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**CLARIFYING JOB SEARCH CLARITY: INVESTIGATING JOB SEARCH AS A SELF-
REGULATORY PROCESS**

by

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Lazaridis School of Business & Economics

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN MANAGEMENT

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The central role of goals in facilitating self-regulation throughout the multiple stages of job search has been recognized by scholars and models of the job search process. I argue that despite numerous calls for more research on job search goals, critical questions remain unanswered and that an explicit focus on job search goals can advance the job search literature by enhancing our understanding of job search behaviours and outcomes, while also providing actionable advice for managing the emotional and exhausting process of looking for a job. In this dissertation, I contribute to job search research by identifying gaps in the literature that can be overcome through an explicit emphasis on job search goals, empirically documenting antecedents and consequences of having clear job search goals and suggesting directions for future research. Specifically, in Chapter 2, I argue that more attention is needed on the types of goals job seekers set and outline how nuanced application of theory can close gaps in research and improve practitioners' ability to help job seekers self-regulate effectively. In Chapters 3 and 4, I present three empirical studies ($N = 367$) that contribute to our understanding of how goals impact the quantity and quality of job seekers' decisions, behaviours and outcomes by examining the downstream effects of different goal orientations (i.e., learning-approach, performance-approach, performance-avoid) and clear process and outcome goals. I conclude by discussing the theoretical and practical implications of my program of research.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION:

CLARIFYING JOB SEARCH CLARITY: INVESTIGATING JOB SEARCH

AS A SELF-REGULATORY PROCESS

CLARIFYING JOB SEARCH CLARITY: INVESTIGATING JOB SEARCH AS A SELF-REGULATORY PROCESS

“The crowning fortune of a man is to be born to some pursuit which finds him employment and happiness, whether it be to make baskets, or broadswords, or canals, or statues, or songs.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Searching for a job has become an integral part of today’s employment context. For example, new entrant job seekers search for work in order to make the school-to-work transition, unemployed job seekers aim to gain employment after a period of not working and employed job seekers may search to change organizations or better understand the labour market (Boswell et al., 2012). Studies suggest that, on average, individuals will change jobs 12 times over their career (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018), further highlighting the ubiquity of job search and the subsequent importance of job search research. As epitomized by Emerson in the opening quote, the employment opportunities that individuals seek out and find afford them the opportunity to achieve success, whether it be objectively (e.g., financially) or subjectively (e.g., satisfaction), or both. Though the academic study of the job search process is relatively niche, it examines a ubiquitous phenomenon within a rich context, thereby providing the opportunity to test and extend numerous theories and, in turn, offer evidence-based advice to job seekers, employers, and career counselors.

Job search is conceptualized as a multi-stage and sequential process that begins with establishing a goal, followed by planning and executing behaviours and, typically, ends with a

change in one's employment situation (Blau, 1994; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2005; Soelberg, 1967; Stevens & Beach, 1996; van Hooft et al., 2012). Central to this conceptualization is the job seeker who is viewed as a purposeful and volitional actor, capable of undertaking several activities to achieve his/her goal (Kanfer et al., 2001). Consistent with this, the majority of job search research defines job search as a self-regulatory process, suggesting that regulating one's cognitions, emotions and behaviours is critical in order to gain employment (Boswell et al., 2012; Kanfer et al., 2001; Manroop & Richardson, 2016; Saks, 2005).

Self-regulation is defined as the process wherein individuals determine their performance by taking an active role in establishing the level of effort they put forth (Karoly, 1993; Vancouver, 2000). Effective self-regulation is critical to job search – though social support may help manage emotions and facilitate motivation (Bandura, 2001) – ultimately, it is incumbent on job seekers to self-organize and self-manage throughout their search. The unfolding and sequential nature of job search further highlights the need for effective self-regulation; preliminary inputs (e.g., goals, self-efficacy beliefs, planning behaviours) are conceptualized to directly impact later inputs (e.g., the quality and quantity of search behaviours) and outcomes (e.g., interview offers, job offers, employment status). In other words, effective self-regulation at the start of the job process should lead to effective job search behaviours and ultimately the attainment of job search outcomes (Koen et al., 2010; Wanberg et al., 2002).

Critically, goals initiate conscious self-regulation (Karoly, 1993), are conceptualized to be precursors to action (Locke & Latham, 1979) and govern ongoing motivation (Bandura, 2001). In other words, goals are a primary means through which volition occurs – goals increase effort and persistence and encourage the development of strategies to facilitate goal accomplishment (Latham & Locke, 1991). It is perhaps unsurprising then that goals are

prominently positioned at the beginning of extant models of job search (Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2005; van Hooft et al., 2012). What is surprising, is the scarcity of research on job search goals; almost two decades ago, Kanfer et al., (2001, p. 851) concluded that more research on job search goals and subsequent behaviours was needed to advance theory and offer practical implications for job seekers. This call for research has remained largely unheeded (Boswell et al., 2012; Saks, 2005; van Hooft, 2018), leaving critical questions about job search goals unanswered. For example, what type of goals should job seekers set? What leads individuals to set certain job search goals? How do job search goals influence job search behaviours and outcomes? The answers to these are important given the nuanced relationship between goals and subsequent performance (Locke & Latham, 1990) and the practical nature of job search research.

Accordingly, the overarching goal of this dissertation is to advance our understanding of job search goals and the subsequent effects on job search behaviours and outcomes. To do so, I begin with a literature review (Chapter 2) that elucidates existing gaps in the job search literature and recommendations for future research. I begin bridging these gaps through three studies (Chapters 3 and 4) that contribute to a better understanding of the role of goals in the job search process. Chapter 5 provides a conclusion of the dissertation.

OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION AND ITS CONTRIBUTIONS

The dissertation herein includes three studies which build upon one another to understand the relationship between job search goals, behaviours and outcomes. To begin, Chapter 2 reviews the broader job search literature before focusing on research on goals in the job search process and the need for a program of research dedicated to understanding the antecedents and outcomes

of job search goals. Leveraging insights from goal setting and self-regulation theories, several avenues for future research are set forth.

Next, in Study 1 and 2 (Chapter 3), I ask whether job search clarity – the extent to which job seekers know the type of job, position, and organization in which they want to find employment (Stevens & Beach, 1996; Wanberg et al., 2006) impacts both the quality and quantity of intended and actual job search behaviours. Using image theory (Beach, 1993) as a foundation, and integrating its tenets with goal setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) and self-regulation (Vancouver, 2000), I hypothesized that JSC should decrease the *quantity* of some job search behaviours (i.e., intentions to submit applications, intentions to accept a job) given its hypothesized role of promoting the *quality* of job search behaviours (van Hooft et al., 2012). Study 1 tests this idea through a scenario study wherein participants were asked to imagine they were graduating and about to embark on their job search, reflected on and provided their job search goals before looking through job advertisements and indicating their intentions to both apply and accept the jobs. The use of scenario study with undergraduates allowed for a preliminary investigation into the goal to behaviour relationship without depleting the self-regulatory resources of actual job seekers (e.g., Price et al., 1992).

