

2011

# A Study of Ghiselli's Hobo Syndrome

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## Recommended Citation

Woo, Sang Eun, "A Study of Ghiselli's Hobo Syndrome" (2011). *Department of Psychological Sciences Faculty Publications*. Paper 49.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2011.02.003>

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Running head: HOBO SYNDROME

**A study of Ghiselli's hobo syndrome**

*Keywords:* hobo syndrome, person-centered, latent class analysis, turnover

### **Abstract**

This study attempts to clarify conceptual and operational inconsistencies in the literature around “Ghiselli’s hobo syndrome.” I propose that defining characteristics of hobo syndrome should include both the exhibition of frequent job movement behavior and positive attitudes about such behavior. This definition effectively differentiates the construct from other similar phenomena associated with frequent job movement (e.g., job/career mobility, protean careers). Using latent class cluster analysis of a diverse sample of 944 U.S. workers, it was empirically validated that a small number of individuals resembling the proposed characteristics of hobos did emerge as a distinct group ( $N = 42$ ), providing person-centered evidence for the construct validity of hobo syndrome. The dispositional roots of hobo syndrome and work-related outcomes were also explored. It was found that individuals with high levels of openness to experience were likely to exhibit hobo syndrome, whereas impulsivity was not related to such tendency. Also, workers who were more likely to be categorized as hobos tended to report less positive views about their current jobs. Based on these findings, implications for research and practice are discussed.

“[...] let me cite a property which might be called the hobo syndrome. This syndrome can be defined as the periodic itch to move from a job in one place to some other job in some other place. [...] This urge to move seems not to result from organized or logical thought, but rather would appear more akin to raw, surging, internal impulses, perhaps not unlike those that cause birds to migrate. Floaters readily provide socially acceptable explanations for their peripatetic activity, but under careful examination these explanations turn out to be little more than rationalizations. The simple fact is that after being in one place for a matter of months, or perhaps a year or so, depending on the strength and periodicity of his itch, the individual is impelled to pack up and move to another place and another job” (Ghiselli, 1974, p. 81).

Ghiselli’s hobo syndrome stemmed from his observation that some people voluntarily left their jobs even during times of high unemployment such as the Great Depression of the 1930’s. Such observation seems to apply even to today’s economic situation with increasing rates of layoffs and other forms of involuntary turnover. According to the most recent statistics reported by U.S. Department of Labor, as many individuals as nearly 2 million have voluntarily separated from their jobs in the month of October 2010, which makes up 49 % of total separations during that period (Bureau of Labor Statistics – U.S. Department of Labor, December 2010). This phenomenon calls for research on individual characteristics underlying frequent job/career movement behavior – *individual* factors that contribute to the explanation and prediction of voluntary turnover *independent of situational and organizational factors*.

Discussions of “hobo syndrome” have often appeared in past studies with a specific interest in individual factors predicting turnover outcomes. Some studies sought to predict future turnover from the number of jobs quit in the past (Judge & Watanabe, 1995; Munasinghe & Sigman, 2004); others focused on personality characteristics associated with frequent job quitting behavior by examining how personality may influence the strength of the turnover intentions-turnover link (Allen et al, 2005) and predict turnover directly or indirectly through job

satisfaction (Boudreau, Boswell, Judge, & Bretz, 2001; Zimmerman, 2008). Evidently, hobo syndrome is likely to be a common thread that goes through studies of individual characteristics predicting voluntary turnover above and beyond the influences of situational factors.

Several researchers have used the term hobo syndrome to acknowledge the presence of individual differences in “tendency to job hop or switching” (e.g., Boswell, Boudreau, & Tichy, 2005; Dickter, Roznowski, & Harrison, 1996). Despite its frequent appearances in the literature, however, there is little clarity regarding what exactly constitutes the hobo syndrome, how it is manifested in workers’ behavior and attitudes, whether there exists a subpopulation of workers called “hobos” with a distinct pattern of turnover-related characteristics, and how it is related to dispositional characteristics and current experience at work. Essentially, little effort has been made so far to delineate the construct of hobo syndrome. Without a clear, agreed-upon definition and construct validation, furthering our understanding of related characteristics and consequences of this syndrome is likely to be hampered. In view of this, the current study aims to improve our understanding of the hobo syndrome construct by proposing a new way of conceptualizing and validating its definition.

Research efforts described in the present article can be summarized as three phases: The first phase describes a theoretical delineation of how hobo syndrome is conceptually defined and manifested in observable behavior, based on a critical review of previous literature on hobo syndrome and related phenomena. In the second phase, I introduce some preliminary data supporting the existence of “hobos” as defined in the current study, based on a sample of 944 U.S. workers in various occupations. In the third phase, I explore how the individuals with hobo syndrome may differ from other workers with regard to their personality and current work attitudes.

