job-hoppers experienced negative consequences of this more unfavorable image. When asked if they received questions about their CV an interviewee responded: *“Nou minder vaak dan je zou denken eerlijk gezegd”* (Rnr. 24), *“Nee, helemaal niet, nee”* (Rnr. 6). When they did receive questions regarding their CV, they always were able to provide an explanation. *“Ik kreeg meer de vraag waarom ik bepaalde keuzes heb gemaakt, maar het is nooit benoemd als positief of negatief,”* (Rnr.5). *“Ja, ik heb die feedback zelf ook wel gekregen toen ik aan het solliciteren was (red. dat ze overkwam als een job-hopper). Als je het CV alleen ziet dan je wel van ‘nou job-hopper’, maar als je het verhaal er achter hoort dan denk je van ‘er zit een logische verklaring achter’ (..) Dan krijg ik te horen van ‘oh, hoe heb je dat voor elkaar gekregen’. Ja, dat geeft een ander beeld he”* (Rnr. 3). This is similar to what recruiter 8 explained to do with job-hopper CV's: *“Als ik een CV voor me krijg en ik zie dat iemand in een korte tijd heel veel verschillende werkgevers heeft gehad, dan ga ik daar wel vragen over stellen. En het is heel erg afhankelijk van de toelichting die je krijgt of ik het dan positief of negatief vind”* (Rnr. 18). Additionally, the interview brought forward that not only job-hoppers, but also non-job-hoppers received questions regarding their employment past.

It can be concluded that in general job-hopping brings up negative associations for companies, but also for the image of job-hoppers. However, all interviewees agreed that it is

primarily about the context and the history surrounding the job-hopping.

### *Positive*

When asking about the possible positive sides of job-hopping most interviewees mentioned positive implications for the job-hoppers themselves, instead of, for the companies they work for. Almost all job-hoppers recognized that having worked in several different companies aids development and experience: *“Je leert heel veel verschillende bedrijven kennen. En je leert jezelf kennen en daarmee leer je richting kiezen”* (Rnr. 1), *“Ik neem onwijs veel kennis en ervaring vanuit andere branches en andere bedrijven mee, waarmee ik mijn collega’s weer heel erg kan verrassen”* (Rnr. 2). *“Positief is dat je veel organisaties ziet en dat is leerzaam. Je leert echt overal wel wat”* (Rnr. 3). *“Veel ervaring; dat je veel gezien hebt binnen andere organisaties en dat je weet hoe een cultuur werkt.(..) Je kunt dan een beetje inschatten hoe de mensen zijn die daar werken en hoe je daar mee om moet gaan”* (Rnr. 5). Some recruiters agreed with this and acknowledged similar positive aspects: *“Hoe meer je ziet van verschillende bedrijven, hoe meer je een uitgebreid beeld ontwikkelt”* (Rnr. 16). *“Je ziet veel denk ik, want elke organisatie is anders, dat is wel een voordeel. Kijk als je zelfstandig bent en je doet verschillende opdrachten, dan is dat een beetje hetzelfde idee denk ik; dan zie je ook veel verschillende bedrijven. (..) Je leer ook veel mensen kennen denk ik en dat is goed voor je netwerk”* (Rnr. 17). Almost all non-job-hoppers brought forward similar positive aspects of job-hopping.

Additionally, it was pointed out by many interviewees that remaining too long at the same company is not beneficial either, as it may lead to employees becoming too rigid in their ways. Two different recruiters even stated: *“Het nadeel van te lang in één organisatie werken en daarmee het voordeel van job-hoppen, is dat een andere organisatie je weer nieuwe prikkels kan geven, of bezig is met nieuwe technologie, of nieuwe manieren van werken waar je van kan leren”* (Rnr. 17). *“Ik zie ook heel veel mensen die heel lang bij een bedrijf blijven hangen en dan denk ik, ja dat houdt allemaal plekken tegen voor nieuwe mensen. (..) Nee, als je iemand heb die al 12 jaar op dezelfde functie zit, die doet het op één bepaalde manier, dus ik geloof wel in uitersten”* (Rnr. 2).

Another clear positive facet of job-hopping that that was shared by the majority of interviewees spontaneously, was financial gain. *“Dus iedere keer als je naar een ander bedrijf gaat kun je weer even pieken in je salaris”* (Rnr. 12), *“Je kunt snel stappen maken als je dat ambieert”* (Rnr. 15), *“Ja, ik denk als je inhoudelijk snel wil gaan dat je binnen een bedrijf dat makkelijker kunt, omdat mensen weten wat je kunt. Als je financieel snel wilt gaan,*

*dan moet je swappen*” (Rnr.23). Recruiter 5 even stated that: *“Wil je veel geld verdienen en verantwoordelijkheden, dan moet je om de zoveel jaar switchen*” (Rnr. 14). All recruiters indicated that if one wishes to make significant steps, it is advantageous to switch, rather than to remain with the same company. That job-hopping is the best way for quick promotions is something almost all interviewees agreed upon. However, when asking people directly what has the upper hand; the negative or the positive implications, the interviewees were almost unanimous (including the job-hoppers themselves); it resonates more with negative implications, than with positive implications. *“Ja, job hoppen heeft toch een negatieve nasmaak. Dat wordt niet echt als positief gezien*” (Rnr. 3), *“ja, ik heb er meer een negatieve associatie bij, omdat ik dan denk dat je telkens denkt dat het gras elders groener is*” (Rnr 9), *“Negatieve kanten, ja ik, ik ervaar dat niet als positief”*(Rnr 11). However, this general negative perception of job-hopping appears to be changing slowly: *“Nou, ik merk wel dat het voorheen met sollicitaties altijd als negatiever werd gezien (red. job-hoppen). En dat het tegenwoordig juist weer een beetje omdraait; dat ze zeggen van nee, maar het is harstikke goed, want je hebt veel ervaring opgedaan. (..) Mijn man heeft een zelfde soort CV en die merkt ook dat het minder wordt; dat mensen ook de meerwaarde ervan inzien zeg maar”* (Rnr 9). Recruiter 7 also mentioned: *“Al denk ik dat het tegenwoordig, omdat het meer gebeurt, een wat minder negatieve lading krijgt”* (Rnr. 17).