Study 2 (also in Chapter 3), builds on and extends Study 1. Specifically, in a sample of unemployed job seekers, I ask how JSC impacts actual job search behaviours. To do so, I draw on goal setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) and goal-systems theory (Kruglanski et al., 2002) to extend the conceptualization of JSC such that it is both a motivational and regulatory mechanism. In doing so, I build on past research that suggests JSC leads to an increase in job search behaviours (e.g., Cote et al., 2006; Zikic & Saks, 2009), by demonstrating that although JSC motivates job seekers to increase some job search behaviours, at moderate to high levels,

JSC also helps job seekers regulate (i.e., decrease low-quality behaviour and increasing high-quality behaviours). Study 2 accomplishes this by integrating Pierce and Aguinis's (2013) meta-theoretical principle "too much of a good thing" effect in exploring the complex relationship between JSC and the quantity and quality of job search behaviours (i.e., job search intensity, job search strategies) among a sample of unemployed job seekers. Moreover, I advance our knowledge of job search behaviours by investigating JSC as an antecedent to job search strategies, as well as the relationships between multiple types of job search behaviours.

Finally, Study 3 (Chapter 4) builds on the results of Study 1 and 2 by integrating goal orientations – that is, one's goal preferences for achievement situations (Payne et al., 2007) – into the unfolding model of job search. Goal orientations provide a framework for understanding how individual self-regulate, including the goals they set, the behaviours in which they engage, and the results they achieve (Dweck & Leggett, 1998). Accordingly, I build on Studies 1 and 2 by exploring goal orientations as an antecedent to JSC, extending the conceptualization of JSC such that it includes both performance and learning goals, and developing an integrative model in order to extend our understanding of the antecedents and outcomes of job search strategies. This is accomplished by collecting data from individuals actively searching for work across four time periods to test an integrated model that includes goal orientation, JSC, job search strategies and employment outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, satisfaction with one's job search).

Taken together, the dissertation adds to the literature by investigating goals as a mechanism that influences both the quantity and quality of job search behaviours (e.g., job search intensity, job search strategies) and outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, satisfaction with job search). I build upon past studies by exploring a more nuanced relationship between JSC and job search behaviours, as well as exploring the relationships between different types of job search

behaviours. In doing so, I answer the call for researchers to examine the antecedents and outcomes of job search goals, an invaluable step in increasing our understanding of the job search process (Kanfer et al., 2001). As argued by Boswell and colleagues (2004), explicit examination of job search goals may allow the literature to move beyond the traditional assumption that job seekers share the same underlying goal of finding employment. As the content of individuals' goals have a direct impact on the behaviours in which they engage and the performance they achieve (Locke & Latham, 1990), research that examines job search goals can increase our understanding of a fuller range of job search behaviours as well as their relative effectiveness (van Hoye, 2018). In doing so, this program of research allows practitioners to better understand how to guide individuals in the job search process in terms of the goals they should set and the strategies they should use, thus enabling job seekers to better manage their own search tactics. The discussion sections of each chapter, as well as the General Discussion and Conclusion (Chapter 5) explore the theoretical and practical implications of this program of research in more detail.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW:

**A MISSING PIECE OF THE PUZZLE: A REVIEW AND EXAMINATION
OF THE ROLE OF GOALS IN THE JOB SEARCH PROCESS**

ABSTRACT

Using Locke and Latham's (1990) seminal goal-setting theory as a framework, I review the existing literature on goals in the process of job search. Further, I argue that application of self-regulation theories has the potential to advance our understanding of the role of goals in the job search process, a critical step in advancing the job search literature. As job search research is inherently practical, a program of research dedicated to the thorough application of theory is needed in order to provide evidence-based implications for a ubiquitous phenomenon. I conclude by proposing several research avenues to begin this program of research.

A MISSING PIECE OF THE PUZZLE: A REVIEW AND EXAMINATION OF THE ROLE OF GOALS IN THE JOB SEARCH PROCESS

The job search process leads to several important outcomes for job seekers – research shows that looking for work impacts one’s emotional and financial well-being (e.g., Vinokur & Caplan, 1987). The insights gained through job search research also informs numerous stakeholders, including those who want to help job seekers find employment (e.g., post-secondary institutions, career coaches and counsellors), organizations who want to hire job seekers, as well as society through increased labour market participation. Accordingly, research that seeks to understand the job search process, including the goals job seekers set, how job seekers behave, why they behave that way (e.g., their goals), and the implications of those behaviours, is important practically and theoretically.

Fortunately, a growing body of research examines the job search process, including two meta-analyses; one on the antecedents and consequences of behaviours (Kanfer et al., 2001) and another on the effectiveness of job search interventions (Liu, Huang, & Wang, 2014). Further, several qualitative reviews have sought to shed light on various aspects of the job search process, including the job search context (i.e., type of job seeker; Boswell et al., 2012), job search behaviours (van Hoye, 2018), predictors of job search success (Saks, 2005) and the need to consider the quality of job search behaviours and outcomes alongside of quantitative measures (van Hooft et al., 2013). Taken together, this body of literature offers numerous theoretical and practical insights for researchers, job seekers and other stakeholders.

However, across the multi-stage sequential process of job search, one stage is noticeably absent from the reviews mentioned above: goal setting. In their seminal meta-analysis, Kanfer et al. (2001) noted their surprise at the paucity of research on job search goals, even after the gap

was identified by Schwab, Ryne and Aldag (1987) several decades prior. Though the call for more research on job search goals has been echoed numerous times (e.g., Boswell et al., 2004; Boswell et al., 2012; Lui et al., 2014; Saks, 2005; Zikic & Saks, 2009), it has largely remained unheeded. Given that the job search process has been defined as beginning when job seekers identify and commit to an employment goal (Kanfer et al., 2001), a major gap in the literature exists.

Accordingly, the purpose of this chapter is to critically examine extant empirical research on goals within the job search process. To do so, I begin with a general overview of the job search literature, highlighting the multi-stage sequential model of job search. Next, I review the empirical evidence regarding the role of goals in the job search process and conclude by integrating relevant theories and exploring theoretical implications and directions for future research.

The Job Search Process

Numerous job search models define it as a multi-stage sequential process that unfolds over time. For example, Soelberg (1967) argued that job seekers begin with a deliberation phase wherein they evaluate themselves and the employment context, choose an occupational path, and then implement the behaviours that will allow them to achieve it. Similarly, Blau (1994) argued that job seekers begin in a preparatory phase wherein they gather information about themselves and the employment context and create resources (e.g., resumes) before engaging in the active phase wherein they engage in direct job search behaviours. Stevens and Beach (1996) used image theory as a framework, arguing that job seekers first formulate goals and then develop a plan to achieve those goals. In a similar vein, a considerable body of evidence has investigated

job search using the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), wherein job seekers form their job search intentions, which in turn, impact the behaviours in which they ultimately engage.

Numerous reviews (e.g., Boswell et al., 2012; Kanfer et al., 2001; Manroop & Richardson, 2015; Saks, 2005) offer consistent support for the unfolding and sequential nature of job search. In a recent review and synthesis of the literature, van Hooft et al. (2012) concluded that job search is a cyclical process that occurs across four stages: (1) goal establishment; (2) planning of goal pursuit; (3) goal striving; and (4) reflection.