### Phase 1: Conceptualizing of Hobo Syndrome

Who are the hobos? What is the underlying cause of their hobo-ness? According to Ghiselli's original description, hobo syndrome reflects individuals' tendency to move from one place to another. Therefore, researchers have assumed that the defining feature of hobo syndrome is the recurrence of quitting behavior itself (Judge & Watanabe, 1995). Based on this notion, past research sought to establish the validity of hobo syndrome by predicting one's future quitting behavior from the individual's past quitting history. Consistent with a well-known truism "past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior" (Owens & Schoenfeldt, 1979), it is reasonable to expect that a person who habitually quits his/her job is likely to quit his/her current job as well. This was confirmed by Judge and Watanabe's (1995) event history analysis, showing that past voluntary turnover behaviors significantly predicted future turnover behavior; whether an individual would quit the current job was related to the number of times the person had left his or her job in the past. Their finding has been repeatedly cited as *the* supporting evidence for "hobo syndrome".

However, I suggest that a predictive relationship between past mobility and future job quitting behavior should not be taken as direct evidence for the construct validity of hobo syndrome. Predicting future behavior from the past is useful, but it tells little about the construct of hobo syndrome other than the persistence of the behavior itself. It is akin to persistence predictions in weather: predicting tomorrow's weather from today's weather. It is accurate but fails to address reasons why certain individuals behave in a specific way. What drives a person to quit jobs so frequently? Further, drawing a conclusion that hobo syndrome predicts future voluntary turnover from Judge and Watanabe's finding is also misleading; predicting future turnover from past mobility is not equivalent to predicting turnover from hobo syndrome *per se*.

Consider Munasinghe and Sigman's (2004) analysis of National Longitudinal Surveys of Youth (NLSY) data, which showed that individuals' future mobility (i.e., turnover rate) was predicted by past mobility even after correcting for the individual fixed effect, which accounts for enduring, time-invariant characteristics of individuals. If the effects of hobo syndrome were to be equated with those of past mobility, the prediction from past mobility to future turnover would be nullified after taking into account the individual fixed effect. Instead, their analysis demonstrated that there was more to be explained about the unique prediction from past mobility to future mobility beyond the time-invariant heterogeneity among individuals. Therefore, their finding suggests that despite the overlaps, past job mobility and hobo syndrome are two distinct phenomena with unique predictive roles on people's career outcomes such as future mobility.

Further, treating the number of jobs quit as a sufficient indicator of hobo syndrome is problematic. While frequent quitting or job movement is a manifestation of hobo syndrome, it does not capture any underlying psychological characteristics that distinguish "hobos" from other types of frequent quitters. Besides hobo syndrome, there are several other concepts that are related to frequent job movement, including job/career mobility (Feldman & Ng, 2007), protean careers (Hall, 2004), and boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). Drawing more attention to individual characteristics, others have introduced such constructs as career competencies or movement capital, which essentially reflect individuals' capability and/or motivation to obtain alternative job offers and improve one's career (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Forrier, Sels, & Stynen, 2009). The distinction between hobo syndrome and these concepts comes from the consideration of underlying psychological mechanisms such as cognition and affect associated with job movement. Although hobos often justify their decisions to quit with acceptable reasons (e.g., dissatisfaction with pay, family,

career success, etc.), ultimately it boils down to the person's wanderlust or propensity toward movement itself (Ghiselli, 1974; Munasinghe & Sigman, 2004). Hobos quit not necessarily because they are pursuing a successful career path, but ultimately because they simply enjoy the act of leaving for finding out what is over the next hill.

Similarly, personality traits (e.g., extraversion, neuroticism, negative and positive affectivity) that are known to be linked systematically to turnover and/or its precursors are only to be considered as covariates, not as defining elements of the hobo syndrome (e.g., Zimmerman, 2008). Quite notably, some personality traits such as openness to experience and impulsivity are more proximal to the nature of hobo syndrome and may be used as a dispositional explanation of the hobo syndrome (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004), as described in the third phase of this paper. However, they tend to cover much broader range of life domains and situational contexts, thus not to be treated as core features of hobo syndrome itself.

Therefore, I propose that we move away from the measurement of hobo syndrome with a single behavioral indicator (i.e., frequent job movement). Rather, both the frequent job quitting behavior and the positive attitudes toward quitting should be considered as two *necessary* and perhaps *sufficient* components of hobo syndrome. Accordingly, the defining features of hobos should necessarily include having positive attitudes (e.g., beliefs and feelings) about frequent job movement and negative about staying in one place for too long. Taken together, hobo syndrome is a description of people who *frequently quit their jobs for the sake of quitting itself*.

### **Phase 2: Identifying Hobos**

Building on the theoretical development of hobo syndrome, in the second phase I empirically examine its construct validity by testing whether or not hobos do exist in reality. Hobo syndrome can be validated from either a variable-centered or a person-centered perspective.