The interviews brought forward three different factors that need to be taken into account, when assessing whether the positive implications of job-hopping outweigh the negative implications of job-hopping, namely:

- Is this viewed from the company’s point of view
- Is this viewed from the job-hopper’s point of view
- Is this based on people’s perception of job-hopping.

When viewed from the company’s point of view, as stated earlier, the interview resulted in more negative implications than positive implications. However, when discussed from the job-hopper’s point of view, there were more positive implications than negative implications. For, even though it might lead to a more negative image, it still leads to quick career advancements steps. This in combination with the fact that not many of the job-hoppers encountered problems due to a ‘job-hopper image’, it can be concluded that job-hopping has positive implications for the employee. The general perception of job-hopping is still very negative. Therefore, P2, *Job-hopping has positive and negative implications for an employee,*

however the positive implications outweigh the negative ones, can be confirmed, for this proposition is based on the job-hopper's point of view.

### **Generational job-hopping**

After establishing whether or not the interviewees perceived job-hopping as a positive or a negative phenomenon, the conversation continued to who/what kind of people job-hop. The majority of the interviewees agreed that job-hopping is more consistent with the current generation; *"het is sowieso een fenomeen van deze tijd, want heel veel jongeren die blijven niet lang meer bij een werkgever"* (Rnr. 19), *"Een baan voor het leven, ja dat is niet meer van deze tijd"* (Rnr. 21). It was brought up in the interviews that generation Y employees have different character traits, which may tend towards increased job-hopping: *"Ja, omdat ze (generation Y employees, red.) ook snel al actie ondernemen wanneer het dan niet bevalt. Dat ze vroeger veel meer dachten van, nou ja het is wel een baan, en ik heb inkomsten en dat het niet in ze opkwam om weg te gaan"* (Rnr. 16). This generation is perceived as impatient in comparison with their predecessors: *"Het is dat generatie ding dat mensen ook sneller eeh... eeh... weer denken "oh nee dit is het niet, ik ga door"* (Rnr. 6). They were considered more selfish than previous generations: *"Mensen zijn veel meer ook bezig zijn met "what's in it for me?", en niet "wat kom ik brengen?". En daardoor zijn ze ook snel verveeld, en voelen ze zich snel niet meer uitgedaagd. Terwijl het... nog niet zo is dat ze dan het helemaal in de vingers hebben of zo"* (Rnr. 16).

To reinforce the statements from the interviews with statistical evidence, several T-tests were performed, with a p-value of .005 to provide stronger evidence regarding the potential generational differences. For the statistical analyses, a differentiation was made between a hop and a switch. A hop is a job held for less than 2.5 years (30 months), whereas a switch is simply a change in job. As is shown in table 3, the complete dataset consists of 1140 (75.3%) generation Y employees, and 374 (24.7%) employees from previous generations. Of the 108 job-hoppers in the dataset, 87 (80.6%) belong to generation Y, and 21 (19.4%) are from an earlier generation. There are 1053 (74.9%) generation Y non-job-hoppers, whereas 353 (25.1%) of the non-job-hoppers originate from other generations.

Statistically, the dataset did not conclusively indicate that people from generation Y ( $M=2.25$ ) significantly job-hop more than their predecessors of other generations ( $M=2.56$ ), ( $p=.054$ ). It was established that generation Y have made significantly ( $p=.000$ ) fewer job switches ( $M=3.20$ ), than employees from other generations ( $M=5.30$ ). Job-hoppers from other generations seemed to have hopped more ( $M=5.05$ ) than generation Y job-hoppers ( $M=4.71$ ), but this difference was not found to be significant ( $P=.497$ ). When it comes to job switches,

job-hoppers from generation Y also made significantly ( $p=.001$ ) less switches ( $M=5.28$ ) than job-hoppers from older generations ( $M=7.24$ ). The same pattern was discovered when considering the average hops for generation Y non-job-hoppers ( $M=2.04$ ) and older generation non-job-hoppers ( $M=2.41$ ), ( $p=.005$ ), as well as when looking at the average job-switches for non-job-hoppers from generation Y ( $M=3.03$ ) compared to the average switches of non-job-hoppers other generations ( $M=5.18$ ), ( $P=.000$ ). It is, however, very important to state that these results are very likely due to the fact that employees from earlier generations have enjoyed far greater opportunities to hop and switch, being from an older generation. The majority, therefore probably have had a much longer career than generation Y employees, who haven't been in the workforce as long. Therefore the results were examined in more detail. This is displayed in table 4.

Even though the statistical results did not demonstrate that generation Y employees job-hop more than employees from previous generations, it does however, again, reveal the difference between job-hoppers and non-job-hoppers. Job-hoppers from generation Y, on average, hop 2.67 times more than non-job-hoppers. And also in previous generations, job-hoppers have made an average of 2.64 more hops than non-job-hoppers from previous.

Table 4: *Generational job-hopping*

	<i>Generation Y</i>	<i>Other generations</i>	<i>Total dataset</i>	<i>Significance T-test</i>
N=	1140 (75.3%)	374 (24.7%)	1514 (100%)	
Job-hoppers	87 (80.65)	21 (19.4%)	108 (100%)	
Non job-hopper	1053 (74.9%)	353 (25.1%)	1406 (100%)	
Average switches complete dataset	3.20	5.30		P=.000
Average hops complete dataset	2.25	2.56		P=.054
Average switches job-hoppers	5.28	7.24		P=.001
Average hops job-hoppers	4.71	5.05		P=.497
Average switches non-job-hoppers	3.03	5.18		P=.000
Average hops job-non-hoppers	2.04	2.14		P=.005

*Based on Excel dataset*

When scrutinizing these figures and, moreover, when looking at the different career stages of these generational groups something interesting can be found. In the first five years of generation Y careers 3.69 hops were made. Whereas job-hoppers from earlier generations have only hopped 1.9 times in the first five years of their careers. Indicating that generation Y job-hoppers hop significantly more in the beginning of their careers than their job-hopping predecessors. The same results come up when looking at the first 5 years of the careers of non-job-hoppers. Non-job-hopping Generation Y employees ( $M=1.76$ ) had a higher average of hops than non-job-hoppers of earlier generations ( $M=0.83$ ), ( $p=.000$ ) in the first five years of their careers.