Common amongst extant models of job search are two sets of related variables that effect the ability to find employment: self-regulatory variables (e.g., goal setting) and job search behaviours (e.g., intensity, effort, strategies). Consistent with the sequential and unfolding nature of the job search process, self-regulatory variables are inherently related to behaviours; the more effective job seekers are at self-regulating, the more likely it is that job seekers will engage in behaviours that will facilitate their ability to find employment (van Hooft et al., 2012). This is an important insight as it emphasizes the critical role of goals in the job search process; setting goals initiates conscious self-regulation (Karoly, 1993), suggesting that job search goals are critical antecedents of self-regulated behaviours. While most studies acknowledge the importance of goals, few explicitly study goals, opting instead to focus on the relationship between individual, biographical or situational differences and job search behaviours, or the latter half of the job search process (i.e., the behaviours to outcome relationship). Indeed, in their meta-analysis, Kanfer et al. (2001) were unable to explore the impact of goals given the scarcity of research. Understanding the antecedents of effective job search behaviours is critical, especially changeable antecedents (e.g., goal setting) as it offers an avenue to put research into practice, and moreover, improves our understanding of a complex phenomenon.

Upon review of the literature, I synthesized and summarized the common elements of previous models of job search (e.g., Blau, 1993; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2005; Soelberg, 1967; van Hooft et al., 2012), as illustrated in Figure 1. Consistent with existing models, my model of job search emphasizes the role of goals; goals are a proximal antecedent to job search behaviours, and job search behaviours are a proximal antecedent to performance in one's job search. Though job search behaviours, such as job search intensity (i.e., the frequency with which individuals engage in a number of job search behaviours such as updating one's resume; Blau, 1994) are among the best known predictors of the ability to find employment, significant variance remains unexplained (Kanfer et al., 2001). The theory of job performance (e.g., Campbell, 1990; Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993; McCloy, Campbell, & Cudeck, 1994) suggests that distal antecedents influence performance through more proximal antecedents. In the context of job search, this suggests that job search goals may explain incremental variance in job search behaviours and outcomes above and beyond that explained by biographical, individual difference and situational variables (Boswell et al., 2012). Indeed, Kanfer et al. (2001) concluded that goal attributes "...are proposed to exert substantial influence on the direction, and possible intensity, of job search behavio[u]r" (p. 850). Accordingly, a program of research that investigates the roles of goals in the job search process can also extend our understanding of job search behaviours and outcomes.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

To summarize, goals are conceptualized to play a role in every step of the job search process (Saks, 2005); job searches begin with the identification of a goal, which in turn, shapes

the behaviours and actions during the job search, and ultimately, the job search ends when the goal has been achieved. Despite this, goals remain understudied in the context of job search.

Next, I review the existing research on goals in job search.

Looking Back: Research on Goals in the Job Search Process

Generally speaking, and consistent with numerous theories on goal setting and motivation (e.g., goal setting theory; Locke & Latham, 1990; social cognitive theory; Bandura, 1986), the practice of setting goals leads to positive outcomes for job seekers. For example, in a study of job seekers who were unemployed, Prussia et al. (2001) found that individuals who coped with their unemployment by establishing goals for re-employment put forth more effort in their job search and were better able to find re-employment as compared to individuals who did not hold re-employment coping goals (e.g., who coped with unemployment by retiring or collecting unemployment insurance). In a meta-analysis on the success of job search interventions, Lui et al. (2014) found that interventions that encouraged job seekers to set goals were more effective than those that did not. However, it is important to note that the interventions that included goal setting did so as part of a broader intervention¹ (e.g., Braddy & Gray, 1987; Gray, 1983; Keeler, 1987; Li-Tsang et al., 2008; Muller, 1992; Rife & Belcher, 1994). Thus, it remains unclear just how goal setting impacts job search behaviours and outcomes; the results of existing interventions do not provide insight into the types of goals job seekers set, nor disentangle how goals influenced job search behaviours or employment outcomes. This is an important gap in the job search literature; though extant studies provide preliminary support that goals influence job

¹ Most commonly, these interventions were modeled after the concept of a job club wherein individuals first participated in relevant training sessions (e.g., finding opportunities, impression management) and then continued to participate in regular (e.g., bi-weekly) meetings with other job seekers wherein they would share their goals, their progress and provide feedback to one another.

search behaviours and outcomes and thus warrant careful study (Boswell et al., 2004, 2012; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2005), the broad conceptualization of goals and goal setting limits our ability to develop specific advice in terms of the type of goals job seekers should set.

Goal setting theory suggests that goals have numerous dimensions, each of which have an impact on behaviours and performance (Locke & Latham, 1990). As mentioned, goal setting generally has a positive impact on performance – though several moderators (e.g., task complexity) impact the relationship. Accordingly, in order to advance job search theory (Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2005) and maximize the efficacy of job search interventions (Lui et al., 2014), it is necessary to take a more nuanced view of goals and how they may influence job search behaviours and outcomes. To do so, I rely on Locke and Latham's (1990) typology of goal dimensions which organizes goals across two broad dimensions *content* and *intensity*, each of which have several sub-dimensions and use this typology as a basis to organize existing research.

Goal Content

Goal content refers to the actual outcome that an individual wants to achieve. A goal assumed to be shared by most job seekers is to find employment (Kanfer et al., 2001) – though goal content also has many sub-dimensions, including: the number of goals set; time orientation (i.e., proximal vs. distal); level of difficulty; and specificity (Locke & Latham, 1990). In the extant literature, research has yet to examine level of difficulty or the number of goals in the context of job search, though other dimensions have received some attention. For example, Boswell et al. (2004), as well as van Hove and Saks (2008), examined the goal content of employed job seekers (i.e., individuals who are currently employed but are considering changing organizations; Boswell et al., 2012) and found that goal content influenced the type of behaviours in which job seekers engaged. For example, the goal to stay aware of alternative

opportunities predicted the use of job advertisements and sites and the goal to gain leverage against one's current employer predicted contacting specific organizations (van Hoya & Saks, 2008). Similarly, job seekers who wanted to leave their current organization were more likely to turnover and used less leverage against their employer than leverage-seeking job seekers (e.g., those that wished to remain in their current organization; Boswell et al., 2004). Moreover, each goal content had unique correlates. Specifically, employed job seekers who sought to gain leverage over their current employer also tended to have low levels of career satisfaction, perceived high levels of alternative opportunities and placed high importance on rewards. The results of these studies demonstrate the importance of understanding job seekers' goal characteristics in order to understand their behaviours.

In a review of the literature, Boswell and colleagues (2012) posited that the content of job search goals would vary by type of job seeker (i.e., new entrant, unemployed or employed). Building on research that explored the goal content of employed job seekers (Boswell et al., 2004; van Hoya & Saks, 2008), potential goals were also developed for new entrants (i.e., job seekers who are looking for their first full-time position in the workforce, such as university and college graduates) and unemployed job seekers (i.e., individuals seeking new employment opportunities given that they lost their jobs through layoffs, firing, end of contract, etc.). More specifically, Boswell et al. (2012) posited that new entrants would hold goals such as gaining employment or comparing opportunities for employment with further education, whereas unemployed job seekers may hold goals such as finding new employment or qualifying for governmental assistance. Though research has not yet empirically documented or examined the proposed content of new entrants' or unemployed job seekers' goals, Boswell et al.'s (2012)

work further highlights how individual, situational and biographical differences are likely to impact goal choice, as well as subsequent behaviours.

Goal content can also be differentiated as *performance goals* or *learning goals* (Winters & Latham, 1996). Performance goals focus on achieving a specific outcome (Seijts & Latham, 2005) – including, for example, the goals studied by Boswell et al. (2004) and van Hoya and Saks (2008), as well as the proposed goals highlighted by Boswell et al. (2012). Learning goals focus individuals' attention on the process, rather than the outcome (Seijts & Latham, 2005). That is, learning goals focus people's attention on discovering and building the knowledge needed to successfully complete the task (Winters & Latham, 1996).