From a variable-centered perspective, researchers may pose a hobo syndrome as a latent variable, accounting for the interrelated patterns of individual differences in behaviors and attitudes regarding frequent job movement. In this view, the construct validity of hobo syndrome would be supported if hypothesized behaviors and attitudinal variables (i.e., frequent quitting behavior accompanied with positive attitudes toward quitting) converge to a higher-order dimension that could be instantiated in the form of exploratory or confirmatory factor analysis. Alternatively, a person-centered approach would examine the existence of individuals who emerge as prototypical hobos, individuals who repeatedly exhibit job quitting behavior over the course of their career and maintain positive attitudes toward such frequent movement. Analogous to the factor analysis of variables, clustering of individuals would be used for such analyses. If individuals with defining features of hobo syndrome in fact emerge as a unique, subpopulation of workers, it would serve as direct support for hobo syndrome.

Variable and person-centered perspectives are complementary to each other in understanding the phenomenon of hobos. The former focuses on the commonality of the syndrome, assuming that everyone bears a varying degree of tendency to be a “hobo”; the latter emphasizes the uniqueness of individuals who exhibit prototypical characteristics of hobos. While it is important to recognize the continuous, universal nature of hobo syndrome, identifying the presence of hobos as a unique subpopulation also offers useful insights, and perhaps more compelling evidence for their existence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century world of organizational employment.

The present study integrates variable- and person-centered approaches by implementing the framework of latent class (LC) cluster analysis. LC techniques used in the present study allow researchers to identify specific groups of individuals that show distinct patterns of behavioral responses and group them together as latent classes. At the same time, it also allows

one to preserve intragroup variability by producing posterior probability distributions of responses per each latent class. In other words, it takes into account uncertainties about an object's class membership by yielding an individual's posterior class-membership probabilities<sup>1</sup>.

Thus, in the context of current study, it is possible to capture varying degrees of hoboness while identifying a specific latent class of "hobos" along with other types of workers. This also enables us to examine how each person's hobo syndrome tendency (or more precisely, probability of being categorized as a prototypical hobo) is related to their individual characteristics that are commonly used in the organizational sciences and practices (see Phase 3). Before doing so, however, it is necessary to identify hobos in a general population of workers in the first place. Therefore, in Phase 2, I hypothesized and tested the following:

*Hypothesis 1:* A profile of hobos will emerge as a distinct latent class in the population of working adults in the U.S.

## **Method**

**Participants and procedure.** Data were collected from 944 working adults residing in the U.S. who volunteered to participate in an anonymous on-line survey in exchange for a monetary incentive. Participants were contacted through a professional, online participant recruiting service. The survey included questions about demographic information, academic and professional background (e.g., the highest educational degree obtained and employment history), and whether and how many times they have voluntarily changed jobs. Among 944 participants, 741 of them (78.5%) reported that they have left their jobs voluntarily at least once in the past;

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<sup>1</sup> This is different from other fuzzy clustering techniques (Kaufman & Rousseeuw, 1990), where the degrees of membership are treated as parameters to be estimated. Instead, LC cluster analysis computes posterior probabilities of class membership from both estimated model parameters and each individual's observed scores, which allows one to examine the cluster-membership probability for everyone in the population with regard to every identified latent class.

one hundred and five individuals (11.1%) said that they have voluntarily left their jobs more than five times.

Average age of the participants was 40.3 (SD=10.4). Four hundred and ninety were female (51.9%). Four hundred and forty two (46.8%) said they were the sole wage-earner in the family. Participants were from a very diverse pool of industries, ranging from architecture and engineering to office and administrative support. The majority (90.7%) had at least some college education, with 68.7 % of them having a bachelor's degree. Twenty five percent had post-college education experience, including master's and doctoral degrees.

**Indicators of hobo syndrome.** Participants' responses to the following four questions were used to identify hobos (and other types of workers) in the sample: (1) "how many times have you quit a job voluntarily (recorded as a covariate)?"; (2) "I believe that quitting is bad and that persistence is a virtue (reverse-coded)"; (3) "I feel positive about changing jobs regularly"; and (4) "I believe that staying at one place too long leads to stagnation". The last three questions were borrowed directly from Maertz and Campion's (2004) scale, which was originally designed to capture people's internalized values about quitting. Responses to these questions were recorded on a 5-point scale (1= Strongly Disagree, 5= Strongly Agree) and entered as ordinal indicators.

**Analytic strategy.** Latent class (LC) cluster analysis, using the Latent GOLD 4.5 software (Vermunt & Magidson, 2000), was conducted to classify individuals into subgroups (i.e., latent classes) that share similar patterns of responses to the four aforementioned indicators of hobo syndrome. After identifying latent classes that exist in the data, individuals were assigned to a specific class based on their modal membership probability.