Considering the five most recent years of careers yielded similar results. Generation Y employees hopped significantly more in the most recent five years of their careers ( $M= 3.37$ ) than job-hoppers from previous generations ( $M= 2.43$ ), indicating that Generation Y job-



hoppers do indeed job-more often than their predecessors. However, this difference was found not to be significant ( $p=.023$ ). The same result is found when looking at the non-job-hoppers; non-job-hoppers of generation Y hopped more ( $M=1.36$ ) in the most recent five years than non-job-hoppers of older generations ( $M=0.84$ ), ( $p=.000$ ). This shows that even in the non-job-hoppers group, generation Y hops more than their predecessors. However, with the results regarding the most recent years of employment it should be taken into account that being from an older generation and therefore probably having had a much longer careers compared to generation Y employees, who haven't been in the workforce as long, was not taken into account. It is however, a good way to highlight the differences between the generations. Generation Y still has completed more hops and switches, regardless of having had a shorter workforce experience.

Table 5: *Generational job-hopping career stages*

	<i>Generation Y</i>	<i>Previous generations</i>	<i>Significance T-test</i>
<i>Average hops in first 5 years of career (job-hoppers).</i>	3.69	1.90	P=.000
<i>Average hops in first 5 years of career (non-job-hoppers).</i>	1.76	0.83	P=.000
<i>Average hops in most recent 5 years of career (job-hoppers).</i>	3.37	2.43	P=.023
<i>Average hops in most recent 5 years of career (non-job-hopper)</i>	1.36	0.84	P=.000

*Based on Excel dataset*

As stated before in the theoretical framework, employees are more actively self-directing their careers and moreover, they go beyond the traditional boundaries of an employer. Interestingly, from the interviews it became clear that multiple interviewees agree with this and even think jobs, in the traditional sense, will not exist for much longer. Function descriptions will become less important and more fluid. *“Ik geloof ook heel erg dat het onderscheid tussen vast en flex gaat verdwijnen. Als organisatie is er het onderscheid tussen*

*je hebt een vaste baan en je bent in vaste dienst, tot en met je bent flexibel, je bent zzp'er, en dat zal steeds meer naar elkaar groeien. Ook waar mensen een gedeelte vast in dienst zijn bij een organisatie en misschien hun zelfde kennis als zzp'er weer voor een andere organisatie inzetten. Dus dat onderscheid gaat steeds meer veranderen”* (Rnr. 23). According to a non-job-hopper, there will be a new way of working, where employees do not work for an employer, but all professionals will work together. It does not matter if that is in or outside an organization or on whatever contracts it is based. It's more a collaboration than hierarchic system. Based on this, it was discussed that employees should run their jobs, even when still employed, as if they are working for their own company; *“Zorg er dus voor dat je eigenlijk ondernemer bent. Run je eigen toko ..doe geen hele gekke dingen, doe zoals je ook zou acteren als je eigen bedrijf zou hebben”* (Rnr. 23).

### **Job-hopping and the environmental fit**

The proximity between work preference and the actual components of the job indicates how well someone is at their place in that job. Non-job-hopper 4 concurs with this and gives an example of why she has yet to depart from their first employer: *“HR technisch is dit een van de interessantste bedrijven om op dit moment te zijn en dat maakt het gewoon heel lastig om ergens anders naar toe te gaan.. en dan is het ook nog voor mij een goede afstand, het is een goede beloning, weet je wel dat soort dingen zitten er dan ook nog allemaal goed. En dan vak inhoudelijk ook... en ik zal ook wel echt wel een keer willen wisselen. Alleen het is gewoon verleidelijk omdat het hier interessant blijft. Ik heb om het jaar of om het anderhalf jaar steeds iets anders kunnen gaan doen. Dus het blijft gewoon heel leuk”* (Rnr. 11). The better this ‘person-job fit’, the more employees feel committed to, and are satisfied with their job. This would indicate that employees, who discover a strong fit, may be less inclined to switch jobs. However, from the interviews it became evident that it is not just the job itself, but also the context of the job and one's colleagues, that play a large role in whether or not people want to change jobs. *“Voor veel mensen is omgeving nog bijna belangrijker dan functie”* (Rnr. 11). *“Ik vind de klik met je leidinggevende wel belangrijk, maar ook hoe zij mij de ruimte zou geven om dingen te doen, en ook de onderwerpen”* (Rnr. 3)., *“Ja, en het gaat erom als je solliciteert, dat je bij mensen komt waar je een klik mee hebt. Dat je denkt van nou met jou kan ik goed samenwerken”* (Rnr. 26).

This also applies to the opposite situation, when there is a poor environmental-fit, employees are less satisfied, possess higher turnover intentions and will switch jobs more readily. *“Als het niet klikt, dan moet je het niet doen!”* (Rnr. 19). One of the interviewees said

she has witnessed this in practice and therefore always advises starters *“maak lijstjes wat voor jou belangrijk is. Ga dan praten. Als dat niet matched, dan moet je dat niet doen.”* (Rnr. 25). Additionally, multiple interviewees have mentioned the importance of the manager’s role in such a scenario: *“Ik denk dat het belangrijker is om je manager te kiezen dan het bedrijf. Want als jouw manager niet achter jou staat en als jij denkt van, nou, daar leer ik niks van. Ja, dan moet je vooral niet voor die baan gaan”* (Rnr. 14)

It was also viewed from a business perspective *“kom maar eens kijken en van hoe voel je je in de groep en hoe voel je je bij de cultuur”... “Ja ik vind het altijd heel fijn, want soms geven mensen wel hele goede antwoorden, maar dan passen ze gewoon helemaal niet..en je hoeft niet mee te kijken van doe je het systeem goed, maar gewoon wel van wat houdt de functie in”* (Rnr. 10)