Two studies have provided initial evidence of the benefits of learning goals in the context of job search. In a sample of unemployed job seekers, van Hooft and Noordzig (2009) developed a job search intervention aimed at inducing goal orientation. Numerous cues were used to induce participants' goal orientation, including framing the workshop as an opportunity to increase one's skills (learning goal orientation condition) or achieve the best results (performance goal orientation condition), explaining goal orientation theory, providing examples of learning or performance goals and encouraging participants to write their own learning or performance goals. A control condition was also used in which goal setting was neither encouraged nor discouraged. The results demonstrated that regardless of dispositional goal orientation (i.e., how individuals interpret and respond to achievement situations; Dweck & Leggett, 1998), participants in the learning goal orientation condition had higher job search intentions and employment probabilities than both the other groups, as well as higher actual job search behaviour than the control group. Noordzij, van Hooft, Mierlo, Dam and Born (2013) used a similar intervention – though only focused on inducing a state learning goal orientation, which in

turn was positively related to self-efficacy, awareness of various job search strategies, and the willingness to learn from failure, all of which were positively related to search intentions and ultimately, employment status.

Taken together, evidence suggests that in terms of goal content, both performance and learning goals influence job search behaviour, though learning goals may have a more positive impact than performance goals on one's job search behaviours and outcomes. Interestingly, Noordzij and colleagues (2013) did not include a state performance goal orientation intervention in their intervention study given ethical concerns that doing so could have a negative impact on job seekers. Doing so seems to reflect goal setting theory's assertion that when tasks are complex (such as job search; Latham, Mawritz & Locke, 2018), specific learning goals will lead to improved performance, whereas specific performance goals may hinder performance (Winters & Latham, 2006). Additional research, that explores both performance and learning goals, as well as their impact, is needed in order to advance the job search literature and inform the development of interventions.

Time Orientation. Though the overarching goal of a job search may be to find employment, this represents a distal goal, that is, a longer-term goal (Locke & Latham, 1990). Consistent with Judge and Cable's (2002) assertion that individuals may pursue employment opportunities for financial, social, and psychological needs – job seekers may also set more proximal, that is, shorter term goals. To date, the goal content studied in the job search literature (e.g., Boswell et al., 2004; Prussia et al., 2001; van Hoye & Saks, 2008) seems to reflect what Saks (2005) referred to as *employment goals* (i.e., goals that relate to potential job search outcomes) and are thus distal performance goals. Saks (2005) also introduced the concept of *job search goals*, representing a more proximal goal focused on job search behaviours, such as

preparing or revising one's resume, or spending a certain amount of time searching for a job over the next week (Saks, 2005). The goals in the studies reviewed above by van Hove and Saks (2008) and Boswell et al. (2004) are consistent with Saks (2005) conceptualization of *employment goals* given their focus on outcomes rather than behaviours.

As conceptualized by Saks (2005), both *employment goals* and *job search goals* seem to reflect performance goals given their emphasis on achieving a certain standard. To the best of my knowledge, job search goals as conceptualized by Saks (2005) have not yet been studied in the context of job search (van Hooft et al., 2012). Critically, self-regulation theories recognize that setting and achieving proximal goals increases self-satisfaction and learning (Bandura, 1991), ultimately impacting one's perceived and actual ability to achieve distal goals (Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Donovan & Williams, 2003). Taken together, this suggests that setting proximal goals should help job seekers persist through the complexities of a long job search process, consistent with Zimmerman's (2000) conclusion that high-quality self-regulation occurs when proximal goals help individuals regulate toward achieving their distal goals.

Specificity. A key tenet of goal setting theory is that specific goals lead to higher performance than vague goals, or no goal (Locke & Latham, 1990). More specifically, as mentioned earlier, for simple tasks individuals are advised to set specific performance goals, whereas for complex tasks, specific learning goals help facilitate goal achievement (Seijts & Latham, 2005). In the context of job search, goal specificity has been operationalized as job search clarity (JSC) - the extent to which job seekers have a specific job, position or organization in mind in which they'd like to find employment (Wanberg et al., 2002). Accordingly, JSC is a form of goal specificity² that applies to the job search process. For consistency of

² Herein, I assume the terms goal specificity and goal clarity are synonymous. This assumption is made as goal setting literature uses the terms interchangeably. For example, Locke (1981) defined "specificity or

communication, I will henceforth employ the terminology goal clarity and job search goal clarity, as opposed to goal specificity.

Stevens and Beach (1996) introduced the concept of JSC to the literature, arguing that different levels of JSC (e.g., high, moderate, low) would relate to different job search strategies - the overall pattern of job search decisions and behaviours (e.g., focused, exploratory, haphazard). To date, the posited relationship between JSC and job search strategies have not been tested (van Hove, 2018), highlighting the nascency of the concept.

To my knowledge, six studies have examined JSC (Bao & Luo, 2015; Cote et al., 2006; Fort et al., 2011; Guerrero & Rothstein, 2012; Wanberg et al., 2002; Zikic & Saks, 2009). In their sample of graduating university students, Zikic and Saks (2009) found that age, utilizing career resources, participating in training to improve one's human capital and collecting information regarding jobs, organizations, occupations or industries (e.g., career exploration) were positively related to JSC. In a sample of skilled immigrants, Guerrero and Rothstein (2012) found language fluency and cultural knowledge were positively related to JSC. Cote et al. (2006) found that positive affectivity, conscientiousness and self-efficacy were positively related to JSC. Inconsistent with Cote et al.'s (2006) finding, Fort et al. (2011) found no significant relationship between job search self-efficacy and JSC although one was expected. The inconsistent findings in terms of the relationship between job search self-efficacy and JSC may be attributed to a

clarity [as] the degree of quantitative precision within which the aim is specified" (p. 60), thus implying that goal specificity and clarity are synonymous. Vigoda-Gadot and Angert (2007) utilized the terms clear, specified and formal goals interchangeably, as did Locke (1996) with specificity and explicitness. In contrast, antonyms include ambiguous, vague, and abstract (Locke, 1996; Locke & Latham, 2006). Further, from a definitional perspective and more specific to job search, the conceptual definition of job search clarity is consistent with the definition of goal specificity. Indeed, if the level of goal specificity is indicated via degrees of precision (Locke, 1981), and a job seeker with high JSC has defined, precisely, the type of job, position, and organization in which he/she would like to be employed, it follows that high levels of specificity are akin to high levels of JSC. Thus, JSC is a context specific measure of goal specificity.

difference in how the construct was operationalized; as self-report responses to Likert-type questions in Cote et al. (2006), compared to an open-ended qualitative measure by Fort et al. (2011). In terms of outcomes, JSC has been demonstrated to be positively related to job search intensity (Bao & Luo, 2015; Cote et al., 2006; Guerrero & Rothstein, 2012; Zikic & Saks, 2009), with one exception – similar to above, Fort et al. (2011) found no evidence that JSC impacted planning behaviours, actual job search behaviours or effort. Again, the authors suggested this may be due to their qualitative rather than quantitative operationalization of JSC (Fort et al., 2011).