Unlike other standard clustering techniques such as hierarchical cluster analysis or K-means cluster analysis, LC cluster analysis is a model-based clustering approach. It assumes that the observed responses on items reflect underlying probability distributions of latent classes. By maximizing a log-likelihood function (when maximum-likelihood method is used for parameter estimation), LC cluster analysis determines the number of latent classes where within-cluster variation is minimized and between-cluster variation is maximized. While the use of log-likelihood criteria is similar to what is done in nonhierarchical cluster techniques such as K-means cluster analysis, the choice of clustering criteria involves less subjectivity in the statistical modeling approach like LC cluster analysis (Vermunt & Magidson, 2002). Among the different information criteria, Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) is the most commonly used for LC cluster analysis model selection (Biernacki & Govaert, 1999; Vermunt & Magidson, 2002). A lower BIC values indicates a better solution, taking into account sample size and model complexity. In addition, other criteria such as entropy, classification error, bootstrap chi-square difference test between  $k$  and  $k-1$  cluster solutions, and the interpretability of classes were also used to triangulate the best solution that has both empirical and theoretical defensibility (Nylund, Asparouhov, & Muthén, 2007).

## Results

Table 1 provides the result of LC cluster model evaluations compared from 1-cluster to 10-cluster solutions. As indicated by the lowest BIC values along with other evaluation criteria mentioned above, the 6-cluster model had the best fit to the data. Table 2 provides means and standard deviations of the four indicators of hobo syndrome (i.e., the number of jobs quit and three variables reflecting attitudes toward quitting) for each latent class derived from the 6-cluster solution (See Figure 1 for a graphic illustration of the mean responses). A closer

examination of each latent class profile of indicators revealed that Cluster 6 (N = 42) reflects the prototype of “hobos” as defined in Phase 1. Individuals categorized into this cluster showed the highest number of jobs voluntarily quit in the past (Mean = 5.05; SD = 5.18) and the most positive attitudes toward quitting. Therefore, the existence of a hobo profile as conceptualized in Phase 1 was confirmed in these data<sup>2</sup>.

### **Phase 3: Linking Hobo Syndrome with Personality and Work Attitudes**

So far, two points have been made in this article. First, hobos are frequent job movers who enjoy the act of changing/quitting jobs. Second, data suggest that the existence of hobos in the population of U.S. workers may be real. In the last phase of the present study, I broaden our understanding of hobos by exploring the nomological connections of hobo syndrome with personality traits and work-related outcomes.

Understanding the personality of hobos can lead us to identify the dispositional origins of the syndrome. There may be a profile of personality characteristics that are meaningfully associated with the nomadic desires and behaviors. In particular, the current study focuses on two personality constructs that are closest to the underlying nature of hobo syndrome: openness to experience and impulsivity. Individuals who are open to new experiences would have high levels of intellectual and experiential curiosity, seeking opportunities to learn and experience different things in life (John & Srivastava, 1999). Therefore, they are more likely to endorse the idea that frequent job changing is good, and exhibit behaviors that are in line with such beliefs. While this conceptual link between openness and hobo syndrome has been mentioned in some studies in the past (e.g., Maertz & Griffeth, 2004; Zimmerman, 2008), no empirical studies to

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<sup>2</sup> Although other clusters also provide rich information and useful insights for other considerations of turnover-related phenomena in the workplace, further discussions of those clusters will take away the main focus of the current article, and thus are not presented in this article. Interested readers may contact the author for a fuller discussion of the findings.

date have directly examined this relationship. On the other hand, hobo syndrome may be also connected to low levels of self-control (or conversely, high levels of impulsivity), as quitting one's job for its own sake has been traditionally viewed as "acting out of impulse" (Ghiselli, 1974; Maertz & Griffeth, 2004).

Hobos are also likely to think about quitting and search for new job opportunities more often than others, *ceteris paribus*; they are more likely to engage in the "keep your options open" philosophy (Murrell, Frieze, & Olson, 1996), thus have lower levels of attachment or commitment to a particular organization compared to other workers. Maertz and Griffeth's (2004) framework of motivational mechanisms for attachment and withdrawal (MAW) provides a useful tool to further investigate this idea. Based on their extensive review of previous literature on factors influencing turnover decisions, the authors identified eight distinctive motivational forces of withdrawal to explain voluntary turnover: *affective forces* (i.e., lacking affective commitment to the organization); *alternative forces* (e.g., receiving an attractive job offer or believing in such a possibility in the future); *behavioral forces* (e.g., realizing the low costs of leaving the organization); *calculative forces* (e.g., realizing a low possibility of attaining important values and goals such as career development and promotion in the future when remaining in the organization); *normative forces* (e.g., wanting to be closer to family); *contractual forces* (e.g., breaching of the psychological contract between the employee and the organization); and *constituent forces* (e.g., lacking attachment to coworkers and team groups). They also proposed the eighth motive, *moral/ethical forces* (e.g., believing that switching jobs regularly is good and that staying for long periods means stagnation), which was conceptualized in the current study as a motivational mechanism for hobo syndrome (see Phase 2). Maertz and Griffeth's taxonomy of motivational forces underlying job quitting decisions covers a fairly

comprehensive list of attitudinal factors that were found to be related to turnover outcomes in past research, including organizational commitment, job embeddedness, job satisfaction and justice perceptions. Using this framework, I explore how hobo syndrome is related to people's current work attitudes, or more precisely, workers' attachment and withdrawal motives in their current workplace.