So in general all interviewees seemed to confer with the fact that job-hopping, or increased job-hopping, can be linked to the fit a person has with the job and organization, but more importantly with the culture, colleagues and management. However, one interviewee shared very explicitly that it is not as black and white as to just having a good fit will reduce job-hopping, for it also dependent upon character traits and experience. *“Nee, nou, weet je wat ik heel vaak merk bij mensen? Is dat ze toch in andere keukens willen kijken. Heel veel mensen denken toch, het gras is groener hè, bij een ander. En eigenlijk is het altijd wel grappig dat mensen daar altijd weer van terug komen. Want, eh het gras is niet altijd persé groener ergens anders, je neemt ook jezelf mee. En jezelf met je eigen onvolkomenheden zullen we maar zeggen. Dus als jij al, ik zeg maar wat, een zwartkijker bent en je stap als zwartkijker van de ene organisatie naar de andere organisatie, dan zal je het in die andere organisatie ook niet heel erg leuk vinden, snap je?”* (Rnr. 9). Recruiter 4 added to this *“Wij waren een ander soort medewerkers denk ik, tenminste als ik dat vergelijk met de studenten van nu. Die zijn veel zelfbewuster en denken ook veel meer na over ‘ja wil ik dan nog reizen’. Ik denk dat wij het ons wat meer lieten overkomen en dan kwam je van het een in het ander en wat minder bezig waren met wat wil ik zelf nou uit het leven halen (..) Het was van o, oke ik heb een baan, nou fijn dan, dan gaan we aan de slag”* (Rnr. 13). This was in line with the reactions of some of the interviewees to the question why they made certain switches. Very often it did have a link with the fits, but also with enhanced career benefits *“Omdat ik opportunistisch ben, Ja, omdat omdat ik vind dat je altijd jezelf voorop moet plaatsen. Ik ben heel loyaal, Maar.. Wel als het goed is voor mij”* (Rnr 12), *“Dus je kunt maar beter mensen erbij betrekken (..) die jouw ondersteunen, want dan krijg je meer support en uiteindelijk, ja, dan komt het toch weer terug op groei. Als mensen jou supporten in groei, dan ontstaat er een*

*wisselwerking en die is heel belangrijk” (Rnr. 23), the suspicion of not making career progress “Ik wilde niet ergens vast in dienst, dus ik had heel erg het gevoel als ik dat doe, dan kan ik nooit meer naar een andere plek, dan komt die ontwikkeling vast stil te staan, ik moet in beweging blijven” (Rnr. 22), and a general idea of needing to gain more experience: “je ziet vaak dat mensen natuurlijk om de zoveel tijd van organisatie wisselen, niet alleen omdat ze het bijvoorbeeld niet meer naar hun zin hebben ergens in een bepaalde rol, maar juist ook om ervaringen uit te breiden.” (Rnr. 22), were often disclosed reasons for people to switch jobs. Therefore, it cannot simply be stated that a good person-job fit or person-organization fit will reduce job-hopping.*

It is evident that employees job-hop more in the beginning of their career given the higher amount of job-hops in the first five years of employees’ careers, compared to the average of job-hops in the most recent five years of their careers (see Table 3), whether they are job-hoppers or not. The previous section on environmental-fit might help explain this phenomenon. One of the interviewees had a nice view on this: *“wanneer je zeg maar in het begin van je carrière bent, ben je denk ik meer aan het zoeken wat je graag wilt doen, dan als je al langer werkt en wellicht wat duidelijker hebt wat je leuk vindt. Dus stel je werkt al langer en dan wissel je elk jaar, of elke twee jaar van job. Dan vind ik iemand eerder een job hopper dan wanneer je in het begin van je carrière bijvoorbeeld een paar keer van baan hebt gewisseld” (Rnr. 18). This uncertainty of what you want, and therefore hopping between different jobs was acknowledged by many of the interviewees.*

So when employees are still searching for the right fit, they are more open to switching jobs in order to find that right fit, because when an employee perceives a different organization to be a better employer, they are more likely to job-hop, in the hope for more career success or perhaps a better fit. Additionally, the previous quotations also exhibit that switching in the beginning of someone’s career is perceived as less negative, or even accepted because people are still searching for a good fit. This may encourage people to switch more in the beginning of their career.

At the start of someone’s career there is also the ‘fear of the unknown’, which may lead to more switches in the beginning of one’s career. *“Eigenlijk is de eerste stap in die je neemt in je carrière, is al heel richtingsbepalend. Als je recruitment gaat doen, dan wordt je ook weer benaderd voor dat soort rollen in de toekomst. En als je technisch recruit, dan ga je weer echt de technische hoek in, dan wordt je niet benaderd voor finance rollen” (Rnr. 6). Based on the above results it can be accepted that people job-hop more in the beginning of their career, for at this stage of their career they are still discovering their needs for a fit.*

However, it probably goes further than that, for at this stage, people (especially from this generation) are also still seeking for their fits in life.

## 5. Conclusion/Discussion

### Defining job-hopping.

Job-hopping literature displays a discussion regarding the description and definition of job-hopping. Therefore, the theoretical discussion of this research started with providing an overview of how job-hopping is defined by different researchers (Ghiselli, 1974; Khatri et al., 2001; Schimitt et al., 1984; Saleem et al., 2016). This research combined these various definitions into the following coherent definition: *Job-hopping is the rational, voluntary behavior of frequently switching employers, especially in the beginning of one's career, with the prospects of career advancement.* This has shown to be a valid definition, but during the interviews, the rational aspect of job-hopping was rarely mentioned spontaneously. After probing, there was reason or logic behind the switching behavior of all interviewees, which revealed the rationality behind job-hopping. Moreover, the interviews showed no support for irrational interpretations (the 'itch') of job-hopping. So, to summarize, there is sufficient support for proposition 1: *job-hopping is rational behavior*, which is in line with the thinking of Schimitt et al., (1984), Saleem et al., (2016) and broadly in line with that of Ghiselli, (1974).

Additional interesting information transpired from the interviews, namely who identifies as being a job-hopper and who does not. Most of the interviewees that were categorized as job-hopper, based on the definition and selection made for this research, also categorized themselves as job-hopper. Only one categorized job-hopper (job-hopper 6) did not identify as being a job-hopper, which was mostly due to the negative connotations surrounding job-hopping. This interviewee did not recognize herself in those negative connotations and therefore, did not identify with the term job-hopper. Moreover, three interviewees that were not categorized as job-hoppers in the light of this research, did however categorize themselves as job-hoppers (non-job-hopper 1, non-job-hopper 3 and non-job-hopper 4). This implies the importance of the (partly) qualitative method used for this research, and in that, the importance of having context with regards to this subject. Without conducting interviews that show the context of job-hopping, and probing for information during the interviews, this information, would probably have been overlooked.