Despite the promising evidence, as a relatively new and understudied construct, research on JSC has been subject to inconsistent conceptualization, ultimately leading to inconsistent operationalizations and findings. For example, though several studies have conceptualized JSC as a goal-related construct within the process of searching for a job (e.g., Cote et al., 2006; Zikic & Saks, 2009), it has also been conceptualized as a psychological process (Manroop & Richardson, 2015) and a job search behaviour (Boswell et al., 2012).

Perhaps more troubling is that upon closer inspection, the current conceptualization of JSC seems to reflect a performance goal given its emphasis on outcome criteria (i.e., the type of job, position or organization in which one wishes to work). As mentioned above, goal setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) advocates for job seekers to set specific learning, rather than specific performance goals when completing difficult tasks, such as job search. A growing body of empirical evidence (see Seijts & Latham, 2005 for a review) documents the potentially deleterious effect that performance goals can have on performance. Despite this, based on preliminary evidence that JSC is positively related to job search intensity, several scholars have advocated for job seekers to increase their JSC in order to improve their chances of finding

employment (e.g., Bao & Luo, 2015; Cote et al., 2006; Zikic & Saks, 2009). This is a major concern given that theory and research caution against setting specific performance goals on complex task and is thus a critical avenue for continued investigation.

Taken together, research in and outside of the job search literature suggest that goal clarity is an important self-regulatory mechanism (e.g., Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Baumeister et al., 2007; Campion & Lord, 1982; Locke & Latham, 1990) that influences behaviours and outcomes (e.g., Cote et al., 2006; Wanberg et al., 2002), while also being malleable (e.g., Guerrero & Rothstein, 2012). In other words, JSC is a theoretically and practically meaningful construct. However, more research, grounded in theory, is needed in order to develop a more nuanced understanding of JSC's impact on job search behaviours, and ultimately outcomes, in order to improve our understanding of JSC and, in turn, provide ethically sound practical implications to job seekers (Noordzij et. al, 2013).

Summary. In sum, the empirical evidence on goal content in the job search process offers preliminary evidence that *what* job seekers are motivated by impacts their job search intentions and behaviours. More specifically, though most research has investigated performance goals and found some positive relationships, preliminary evidence suggests that learning goals may be more beneficial for job seekers. Overall, as will be discussed in further detail below, more research is needed to develop and test theoretical propositions within the context of job search and develop a more nuanced understanding of how the characteristics of job seekers' goals impact their behaviours and outcomes, positively or negatively.

Goal Intensity

Along with *what* individuals are motivated to achieve (i.e., goal content), goal setting theory argues that it is important to consider the intensity of goals – that is, *how* motivated job

seekers are to achieve their goals (Locke & Latham, 1979). In terms of goal intensity, goals may vary in terms of an individual's commitment to the goal, the actual levels of effort that the individual must expend to achieve the goal, the level of importance that is placed on the goal, and the relative position of that goal among the individual's goal hierarchy. Of these sub-dimensions, only goal commitment has been studied in the context as job search. More specifically, meta-analytic evidence suggests that employment commitment – defined as an individual's attitude toward the importance or centrality placed on employed work (Rowley & Feather, 1987) – is consistently and positively related to job search behaviour (Kanfer et al., 2001). In other words, the more committed a job seeker is to finding employment, the harder they will work.

Moving Forward: Exploring the Role of Goals in the Job Search Process

Now that I have reviewed existing empirical evidence on the impact of goals on the job search process, I will consider how these gaps may be addressed through the application and integration of theoretical frameworks – notably, goal setting theory and self-regulation theory. To begin, goal setting theory posits that the goals individuals hold will directly influence what they do and how they perform (Locke & Latham, 1979). More specifically, goals affect behaviours in three ways: effort, persistence and direction (Locke & Latham 1979). First, goals motivate people to exert effort toward behaviours that meet the demands of the goal. Second, goals motivate individuals to persist in their effort, especially when goals are difficult rather than easy. Lastly, goals direct attention to relevant behaviours and outcomes, especially when the goals are clear and specific, allowing individuals to selectively engage in behaviours that will allow them to achieve their goal.

As reviewed above, the small body of research on goals in the context of job search is largely consistent with goal setting theory's assertion that goals influence behaviour through increasing motivation. The finding that JSC influences job search intensity, for example, aligns with the notion that goals motivate people to exert effort. That said, it's important to recognize that job search behaviours vary across several dimensions (van Hoye, 2018); exploring the relationship between goal attributes and other relevant behaviours, such as job search strategies and persistence over the time, have yet to be empirically investigated (Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2005; van Hoye, 2018). This is an important gap in the research; although job search intensity is the best-known predictor of finding employment (Kanfer et al., 2001), significant variance remains unexplained and job search intensity is not a significant predictor of other employment outcomes (e.g., person-organization fit, job satisfaction; Wanberg et al., 2002). Thus, what is needed is a concerted effort to understand the antecedents and outcomes of other job search behaviours (van Hoye, 2018). Goal setting theory provides numerous research avenues through which we can increase our understanding of job search goals, behaviours and outcomes. Though rarely applied to the job search context (Lui et al., 2014), the evidence offered by over a thousand studies on goal setting theory (Locke & Latham, 2013) can be leveraged to develop theoretically grounded hypotheses and job search interventions. Integrating goal setting theory with other theoretical frameworks frequently used in job search research should further contribute to this program of research.

Of interest is self-regulation theory given that job search is consistently defined as a self-regulatory process (Kanfer et al., 2001). Self-regulation features explicitly (e.g., Saks, 2005; van Hooft et al., 2012) or implicitly (Kanfer et al., 2001) in almost all models of the job search process. In both self-regulation theories and in models of job search, goals are prominently

positioned at the start of the process (e.g., Soelberg, 1967; van Hooft, Wanberg & van Hooft, 2012). Moreover, goal setting and self-regulation are related — to consciously self-regulate, an individual must set a goal and act to achieve that goal, obtain feedback to examine progress toward achieving the goal and adjust strategies to ensure success (Zimmerman, 1998). Most job search research assumes that job seekers are effective self-regulators, which perhaps explains the relative absence of research on job search goals. However, a large body of research suggests that individuals vary in their ability to self-regulate effectively (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; Karoly, 1993; Vancouver, 2000).

Self-regulation reflects the notion that humans (and other organisms) can exercise free-will over their behaviours; that is, we have the capacity to change our behaviours across a variety of circumstances (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; Karoly, 1993; Vancouver, 2000). Self-regulation is particularly relevant in the context of job search and more broadly, career development, wherein individuals are viewed as agentic actors, ultimately responsible for producing and managing their behaviours (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 1996; Kanfer et al., 2001; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2006). Effective self-regulation should help job seekers navigate the dynamic employment context, wherein careers and subsequent career development are not always predictable, and thus requires individuals to be flexible, adaptable, and learn from their experiences (Savickas, 2005). Indeed, the reflection phase of van Hooft et. al's (2012) model of job search highlights that although goals influence planning and striving behaviours, preliminary outcomes provide job seekers with feedback which may, in turn, lead to goal revision.