## **Method**

Participants in Phase 2 also filled out a set of questions asking about their personality characteristics and current work experiences. Openness to Experience was measured with Goldberg's 10-item scale (originally labeled as *Intellect or Imagination*), which was available from the International Personality Item Pool Web site (<http://ipip.ori.org/ipip/>) (Goldberg et al., 1996/2006). Sample items include "Have a vivid imagination", "Spend time reflecting on things", "Am full of ideas". Impulsivity (originally labeled as *Self-Control*) was measured with ten items developed by Roberts and colleagues (Roberts, Chernyshenko, Stark, & Goldberg, 2005). The contents of these items are copyrighted and were obtained directly from the authors of the measure. Sample items are "I often rush into action without thinking about potential consequences", "I am known to make quick, hot-headed decisions", and "My friends say I am unpredictable."

Participants were also asked to answer the following three questions regarding their intention to quit: "How often do you think about leaving your organization? (1=never, 2=occasionally, 3=sometimes, 4=often, 5=always)"; "Are you planning to leave your organization in the near future? (1=yes, 0=no)"; and "Are you currently searching for alternative job opportunities? (1=yes, 0=no)". Responses to these questions were highly correlated with one another (*r*s ranged from .49 to .63), thus aggregated into a single score reflecting the person's

intention to quit. To measure participants' current work attitudes, a set of items adapted from the motivational forces of attachment and withdrawal questionnaire (MAW; Maertz & Campion, 2004; Maertz & Griffeth, 2004) were used. The original MAW scale consists of eight subscales representing eight distinct causes of turnover decisions – Affective, Alternative, Behavioral, Calculative, Normative, Contractual, Constituent, and Moral forces. Among these, the first seven subscales were used as measures of participants' attachment and withdrawal patterns in their current workplace (i.e., current work attitudes) after modifying wordings of the items according to the current context. All subscale scores were coded in the same direction so that high scores would reflect high levels of withdrawal motives (e.g., high scores of MAW-Affective would mean lack of emotional attachment to the organization). Responses to all personality and work attitudes items were recorded on a 5-point scale (agree to disagree).

Hobo syndrome was operationalized as each individual's probability of belonging to the latent class cluster of "hobos" as identified in the second phase. I used this index instead of simply summing up the scores of the four hobo indicators used in the present study, because it fully accounts for the variability in individuals' responses both within and across latent classes. In addition, I ran two separate logistic regression analyses to examine how the seven withdrawal motives and the two personality variables (openness and impulsivity) predict the probability of being categorized as a "hobo," treating the dependent variable as dichotomous (1=belonging to the "hobo" cluster; 0=belonging to the other five clusters).

## **Results**

Table 3 provides descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of study variables. Consistent with the expectation, hobo syndrome was positively correlated with openness ( $r = .13, p < .01$ ). Impulsivity, on the other hand, did not show a significant relationship with hobo syndrome,



contrary to the common beliefs about hobos being impetuous and spontaneous. Probability of membership in the latent class of hobos was positively correlated with individuals' intent to quit ( $r = .23, p < .01$ ), and with six of the seven motivational forces subscales ( $r$ s from .11 to .31,  $p < .01$ ). The only subscale with a non-significant correlation with hobo syndrome was Normative force ( $r = .01$ ). In other words, it was shown that the more one resembles the prototypical characteristics of hobos, the more likely is the person to experience motivational forces of withdrawal from the organization.

Table 4 shows logistic regression results of predicting the probability of belonging to the "hobo" cluster from motivational forces and two personality traits. When all seven withdrawal motivational forces (or motives) were simultaneously entered in the regression model, the probability of being categorized as a "hobo" was best predicted by high levels of Contractual motive ( $\beta = 1.30, p < .01$ ), followed by high levels of Behavioral motive ( $\beta = 0.45, p < .05$ ). In addition, hobo syndrome was also predicted by low levels of Affective motive ( $\beta = -0.43$ ), high levels of Constituent motive ( $\beta = 0.38$ ) and high levels of Alternative motive ( $\beta = 0.32$ ), although these effects were only marginally significant ( $p < .10$ ). For the second regression analysis, with Openness and Impulsivity scores entered as predictors, results showed that high levels of Openness predicted hobo syndrome ( $\beta = 0.49, p < .01$ ) whereas the regression coefficient for Impulsivity was not statistically significant.