### **Associations with the term ‘job-hopping’ ~ positive or negative?**

Job-hopping can have both positive and negative implications for employees. In proposition 2, it was stated that *the positive implications outweigh the negative ones*. Although the initial connotations with job hopping are quite negative, the interview process yields sufficient evidence for this proposition to hold.

Spontaneously, some negative associations came up during the interviews such as, not knowing what you want, not being able to stay somewhere for a longer period and not being persistent, which could all lead to being less eligible on the job-market. After probing for more negative associations, even more negative aspects such as malfunctioning and disloyalty were mentioned. Nonetheless, many positive reactions regarding job-hopping were also mentioned, which were in line with literature by Fan & DeVaro (2015), who mentioned that there are alternative (positive) ways to interpret job-hopping. For instance, as stated by Rosen (1972) previous employment greatly helps the development of new skills. Additionally, an important reason to job-hop, is the prospect of financial gains. According to interviewees across all categories, job-hopping is the quickest way to achieve a promotion, which includes increasing rewards such as salary. These responses were in line with the literature by Mincer, (1986), Murphy & Topel (1992) and Keith & McWilliams (1995), who stated that additional positive effects of job-hopping may include positive experiences of salary and an enhanced professional status.

Nevertheless, in general all interviewees (no exceptions) said that the general perception of job-hopping is still mostly negative, with the negative aspects resonating more with the general opinion than the positive aspects. It is, however, important to distinguish between job-hopping implications for individuals and for organizations. For organizations we have found positive and negative implications as well (short term and long run). Resonating with negative terms such as disloyalty and a high possibility for turnover (Tsui et al., 1997; Fan & DeVaro, 2015), job-hopping lowers the incentives for companies to invest in new knowledge (Fallick et al., 2006). But even if companies invest less in employees; losing one can be very expensive, which makes job-hopping a big bone of contention for many companies (Johari et al., 2012). On the other hand, hiring a job-hopper can provide companies with experienced and valuable employees.

The second proposition of this research; *Job-hopping has positive and negative implications for an employee, however, the positive implications outweigh the negative implications for the employee*, is formulated from the employees’ point of view. From this

individual perspective, job-hopping appears to be the quickest way to promotions (including financial gains).

### **Generational job-hopping**

With employees in the driver seats of their careers, the career decisions making process has changed distinctively. Job-hopping is a possible result of this change in career paths. According to Saleem et al., (2016) and Topel and Ward (1992), job-hopping is something that occurs more in the younger worker demographic. This idea, combined with the negative traits associated with generation Y employees; being entitled disloyal and needy (Thompson & Gregory, 2012), and the want for immediate gratification (Southard & Lewis, 2004), makes generation Y employees the perfect candidates for job-hopping. The dataset created for this research, enabled us to investigate the career paths of Human Resource alumni in the first 5 years after graduation and to focus on the differences between generations.

The results showed that Y job-hoppers hopped an average of 3.69 times in the first 5 years of their careers compared to an average of 1.90 hops for the non-generation Y employees. Additionally it showed that non-job-hoppers of generation Y have an average of 1.76 hops in the first five years of their careers, whereas non-job-hoppers of other generations had an average of 0.83 hops in the first five years of their careers. This provides evidence for proposition 3: *job-hopping occurs more in generation Y than in previous generations*. These results did not only show that generation Y job-hop more than older generations, it also shows the difference between job-hoppers and non-job-hoppers, which was in line with the perception of the interviewees. Recruiters, job-hoppers and non-job-hoppers all mentioned that job-hopping seems to be something of the current time and classified job-hopping as a trend. However, the interpretation of these results is quite difficult because:

- a) There is evidence that organizations have also changed their policies: they do offer less long term contracts and longer sequences of short term contracts, which signals to employees that they might be forced to look for alternative employment options.
- b) It's also possible that the characteristics of generation Y are shared by a much larger proportion of the working population: e.g. also older employees care for sustainability more balance, quick career gains. Moreover, group averages do not surrogate individual data (Rauvola et al., 2018). This research tried to overcome this problem by using a mixed methods approach which takes group averages, but also individual data into account.



## **Job-hopping and the environmental fit.**

The stronger someone's environmental fit the less chance of turnover (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). The opposite is also true, the less environmental fit, the more chances of discontent with the job, turnover intentions and voluntary mobility (Gesthuizen, 2009). This indicates that job-hoppers, who have a frequent account of voluntary mobility, could be hopping due to a bad environmental fit. Moreover, job-hopping could be a way to create and find a better fit. However, it could also simply be a way to create quicker promotions by managing careers more hands on. Unfortunately, no conclusive results arose from the interviews. There were multiple non-job-hoppers who stated that they remained at their jobs because of a strong fit with their current employer as well as their job. Which seems to confirm that the better the fit, the less likely people are to turnover. However, the opposite did not come forward during the interviews; job-hoppers did not (explicitly) indicate that they left due to a bad fit.

Multiple interviewees, among which recruiters, did mention that they believe this fit to be crucial. Moreover, in general all interviewees seemed to agree with the idea that job-hopping can be decreased or increased based on a good environmental fit. There are, however, numerous aspects to take into account when making a career decision – making the process more complex than the proposition implies.

Job-hoppers gave reasons as, not enough career opportunities, gaining different experiences, better pay, for hopping jobs, which (partially) could be linked to environmental fits, when viewing the description of Kristof, (1996) of the environmental fit. However, this is not enough evidence to conclude that proposition 4a, '*a good person-job fit or person organization fit will reduce job-hopping behavior*', is true. Whilst it is reasonable to expect that such aspects support this proposition, it cannot be concluded based on the interviews that a good environmental fit will actually reduce job-hopping.