In order to self-regulate, individuals need to observe their behaviours and outcomes and use that information to determine how they should act moving forward. Goals facilitate self-regulation (Oulette & Wood, 1998) by establishing standards with which individuals can

compare their behaviours and subsequent outcomes (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; Karoly, 1993), and ultimately, gain a better understanding of the behaviours in which they should engage as well as those they should resist the impulse to engage (Baumeister, Heatherton, & Tice, 1994; Polivy, 1998). In this way, self-regulation emphasizes working smarter (i.e., learning which behaviours will allow them to achieve their goal) rather than working harder (i.e., increasing the quantity of job search behaviours, generally). This is an important consideration given that most job search research focuses on the antecedents and outcomes of quantity-based measures of job search behaviours (van Hove, 2018). Indeed, extant research on goals in the context of job search has focused on the motivational power of goals in facilitating job search success (e.g., Braddy & Gray, 1987; Cote et al., 2006; Rife & Belcher, 1994; Zikic & Saks, 2009). Specifically, this line of research suggests that by working harder (i.e., putting in more effort), job seekers can achieve success through gaining more interviews, more job offers and finding employment faster (Kanfer et al., 2001). It has led some job search research to suggest that job seekers focus on setting goals or increasing their JSC in order to increase their motivation to engage in job search behaviours (i.e., job search intensity; Cote et al., 2006; Zikic & Saks, 2009). However, motivation is only one component of effective self-regulation; alongside of having the motivation to perform, individuals must also have the capacity to perform (e.g., knowledge, skills).

Given the complexity of job search, the vast number of behaviours it requires (Blau, 1993), and the ever-evolving employment context, it is generally assumed that job seekers have not mastered the job search process. In other words, job seekers' capacity to perform is limited (Latham et al., 2018; van Hooft et al., 2012) which, in turn, impacts their ability to effectively self-regulate (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 1997). Importantly, developing the capacity to perform is thought to occur across several stages, including learning directly through others (e.g.,

instruction and/or observation), imitating others and practicing under routine conditions prior to self-regulating under dynamic conditions (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 1997). In other words, through an emphasis on learning, job seekers can build their capacity to effectively self-regulate.

As described above, goal content impacts behaviour. Outside of the job search context, research consistently shows that performance goals focus individuals' attention on producing results, whereas learning goals focus individuals attention on the discovery of effective strategies that will, in turn, produce results (Chen & Latham, 2014; Porter & Latham, 2013; Seijts & Latham, 2005). In other words, performance goals focus effort on goal accomplishment per the motivational component of self-regulation, whereas learning goals focus one's effort on learning per the performance-capacity component. **Critically, theory and empirical evidence suggest that**

. For example, in a meta-analysis of training effectiveness, Colquitt and colleagues (2010) suggested that participating in training improves skill acquisition and task-related self-efficacy, a key component of motivation (Bandura, 1991). Meta-analytic evidence confirms that job search interventions promote success only when performance capacity and motivation are enhanced simultaneously (Lui et al., 2014). Taken together, goal setting theory and developmental phases of self-regulation suggest that job seekers should focus on learning rather than performing so that they can work smarter as well as work harder.

Another important insight from the developmental phases of self-regulation is the role of supportive others who can share their knowledge with job seekers to improve their capacity to self-regulate effectively. For example, employment counselors who deliver interventions aimed at helping job seekers learn (Lui et al., 2014). From the perspective of job search research, the developmental phases of self-regulation (i.e., instruction, imitation, practicing, self-regulation) further underscore the critical need for research that develops, tests and documents the impact of

goals on job search behaviours and outcomes. Though job search interventions that incorporate goal setting are among the most effective in facilitating employment (Lui et al., 2014), the relative absence of research that documents the pathways through which goal characteristics impact job search behaviours and outcomes (Boswell et al., 2012; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2005; van Hooft et al., 2012) may limit the efficacy of these interventions. Afterall, how can supportive others help train job seekers in effective goal setting without research evidence to guide them in terms of the type of goals job seekers should set and why? This is a critical insight as it highlights the importance of a nuanced application of theory in order to maximize the practical implications of job search research (Lui et al., 2014).

Along with investigating the impacts of learning goals on the job search process, more research is needed to examine the positive and negative impacts of performance goals on job search behaviours and outcomes. Above, it was argued that for complex tasks such as job search, performance goals can be deleterious because they focus individuals' attention on outcomes rather than on understanding the steps required to achieve the goal (Latham et al., 2018), ultimately impacting their ability to learn and effectively self-regulate (Seijts & Latham, 2005; Zimmerman, 2000). Yet, to date, research has advocated for job seekers to set more specific performance goals (i.e., increase their JSC) to increase their motivation and improve their chances of gaining employment (Cote et al., 2006; Zikic & Saks, 2009). At the same time, in an intervention study, Noordzij and colleagues (2013) chose not to including an intervention that would have job seekers set performance goals, noting the potential negative consequences and the corresponding ethical concerns of negatively impacting actual job seekers. Thus, it remains unclear – should job seekers set clear performance goals?

Although job search research consistently recognizes goals as being a foundational part of the job search process, the underlying assumption in the literature has generally been that job seekers' share the singular performance goal of finding employment (e.g., Boswell et al., 2012; Kanfer et al., 2001). While this may be somewhat true, job seekers vary on goal dimensions in terms of content, clarity, commitment, position in the hierarchy, etc. Goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) and the job search literature (e.g., Boswell et al., 2004, 2011; Van Hoye & Saks, 2008) suggest that individuals can hold qualitatively different goals. Moreover, past studies have relied on single-item measures of employment goals (Boswell et al., 2004), as well as measures developed solely for the purpose of that study (Boswell et al., 2004; Van Hoye & Saks, 2008). As Boswell et al. (2004) notes, this is a limitation of past research as job seekers may hold several employment goals that were not examined in the context of their study. Though Boswell and colleagues (2012) developed a typology of potential goals that different types of job seekers may hold, it is unclear how this list was developed. A qualitative exploration of job seekers goals, through an inductive process (Hinkin, 1995) represents another important step in furthering our understanding of the type of goals job seekers set.

Understanding job search goals is critical in order to advance the job search literature (Boswell et al., 2012; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2005, van Hooft et al., 2012) because job search is often considered a process where the preliminary inputs (e.g., goals) can have downstream effects on behaviours and outcomes. Hence, I argue that that furthering our understanding of job search goals through the careful application of goal setting and self-regulation theories to the job search process, will improve our understanding of how job seekers behave, and why, and how job search behaviours relate to employment outcomes.

Theoretically, a program of research dedicated to understanding the impacts of goal content has the potential to further our understanding of the antecedents to a wider range of job search behaviours (van Hoye, 2018), as well as the unfolding nature of the job search process (van Hooft et al., 2012). Consistent with the theory of job performance, disentangling the relationship between distal antecedents (e.g., goals) and more proximal antecedents (e.g., behaviours) can help explain incremental variance in the outcomes (e.g., the ability to find a good job). Moreover, furthering our understanding of the psychological and behavioural mechanisms underlying the job search process will allow for the development of job search interventions that are grounded in theory, a critical step given that many interventions have no demonstrable effect (Lui et al., 2014).

CONCLUSION

From the literature review in Chapter 2, one can draw three conclusions. First, existing theories of the job search process explicitly or implicitly recognize that goal setting is foundational to the job search process (Blau, 1993; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2005; van Hooft et al., 2012). Second, goals aid self-regulation, therefore they impact subsequent job search stages, including goal-striving and goal-achievement. Third, high-quality self-regulation can be facilitated by consciously setting goals with certain characteristics. Specifically, clear learning goals facilitate the achievement of more distal performance goals (Zimmerman, 2000). This conclusion also underscores the inherent interplay between goal characteristics; learning goals are more proximal than performance goals, both of which can vary from specific to vague.