### **Discussion**

The present study represents a follow-up to Ghiselli's (1974) proposition regarding the existence and characteristics of hobos in the workplace. In the attempt to provide a basis for similar quests in the future, in the current article I proposed an explicit definition of hobos, and then empirically tested and confirmed that a group of individuals resembling the prototypical

characteristics of hobos (as delineated in this article) did emerge as a distinct group in the population. Building on the supporting evidence for construct validity of hobo syndrome, I also began to explore the dispositional roots of this phenomenon and related organizational outcomes. As such, the study offers a number of insights and venues for future research.

First of all, the conceptual demarcation of the hobo syndrome construct will facilitate future research endeavors that attempt to understand the unique effects of individual characteristics separate from those of organizational and situational factors. In particular, the departure from the sole reliance on a single behavioral indicator (i.e., the number of jobs quit) allows researchers to appreciate the core aspects of human psyche underlying hobos' frequent job quitting behavior. According to Ghiselli's (1974) original definition of hobo syndrome, frequent job quitters may have perceptual or attributional biases in processing, interacting with, and navigating through their work environment and career/job moves. In this article, I build on and extend from his definition by proposing that the concept of hobo syndrome requires both desires and actions of frequent movement. In view of that, I further suggest that we should distinguish "true-hobos" who quit their jobs for the sake of quitting (and enjoy the act of leaving itself) from "pseudo-hobos" who have quit their jobs several times but do not necessarily feel positive about changing jobs<sup>3</sup>.

Also, the present article demonstrates the utility of the LC cluster approach in identifying specific group of individuals sharing a distinct pattern of hobo-ness. Unlike variable-centered procedures of construct validation (e.g., factor analysis), LC cluster methods enable us to consider both uniqueness and commonality of individuals across subpopulations. Using this method, the current study illustrates that while hobos share a specific, distinguishable pattern of

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<sup>3</sup> The latter type would be similar to what emerged as Cluster 5 in the current study; however, I would expect the "pseudo-hobos" to show the level of job quitting frequency that is comparable to Cluster 6 (which was not the case in my results).

behavior and attitudes regarding frequent job movement, everyone has such a tendency to varying degrees. This provides direct person-centered evidence for the presence of hobos in the U.S. working population, while allowing for a nomothetic examination of where the hobo syndrome is located in a nomological network of related variables.

This paper opens a window for future studies that examine antecedents and consequences of hobo syndrome in the workplace. Although exploratory, findings from the current study indicate that openness may provide a dispositional explanation for hobo syndrome. It appears that those who are open to new opportunities in life are more likely to exhibit hobo-ness in their career behavior by quitting jobs more frequently than others and maintaining positive views about it. On the other hand, data suggest that being impulsive does not necessarily entail desires and behavior of job hobos. Perhaps the dispositional influence of impulsivity is somehow tempered by other mobility-related individual factors that are either orthogonal or counteractive to the construct of impulsivity, such as careerism (Dougherty, Dreher & Whitely, 1993). Therefore, more research is needed to understand more fully how individuals' dispositional characteristics interact with one another in influencing manifestations of hobo syndrome.

I also began to explore how hobo syndrome is related to workers' experience and behavior in their current workplace. As expected, hobos were more likely to report less positive views about their current jobs, hence high withdrawal motives and intent to leave. Findings from this study are informative in that they describe a readily observable link between people's explicit responses to work attitudes survey and their latent hobo-ness: Individuals with a hobo syndrome tend to show lower levels of attachment and satisfaction with their current jobs. However, one important missing block in the current investigation is the consideration of intermediate processes through which tendency of hobo syndrome affects individuals' cognitive

evaluations and affective experiences about their work. Based on the current findings, future studies should seek to understand the underlying causal mechanisms of how hobos develop such psychological detachment from the organization.

In addition, I must acknowledge a potential limitation of the present study design: the use of self-reports in measuring past quitting behavior (i.e., frequency of voluntary turnover incidents in the past). It is possible that some turnover incidents reported by participants as voluntary may have been initiated by their employers and primarily driven by their desire to avoid termination. While the simultaneous consideration of behavioral and attitudinal aspects of frequent quitting would help demarcate its underlying motivations, it does not solve the problem in its entirety. It calls for more objective and verifiable measures of voluntary turnover in future research on hobo syndrome (Maertz & Campion, 1998).

Findings of the present study have important implications for individuals who seek to successfully manage their careers. A demarcation of the hobo syndrome construct allows one to distinguish different motives and attitudes that lie beneath the overt behavior of frequent job quitting. From the perspective of career agents or counselors, understanding the differences between hobo syndrome and more career-focused phenomena/characteristics (e.g., boundaryless or protean careers; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006) would aid one's reflection on true driving forces behind the person's past quitting history. From a managerial perspective, organizations who are particularly concerned about turnover problems may consider implementing a screening procedure based on a set of questionnaire items asking about how many times the applicant has quit jobs in the past, as well as their attitudes toward frequent job changes. Employers may also consider offering unique work assignments and experiences that fulfill the needs of job hobos, such as periodic changes in job scopes, locations, and team compositions.