Unequivocally, as a result from the interview process and the dataset, employees hop more in the beginning of their careers (table 3). This was evident for job-hoppers and non-job-hoppers. Job-hoppers did indeed hop more than non-job-hoppers in the later stages of their careers, but both categories hopped less in the later stages of their careers, than in the beginning of it. From the interviews it became apparent that this could be due to greater certainty in one's goals, which was stated by many interviewees of all different categories. One of the recruiters added to this by explaining that switching jobs in the beginning of one's career is more acceptable than in the later stages of your career. If this is a general perception, than employees might feel less inhibited in the beginning of their careers to make switches,

than later on in their careers. However, another recruiter confirmed the fact that people might job-hop more in the beginning of their careers, because people who are just starting their career do not know what they want from a job or organization yet, which is in line with not knowing exactly what your needs for a fit are. So for this proposition it seems that it is not as black and white as the proposition 4b states; *People job-hop more in the beginning of their career, for at this stage of their career they are still discovering their needs for a fit.* Nonetheless, it does seem that not knowing what you want, and what you value is an important reason for more job-switches in the beginning of one's career.

### **Main research question**

When taking all of the above into account, it is possible to address the main research question of this paper; *Does job-hopping benefit or detriment careers?* To answer this correctly it might be needed to re-examine the literature. The current body of knowledge demonstrates two ways to view career success; subjectively and objectively. The former (subjectively), which is based on one's personal views on their career success, and the latter (objectively), which is based on tangible data, such as income, career progress, position and status (Gattiker & Larwood, 1988). However, it is challenging to accurately measure career success in this world of boundaryless careers (Gattiker & Larwood, 1988), for the parameters of objective measurements are evolving rapidly, making them more subjective in nature. This means that the objective measurements, such as salary or status are becoming less important and subjective measurements such as job satisfaction and well-being are becoming more important.

As became clear from the results, job-hopping is a phenomenon with many aspects and is perceived mostly as a negative behavior by employers, non-job-hoppers and even job-hoppers themselves. However, this negative perception of job-hopping seems to have little consequences. Not many of the job-hoppers encountered difficulties finding a new job, nor did they have to defend their career path more than a non-job-hopper during the job-interview process. So, even though job-hopping may create a more negative image, it does not appear to have detrimental consequences for a job-hopper's career. Job-hopping did however deliver numerous beneficial outcomes, such as career advancements, increases in pay and extension of ones experiences. As the answers given during the interview are based on self-report, both the subjective as objective criteria for career success seem to be satisfied. In conclusion, from the employees' perspective, job hopping provides compelling benefits, despite the existence

of negative connotations and potential detriments, making job-hopping beneficial rather than detrimental for careers.

### **Limitations/Suggestions for future research**

As with all research, this thesis should be read in the light of its limitations. The first limitation is briefly considered in the discussion about the generational job-hopping. It is difficult to draw conclusions on generational aspects based on one session of interviews. Even within one generation, differences in behavior can be present. As Twenge & Campbell (2008) explained, the culture in which generation Y employees grew up, plays a major role in influencing their behavior. This culture can be different for younger generation Y employees than for older ones. Rauvola et al., (2018) suggest that these issues can be overcome when using 'Lifespan theory' instead of generational differences. Lifespan theory suggests that the interaction between 'age-related (biological maturation, workforce entrance etc.)', 'history-related (rise of the internet, natural disasters etc.)' and 'non-normative influences (illness or job-loss)' influences employees. Whereas generalized thinking only takes history related influences into account, and infers that this impacts people even before identity formation whilst growing up (Rauvola et al., 2018). However, employees are not solely influenced by history-related context, nor are their values, attitudes and behaviors static after a certain age. This research already tried to take the lifespan approach into account, as the lifespan approach offers a more nuanced approach to comprehend the context to why people adopt certain work related attitudes, values and behaviors, such as job-hopping. Conducting interviews in addition to doing statistical analyses enables to examine the how and why regarding the adoption of certain behaviors. However, in the dataset this context is lacking. To make better informed statements about generational differences it is therefore important to take more context into account. Therefore, in line with the lifespan theory that recognises a 'dynamic, differentiated and contextualized view of how employees change over time (Rauvola et al., 2018), to get a more accurate view into generational job-hopping and its context, it is therefore better to repeat the data analysis with an updated dataset more often, as well as repeating the interviews. This could also be an interesting way for future research to explore whether previous job-hopping might predict future job-hopping. There already is some theoretical evidence that states that research based on event history analysis showed that the amount of voluntary job switches and turnover intentions could predict future turnover behavior (Khatri, et al, 1999; Chew, 1993; Saleem et al., 2016).. Which may show that there is some form of underlying psychological mechanism connected to the job switching. For

further research it therefore would be interesting to keep updating this dataset and to see whether, for example people classified as job-hoppers, still hop as much, or at least more than non-job-hoppers in 10 years. It would also make certain career patterns more clear.

Conducting interviews with the same people would bring an even more in depth look into the careers of job-hoppers and non-job-hoppers, which can also make it easier to control for environmental factors such as the economy.

Which brings me to the second limitation of this research. As already discussed in the research design, an important, often overlooked, contextual influence of turnover is the external labor market (Cappelli & Sherer, 1991). In particular, Cappelli and Sherer (1991) mention that the availability of jobs may influence the turnover behavior. For instance, in a labor market that is characterized by copious employment alternatives, employees are less restricted to act in line with their attitudes regarding their current jobs (Cappelli & Sherer, 1991). This research tried to overcome this issue by comparing unemployment rates in different generations, to establish whether a correction is needed. However the averages were found to be essentially the same, consequently no correction was needed. This research also tried to reduce this issues by conducting interviews and exploring this subject with the interviewees. However, the unemployment rates used for comparison were nationwide (a macro view) and not industry specific (a micro view). To get a more precise view into the career paths and behavior of human resource alumni it could be better to look at unemployment in a more micro way.

Additionally, this study was exploratory and (partly) qualitative in nature, therefore the size of the sample of interviewees is rather small. 26 HRS alumni of the Tilburg University were interviewed, which makes it not only a small sample, but also a very specific sample of highly educated professionals. It therefore could be interesting to duplicate this research in another sector/with participants of a different education level to see for instance whether in different professions or other sectors there can be found a so-called itch as a reason for job-hopping. Furthermore it could be duplicated in a different country or even continent to see whether the findings of this study are applicable to other Western and non-Western countries, because one of the aspects that could play a role in job-hopping behavior is a so called turnover culture as explained in the theoretical framework (Iverson & Deery, 1997). Turnover culture is a part of the social context, which is the second key dimension of discrete contextual influence (Johns, 2006) and therefore important to consider, when researching a behavior, such as job-hopping.