While extant theorizing and research on job search acknowledges the importance of goal setting and self-regulation, very little research has empirically investigated how goals impact job

search behaviours and outcomes. Doing so will provide insight into how job seekers behave in their job search (van Hoye, 2018) beyond the typically investigated broad measures such as job search intensity. Taking a more nuanced view of behaviours can, in turn, improve our ability to explain between-individual differences in the attainment of employment outcomes. Specifically, the research opportunities identified in the present literature review include understanding the positive and negative impacts of setting performance goals during the job search process; investigating the relationship between learning goals, job search behaviours and outcomes; conducting qualitative explorations on the type of goals job seekers set; and investigating antecedents to job search goals. I begin this program of research in Chapter 3 by developing hypotheses around the impact of clear performance goals in the job search process, and in Chapter 4 by simultaneously investigating clear learning and performance goals in terms of their antecedents and outcomes.

CHAPTER 3:

CLARIFYING JOB SEARCH CLARITY: AN INVESTIGATION OF

ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES

ABSTRACT

Effective self-regulation occurs when individuals increase the frequency of high-quality behaviours and decrease the frequency of low-quality behaviours. I examine whether job search clarity (JSC) facilitates high-quality behaviours in the job search process. In a scenario study of undergraduate participants (Study 1), I find evidence that JSC relates to job search strategies, as well as the intentions to accept job offers, though is unrelated to intentions to apply to jobs. In a sample of unemployed job seekers (Study 2), I find that JSC and risk propensity are related to job search strategies. Additionally, risk-propensity is related to the tendency to apply for jobs for which one is over-qualified. In contrast to previous research, I find that JSC has a curvilinear relationship with the frequency of active job search intensity – highlighting the need to integrate theory in to job search research to elucidate the ways in which goals impact job search behaviours. Implications for theory, practice, and future research are discussed.

CLARIFYING JOB SEARCH CLARITY: AN INVESTIGATION OF ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES

Goals have been conceptualized as a foundational part of the job search process – though individual differences and situational variables impact the type of goals that individuals set (Saks, 2005), it is the very act of goal setting that initiates the behaviours necessary to facilitate goal achievement and thus the end of the job search process (van Hooft et al., 2012). In their seminal article, Kanfer et al. (2001) argued that job searches begin when job seekers establish and commit to an employment goal. The downstream effects of goals include behaviours (e.g., job search intensity, job search strategies, submitting applications) which lead to preliminary outcomes (e.g., number of interviews, number of offers), and ultimately, a change in one's employment status (e.g., employed, unemployed).

The unfolding nature of the job search process is consistent with the conceptualization that job search is a self-regulatory process (Kanfer et al. 2001) wherein job seekers must manage their thoughts, behaviours, and feelings over time until the goal is achieved (Baumeister et al., 2007). Even though goals initiate the self-regulatory process (Karoly, 1993), as previously mentioned, research on goals within the context of job search is limited (Boswell et al., 2012; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks et al., 2005; van Hooft et al., 2012). As such, what is needed is a program of research that improves our understanding of the self-regulatory processes of job search, in terms of how preliminary inputs (e.g., goals) can have downstream impacts on behaviours, as well as outcomes in the job search process. I begin this investigation by examining job search clarity (JSC) – defined earlier as the extent to which individuals have a clear idea as to the type of organization, job, and position they desire (Wanberg et al., 2002).

Though originally conceptualized alongside job search strategies (Stevens & Beach, 1996), the link between JSC and job search strategies has yet to be tested empirically (van Hove, 2018). Nonetheless, existing research suggests that JSC is meaningful construct. For example, it is positively related to job search intensity (e.g. Cote et al., 2006; Guerrero & Rothstein, 2012; Zikic & Saks, 2009), one of the best predictors of employment status (Kanfer et al., 2001). Moreover, an examination of JSC's antecedents (e.g., participating in training, collecting information; Guerrero & Rothstein, 2012) suggests that it is malleable, thereby offering an avenue for intervention to improve the effectiveness of job seekers search efforts. Accordingly, the goal of the studies herein is to further our understanding of the antecedents and outcomes of JSC by applying insights from career development theory (Super, 1990), goal setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) and image theory (Beach, 1989).

I begin by examining JSC's impact on job search behaviours through a situational study. In Study 1, senior-level undergraduate participants imagined they were recent graduates looking for employment (i.e., new entrants to the labour market; Boswell et al., 2012). After declaring their job search goal and developing their job search plan, participants were presented with several job advertisements and indicated their intention to apply and accept each. This research design allowed me to explore individual and situational differences (e.g., job search self-efficacy, employment history) as antecedents to JSC and begin efforts to disentangle the relationship between the quantity and quality of job search behaviours.

In order to overcome the limitations of a scenario study and extend the findings of Study 1, I conducted a second study with individuals who were unemployed and looking for work. I measured individual and situational differences, JSC and actual (rather than intended) job search behaviours. Doing so allowed me to critically examine the relationship between JSC and the

quantity of job search behaviour. Specifically, I build on past research that found a positive relationship between JSC and the quantity of job search behaviour (e.g., Cote et al., 2009; Guerrero & Rothstein, 2012; Zikic & Saks, 2009), by recognizing that effective self-regulation involves increasing some job search behaviours (i.e., those that contribute to the goal of finding employment) and decreasing non-contributing behaviours (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). This suggests that as a regulatory mechanism (van Hooft et al., 2012), JSC may increase some job search behaviours, while decreasing others. Thus, I explore the possibility that the relationship between JSC and the quantity of job search behaviour is non-linear, by applying goal-systems theory (Kruglanski et al., 2002).

Taken together, the studies herein make several contributions to the literature. Specifically, I offer empirical evidence that JSC is an important mechanism in the job search process through its role in regulating job search behaviours. In doing, I recognize that job search behaviour is a multi-dimensional concept and highlight the value of studying multiple dimensions in order to understand the nuanced relationships between individual differences, goal characteristics and subsequent behaviours. Furthermore, elucidating the ways in which JSC impacts job search behaviours contributes to the ongoing discussions regarding the need to consider the quality of goals and behaviours alongside the more quantitative measures (e.g., Koen et al., 2010; Saks & Ashforth, 2002; van Hooft et al., 2012). Practically, this research suggests that job seekers, vocational specialists and career counselors should be mindful of goal characteristics and the quantity and quality of behaviours while navigating the process of job search.

Figure 2 provides an overview of the framework used in the studies herein: individual, biographical and situational variables are related to JSC and job search self-efficacy, which in turn, relates to the quality and quantity of job search behaviour.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]

The Self-Regulatory Processes of Job Search

Rather than increase the quantity of behaviours in general, self-regulation theory recognizes that individuals can observe and evaluate their behaviours and use that information to increase behaviours that facilitate goal achievement and decrease behaviours that do not (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; van Hooft et al., 2012). Acting with such intentionality is consistent with the view that job seekers are purposeful and volitional actors who can influence their behaviours and environments (Bandura, 1986; Kanfer et al., 2001). Conscious self-regulation requires individuals to establish a goal (Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Karoly, 1993; Zimmerman, 2000) in order to provide a referent standard with which to regulate their behaviours. Both goal setting (Locke, 1996) and control theory (Campion & Lord, 1982) suggest that clear goals, compared to vague goals, make better referent standards given reduced ambiguity as to what constitutes goal achievement (Carver & Scheier, 1981). In other words, JSC should help job seekers self-regulate effectively.