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Table 1  
*Comparison of LC Cluster Models Based on Four Indicators of Hobo Syndrome*

Cluster Model	Hypothesis	LL	BIC(LL)	Number of parameters	Classification error	Entropy	Bootstrapped $p$ value from LRT for k-1 classes
Model 1	1-Cluster	-4050.88	8183.040	12	0.000	1.000	-
Model 2	2- Cluster	-3887.74	7890.625	17	0.083	0.702	0.000
Model 3	3-Cluster	-3841.11	7831.229	22	0.144	0.655	0.000
Model 4	4-Cluster	-3812.27	7807.413	27	0.140	0.681	0.000
Model 5	5-Cluster	-3790.47	7797.676	32	0.167	0.692	0.000
<b>Model 6</b>	<b>6-Cluster</b>	<b>-3772.56</b>	<b>7795.718</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>0.185</b>	<b>0.695</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Model 7	7-Cluster	-3769.82	7824.113	42	0.221	0.638	0.716
Model 8	8-Cluster	-3751.18	7820.687	47	0.186	0.719	0.000
Model 9	9- Cluster	-3744.68	7841.560	52	0.223	0.685	0.116
Model 10	10-Cluster	-3735.79	7857.636	57	0.226	0.685	0.034

*Note.* LL=log-likelihood; BIC=Bayesian information criterion.  
 Values in bold pertain to Model 6, which was identified as the optimal cluster solution.



Table 2  
*Mean Responses of Six Latent Classes to the Indicators of Hobo Syndrome*

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Latent Classes</b>					
	<b>Cluster 1 (N=407)</b>	<b>Cluster 2 (N=163)</b>	<b>Cluster 3 (N=114)</b>	<b>Cluster 4 (N=104)</b>	<b>Cluster 5 (N=44)</b>	<b>Cluster 6 (N=42)</b>
Number of jobs quit	2.77 (2.85)	2.38 (2.69)	1.82 (2.20)	1.89 (2.32)	3.23 (3.02)	5.05 (5.18)
Belief that persistence is a virtue (reversed)	3.31 (0.89)	1.53 (0.50)	1.58 (0.56)	1.25 (0.44)	3.59 (0.87)	4.86 (0.42)
Positive feelings about changing jobs regularly	2.64 (0.88)	1.53 (0.60)	4.18 (0.80)	1.00 (0.00)	1.00 (0.00)	4.40 (0.67)
Belief that staying at one place too long leads to stagnation	2.91 (0.97)	2.53 (0.93)	4.19 (0.87)	1.00 (0.00)	1.00 (0.00)	4.43 (0.74)

*Note.* Values in parentheses are standard deviations within cluster.

Table 3  
*Correlations of hobo syndrome with personality and work attitude variables*

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Hobo syndrome	0.05	0.18	-										
2. Openness	3.70	0.59	.13**	(.79)									
3. Impulsivity	3.66	0.66	-.05	-.16**	(.80)								
4. Intent to quit	3.00	1.81	.23**	-.05	.08*	(.66)							
5. Affective	2.12	1.02	.20**	-.20**	.08*	.58**	(.92)						
6. Alternative	3.08	1.03	.11**	-.04	.28**	.34**	.12**	(.69)					
7. Behavioral	2.70	1.11	.25**	-.01	-.08*	.34**	.39**	.08*	(.70)				
8. Calculative	2.52	1.12	.25**	-.16**	-.08*	.57**	.77**	.02	.47**	(.85)			
9. Normative	2.46	1.32	.01	-.13**	.34**	.24**	.05	.45**	-.14**	-.05	(.76)		
10. Contractual	2.88	1.22	.31**	-.03	-.15**	.38**	.54**	-.06	.43**	.57**	-.20**	(.97)	
11. Constituent	2.38	1.06	.26**	-.17**	.00	.46**	.63**	.08*	.40**	.64**	-.01	.57**	(.81)

Note. Hobo syndrome was operationalized as the posterior probability of Cluster 6 membership as identified in Phase 2.

Table 4

Results of logistic regression analyses predicting hobo syndrome with motivational forces and personality traits.