A final limitation of this research links back to the used dataset, for it was based on the

information taken from LinkedIn. That means that the statistical analyses are done based on self-report information. It is not possible to check whether mistakes were made when filling in the information on their LinkedIn pages, nor whether the information was deliberately altered, to appear better than reality. As part of the interview process, hard copies of their LinkedIn profiles were presented to the interviewees, who were asked to confirm the information. With almost all interviewees the information was accurate, but there were small side notes ('this was more of a student job', 'it states a year, but I have only worked there for 4 months') to some of the information retrieved from their profiles. This might indicate that more of these side notes exist on the information used for the dataset. Additionally, self-report is the method used when conducting the interviews. Especially with regards to the first proposition; job-hopping is rational behavior, it is important to take into account that people might have a tendency to, especially in hindsight, rationalize their behaviors. This is something that cannot be controlled for in this research.

A final suggestion for future research is looking at the link between job-hopping and self-employment. This went beyond the scope of this research, but multiple interviewees mentioned that careers are becoming more fluid and even believe that in the future there will be no such thing as jobs the way we know them today. "We all will become 'some sort of entrepreneurs'". And job-hoppers might be developing into this idea quicker than non-job-hoppers. This is in line with what Åstebro and Thompson (2011) stated about job-hopping increasing the chances of entering into self-employment. For having experience in many different roles, is one of the most important determinants of becoming an entrepreneur Åstebro and Thompson (2011). This study could be repeated in multiple years to see whether indeed more of the job-hoppers have become entrepreneurs than the non-job-hoppers.

## **Implications**

This research has contributed, theoretically, to the existing body of knowledge of job-hopping. More specifically this research looked at the context of job-hopping and the reasoning behind job-hopping behavior by conducting in depth interviews, something that has not been done often before. It also showed a more positive outlook on job-hopping, in comparison to the existing literature, which in general exhibits more negative connotations whilst describing job-hopping. Furthermore a big dataset was created which can be used for future research that goes further than the scope of this thesis.

Practically this research has contributed to open discussion on many different subjects. Firstly, this research made it clear to be aware of stereotypes. It showed that job-hopping

behavior should always be seen in context and probing during, for instance, job-interviews can give very different perceptions of an employee. It is therefore important that companies take this context into account, for example, by not filtering out employees purely on the basis of a candidate's career path, during the selection process.

Secondly if the link between job-hopping and fit is indeed existent, organizations may want to concretize the possibilities for a fit as soon as possible (perhaps already during recruitment). This way the company will not invest unnecessary in an employee that might leave earlier than wanted, due to a bad fit. Aligning the organizations wants, needs and values, with those of the employee, should be done as early as possible. This is in line with the third practical implication of this research. As became clear from the interviews, employees seem to switch because of, among other things, new possible challenges and career development opportunities. For an organization it is therefore important to discuss options for growth and development within the company at an early stage of employment. This way, the employee is aware of the options and does not have to seek these elsewhere.

Finally a broader discussion on company-specific knowledge/capital could be elicited due to this research. As employees can switch more easily, and increasingly do so, the importance of company-specific knowledge seems to decrease. This is something to take into account as employee, but also as employer. For, is it still profitable for companies to invest in general knowledge, which can be used in, and transferred to, the next company? Or should organizations invest more in company specific knowledge to make the attachment of the employee to their company greater, but in that maybe less interesting for the employee. An interesting discussion that should be held, not only by organizations, but also in the academic world, eliciting further research on this topic.

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## Appendix A: Table 6, overview of the interviewees

Table 1: *Overview of interviewees*

<i>Category</i>	<i>Graduation year</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Current Sector</i>	<i>Double roles</i>	<i>Respondent nr.</i>
Job-hopper 1	2005	Female	Non-profit	-	1
Job-hopper 2	2011	Male	Profit	Recruiter	2
Job-hopper 3	2012	Female	Non-profit	-	3
Job-hopper 4	1996	Female	Non-profit	-	4
Job-hopper 5	2011	Female	Profit	-	5
Job-hopper 6	2010	Female	Profit	Recruiter	6
Non-Job-Hopper 1	2005	Female	Non-Profit	-	7
Non-Job-Hopper 2	2002	Female	Non-Profit	-	8
Non-Job-Hopper 3	2002	Female	Non-Profit	-	9
Non-Job-Hopper 4	2004	Female	Non-Profit	-	10
Non-Job-Hopper 5	2010	Female	Profit	-	11
Non-Job-Hopper 6	2006	Female	Profit	-	12
Non-Job-Hopper 7	2004	Female	Profit	Recruiter	13
Non-Job-Hopper 8	2012	Male	Profit	Recruiter	14
Non-Job-Hopper 9	2004	Male	Profit	-	15
Non-Job-Hopper 10	2008	Female	Profit	Recruiter	16
Non-Job-Hopper 11	2012	Male	Profit	Recruiter	17
Non-Job-Hopper 12	2004	Female	Non-Profit	Recruiter	18
Recruiter 1	2001	Male	Profit	Job-hopper	2
Recruiter 2	2004	Female	Profit	Non-classifying job-hopper	19
Recruiter 3	2010	Female	Profit	Job-hopper	6
Recruiter 4	2004	Female	Profit	Non-job-hopper	13
Recruiter 5	2012	Male	Profit	Non-job-hopper	14
Recruiter 6	2008	Female	Profit	Non-job-hopper	16
Recruiter 7	2012	Male	Profit	Non-job-hopper	17
Recruiter 8	2004	Female	Non-Profit	Non-job-hopper	18
A.I'er/Consultant 1	2012	Female	Profit	-	20
A.I'er/Consultant 2	2011	Female	Non-Profit	-	21
A.I'er/Consultant 3	2007	Female	Non-Profit	-	22
A.I'er/Consultant 4	2007	Male	Non-Profit	-	23
Non-classifying job-hopper 1	2012	Female	Non-Profit	-	24
Non-classifying job-hopper 2	2005	Female	Profit	-	25
Non-classifying job-hopper 3	2004	Female	Profit	-	19
Non-classifying job-hopper 4	2003	Female	Profit	-	26

\* *A.I'er* = Someone who works as an ad interim.