Model 1		95% C.I. for $Exp(B)$		$R_{CS}^2$	$R_N^2$	
Predictor	$B$	$Exp(B)$	lower	upper	.10	.32
Constant	-4.34*	0.01	-	-		
Affective	-0.43 <sup>†</sup>	0.65	0.42	1.01		
Alternative	0.32 <sup>†</sup>	1.38	0.95	2.01		
Behavioral	0.45*	1.57	1.07	2.30		
Calculative	0.23	1.26	0.72	2.23		
Normative	0.16	1.18	0.82	1.70		
Contractual	1.30**	3.68	2.11	6.41		
Constituent	0.38 <sup>†</sup>	1.46	0.98	2.18		
Model 2		95% C.I. for $Exp(B)$		$R_{CS}^2$	$R_N^2$	
Predictor	$B$	$Exp(B)$	lower	upper	.01	.05
Constant	-3.19**	0.04	-	-		
Openness	0.49**	1.64	1.17	2.30		
Impulsivity	-0.23	0.80	0.57	1.11		

Note. Hosmer-Lemeshow test for Model 1  $\chi^2 = 2.588$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p = 0.957$ ; for Model 2  $\chi^2 = 6.445$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p = 0.597$ .  $Exp(B)$  = odds ratio. For easier interpretation of the results, all predictor variables were standardized.

<sup>†</sup> $p < .10$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

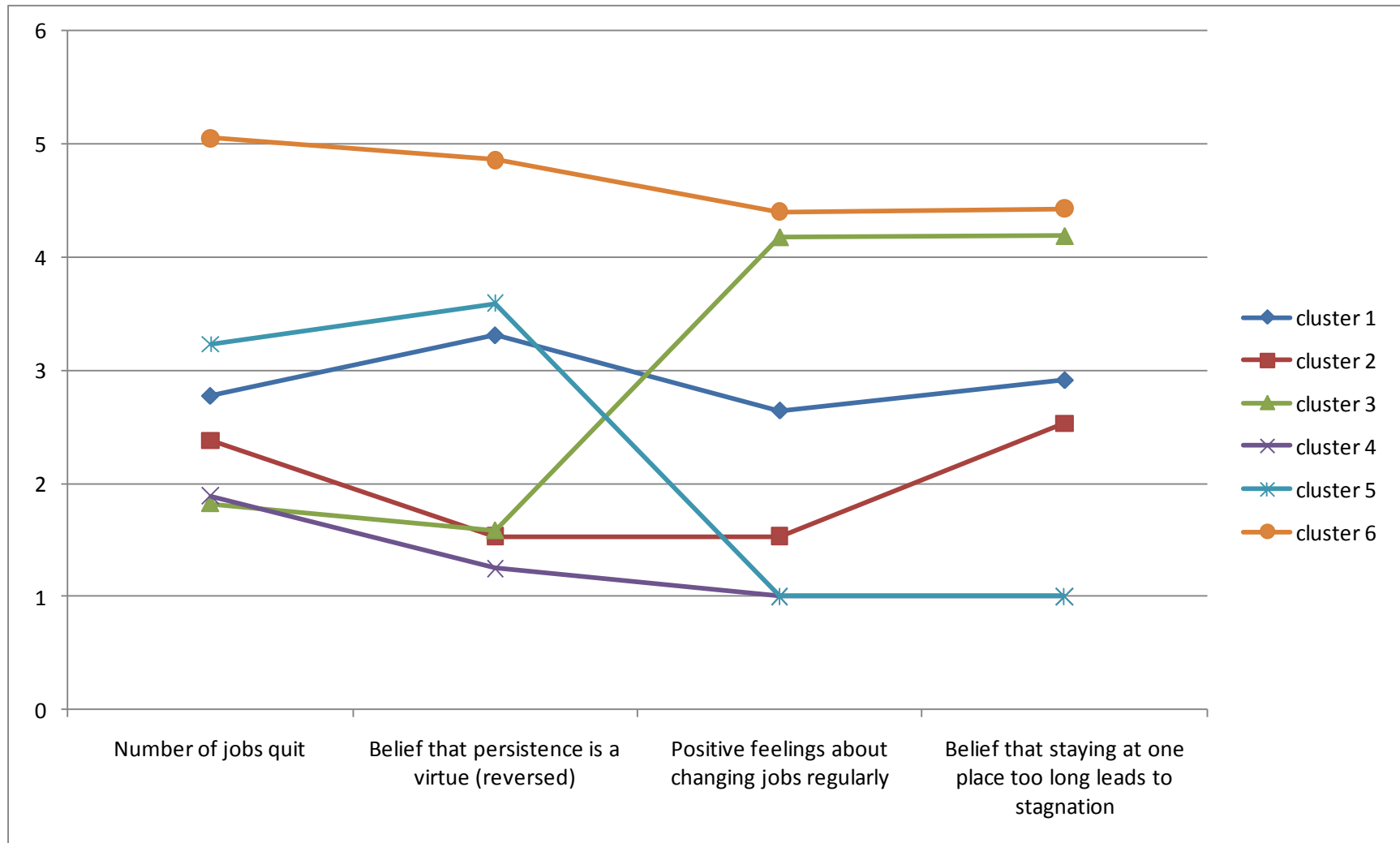


Figure 1. A graphic illustration of six latent classes.