\* A non classifying job-hopper, is an employee who was categorized as a job-hopper, based on their LinkedIn

*profile and therefore was asked the job-hopper questions during the interview. However, based on the information gathered during the interview, this person cannot longer be categorized as a job-hopper based on the job-hopper definition in this research.*

## Appendix B: Interviewee job-hopper descriptions

Table 7: Overview of interviewees

<i>R nr.</i>	<i>Definition</i>
1	Switchen als een kip zonder kop.
2	Iemand die gemakkelijk en vaak van baan en bedrijf wisselt.
3	Stelselmatig na maximaal 2 jaar van baan en bedrijf wisselen, met als reden ‘niet wat ik wilde’.
4	Geen duidelijke definitie vermeld.
5	In een korte tijd veel verschillende werkgevers hebben gehad/ Max. 2 jaar ergens blijven.
6	Iemand die het niet lang volhoudt en elke zoveel maanden/ elk jaar een andere baan heeft.
7	Iemand met meerdere banen in een kortere periode.
8	Vaak van organisatie veranderen.
9	Telkens denken dat het gras elders groener is.
10	Van de ene baan naar de andere hoppen ( binnen 6 maanden/ jaar), zonder ergens te aarden.
11	Snel wisselen van organisaties.
12	Om de zoveel jaar switchen van baan en bedrijf.
13	Vaak van baan wisselen door niet weten wat iemand leuk vindt.
14	Geeft geen duidelijke definitie, maar geeft wel aan dat het om verschillende bedrijven gaat.
15	Snel van de ene baan naar de andere baan gaan voor het snelle gewin, zonder te kijken naar inhoud van de baan of je lange termijn resultaat.
16	Binnen een jaar switchen van baan (en organisatie, maar niet persé) met bijv. als reden meer salaris.
17	Snel van baan wisselen, zonder de baan echt een kans te geven of om puur financiële motieven.
18	Binnen een beperkte duur naar een andere werkgever gaan.
19	Elk jaar van baan veranderen (fenomeen van deze tijd).
20	Geen definitie vermeld.
21	Kritisch kijken naar hoe vind ik het juiste werk in mijn ontwikkeling. Werkgever is niet leidend, maar het werk dat je wilt doen. Én, mensen die eerst eigenlijk aan zichzelf moeten werken, maar in plaats daarvan van werkgever wisselen.
22	Elk jaar van baan wisselen.
23	In een korte tijd veel verschillende functies doen ( niet als interim’er), niet binnen, maar tussen organisaties.

## **Appendix C: Example of interview**

### **1. Structure for the interviews job-hoppers**

#### **A) Start with discussing various switches**

- discuss reasons and context
- What do you search for in a company/job (core values)?
  - Did you gain more of that because of the job switching?

#### **B) For each switch. Job promotion:**

- Link new job with the old job
- New aspect of the job: required expertise/skills/responsibility/span of control/development options
- Career advancements (promotion, salary, own perception etc.)
- Negative aspects of job switch
- Plannend/ unplanned
- Good fit with the previous employer/job?
- Better fit with your current employer/job?
- Did the state of the labor market have an influence on your decision?

#### **C) Overall questions:**

- In hindsight, has there been clear career path?
- Were you aware of this path (plannend/unplannend)
- When you entered the labor market did you have a clear idea of what you wanted from a job/company?

#### **D) Focus on job-hopping:**

- Would you describe yourself as a job-hopper
- Positive/negative effects of job-hopping?
- Questions about job history during an job interview regarding the switches?
- If you find what you consider to be a better job, what can your old employer do to keep you?
- If you were satisfied with your job, would you stay at the same pace for 10 years?
- Would you say switching jobs was a rational decision? (at the very end?)



## 2. Structure for the interviews non-job-hoppers

### A) Start with discussing current job

- How long have you been working for the same company?
- After how long/ how often did you receive career advancement (promotions, salary, own perception)?
- What do you search for in a company/job (core values)?
  - Do you feel like you have this in your job?
- Aspect of the job: required expertise/skills/responsibility/span of control/development options
- Good fit with your current employer/job?

### B) Switching /Job promotion:

- If you could find a better job somewhere else right now, would you leave?
  - Negative/positive aspects of job switch
  - what can employer do to keep you?
- Moved to another company, after 6 months an amazing offer different company, do you take it?
  - Negative/positive aspects
- Did the state of the labor market have an influence on your decision?

### C) Overall questions:

- In hindsight, has there been clear career path?
- Were you aware of this path (planned/unplanned)
- When you entered the labor market did you have a clear idea of what you wanted from a job/company?

### D) Focus on job-hopping:

- How would you describe job-hopping
- Positive/negative effects
- satisfied with your job, would you stay at the same place for 10 years?
- Staying at the same job was a rational decision? (at the very end?)

### 3. Structure for the interviews recruiters

- Have you heard of the phenomenon job-hopping? (if not explain)
- How would you define job-hopping
- What is your personal opinion about job-hopping?
- How would you say recruiters look at job-hopping in general?
  - What are the positive things?
  - What are the negative things?

## Appendix D: Unemployment rates from 1989 - 2017

Generation Y		Other Generation	
<i>Year</i>	<i>Unemployment %</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Unemployment %</i>
2003	4.80%	1989	6.70%
2004	5.70%	1990	6.10%
2005	5.90%	1991	5.80%
2006	5.00%	1992	5.80%
2007	4.20%	1993	6.50%
2008	3.70%	1994	7.30%
2009	4.40%	1995	7.00%
2010	5.00%	1996	6.50%
2011	5.00%	1997	5.90%
2012	5.80%	1998	4.70%
2013	7.30%	1999	4.10%
2014	7.40%	2000	3.60%
2015	6.90%	2001	3.30%
2016	6.00%	2002	3.90%
2017	4.90%		

Source: Verzamelde bijlagen CEP 2018 met lange tijdreeksen - Cpb

The differentiation between being classified as generation Y or older generations is based on graduation dates, for the moment of labor market entrance is more relevant than date of birth for this research. Additionally, due to incomplete data regarding dates of birth it would not be feasible to differentiate based on this criterion.