Research on JSC is nascent. As mentioned in Chapter 2, six studies have examined JSC (Bao & Luo, 2015; Cote et al., 2006; Fort et al., 2011; Guerrero & Rothstein, 2012; Wanberg et al., 2002; Zikic & Saks, 2009). Overall, in terms of antecedents, research generally supports the notion that knowledge about one's self and the employment context, as well as individual differences have an impact on JSC. Building on this, I explore two antecedents of JSC.

Antecedents of Job Search Clarity

A large body of research has studied individual differences (e.g., personality traits, self-efficacy) as antecedents to job search behaviours and outcomes (Kanfer et al., 2001; Wanberg et al., 1999; Zikic & Saks, 2009). The intervening role of goals between individual differences and job search behaviours has only been considered by a few studies (Cote et al., 2006; Zikic & Saks, 2009). Given evidence that individual differences are often shown to have a greater impact on cognitions and behaviours in ambiguous situations, (Kuppens & Tuerlinckx, 2007), such as job search (Latham et al., 2018), herein I focus on job search self-efficacy, a theoretically and empirically meaningful construct in job search (Kanfer et al., Saks et al., 2005).

Self-efficacy. According to Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001), efficacy beliefs play a critical role in exercising agency over one's behaviours (i.e., in self-regulating). Specifically, an individual's self-efficacy beliefs, that is their belief that they can achieve results, impacts the goal setting process such that more challenging goals are set when self-efficacy is high (Bandura, 2001). Generally, clear goals are thought to be more challenging than vague goals as the ambiguity associated with vague goals suggests that a broader range of outcomes could be associated with goal completion (Locke & Latham, 1990). In the context of job search, preliminary empirical evidence suggests that job search self-efficacy is positively related to JSC (Cote et al., 2006). Accordingly, I hypothesize:

H1: Job search self-efficacy will be positively related to job search clarity.

Situational Differences. Super's (1990) theory of career development suggests that career development is an ongoing and iterative process that generally occurs across four phases: exploration, establishment, maintenance and decline/disengagement. The *exploration* stage,

thought to occur during mid-adolescence to young adulthood, primarily focuses on learning more about oneself and the external environment through trial-and-error testing (Super, 1990). As individuals' gain information about themselves and the external environment, they move on to the *establishment* stage, characterized by informed decision making that will shape one's career moving forward (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). The *maintenance* and *decline/disengagement* stages are thought to occur at the middle and end of one's career, respectively, characterized by the upgrading of one's skills or transition toward retirement (Super, 1990).

The *exploration* and *establishment* career development stages are particularly relevant for new entrant job seekers – defined as those who are, or are preparing to, transition from school to the workplace (Boswell et al., 2012; Kanfer et al., 2001). These stages highlight the importance of gaining experience and information about one's self and the external environment in order to make informed decisions about one's career moving forward. The fundamental assumption of the exploration phase is that information can be collected to make clear and specific choices regarding one's career moving forward. In terms of the job search process, and specifically JSC, this suggests that individuals with more work experience should have greater opportunity to collect such information and thus may have higher levels of JSC. Consistent with this, Zikic and Saks (2009) found that career exploration led to higher JSC, through more experiences and understanding about the labour market and ostensibly about oneself. Accordingly, I hypothesize the following:

H2: Work experience will be positively related to JSC.

Outcomes of Job Search Clarity

The goals job seekers set should impact their intended and actual job search behaviours (Azjen, 1991; Locke & Latham, 1990). In planning their job search behaviours, job seekers must

make several decisions, including which strategies to use, activities to focus on, and under which conditions they will act (e.g., apply or accept a job) (van Hooft et al., 2012). From a self-regulation perspective, these decisions are critical because job seekers have limited resources (e.g., time and effort) to expend when searching for a job and thus must make decisions to engage in effective and efficient behaviours (Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Karoly, 1993; van Hooft et al., 2012). To date, research has found that JSC is positively related to job search intensity—the most frequently studied job search behaviour (van Hoyer, 2018). The present study builds on extant studies by exploring the relationship between JSC and other job search behaviours. Specifically, I explore the relationship between JSC and job search strategies, as well as the specific decisions to apply to or accept a job.

Job Search Strategies. Goal setting theory argues that establishing a goal leads to the development of strategies to achieve that goal (Locke & Latham, 2002). In the context of job search, this has led to theorizing that individuals who have high JSC are likely to engage in different job search strategies than are individuals who have poorly defined or fuzzy goals (i.e., low JSC) (e.g., Stevens & Beach, 1996; Crossley & Highhouse, 2005). As previously mentioned, though JSC was initially conceived as an antecedent to job search strategies (Stevens & Beach, 1996), this relationship has yet to be examined empirically (van Hoyer, 2018).

Image theory (Beach, 1993) provides some insight as to how JSC may impact job search strategies. Image theory (Beach, 1993) suggests that decision making occurs in two stages, first the screening stage, followed by the choice stage. In the screening stage, individuals remove unacceptable options via a compatibility test wherein they compare potential options to a chosen standard (i.e., goal). When too many violations exist, the option will be removed (i.e., screened out). For example, Beach and Strom (1989) asked participants to imagine they were a newly

graduated student looking for a job. Participants were instructed as to what their job search goals were (i.e., the chosen standards) and were then presented with several job advertisements, the characteristics of which did or did not violate the participants' standards. The study found that when job characteristics violated 4 or more standards, they were likely to be screened out. In other words, when given a clear goal, job seekers were able to more rigorously evaluate alternatives, ultimately removing options that did not match their goal from consideration. This finding is consistent with Locke and colleagues (1989) assertion that "as goals become more specific the leeway for interpretation is progressively reduced" (p. 272). Taken together, theory and empirical evidence support the notion that clear goals promote a rigorous screening process.

Research has identified three types of job search strategies: haphazard, focused and exploratory (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Stevens & Beach, 1996). A haphazard job search strategy may occur when individuals do not have a clear idea of what they are looking for and apply to jobs in a seemingly random trial-and-error fashion due to individuals failing to screen out unacceptable options. This may result in consideration of opportunities that are both within and outside of their work and educational experience. An exploratory job search strategy is thought to occur when individuals have a moderate level of JSC, leading to information being collected from a wide variety of sources and the exploration of a wide range of employment opportunities. From a self-regulatory perspective, learning can be facilitated through a planned exploration of alternatives as behaviours are directed toward acquiring information and developing one's expertise. Finally, a focused job search strategy is thought to occur when job seekers have developed a clear job search goal and thus consider and collect information from a narrower set of opportunities as compared to the haphazard or exploratory job search strategies. That is, high levels of JSC should facilitate a more rigorous screening process, and from a self-

regulatory perspective may reflect effective self-monitoring in that only opportunities that align with one's goals are retained passed the screening process. Based on the preceding arguments, and consistent with Stevens and Beach's (1996) conceptualization, I predict:

H3: JSC will be positively related to the use of (a) focused and (b) exploratory job search strategies, and (c) negatively related to the use of a haphazard job search strategy.

Decision to Apply or Accept a Job. Analyzing specific job search behaviours may explain incremental variance in employment outcomes (van Hove, 2018). Despite this, almost no research has investigated specific job search behaviours (van Hove, 2018) aside from networking (van Hove et al., 2009; Wanberg et al., 2000). The specific behaviours of applying to and accepting jobs are a fundamental part of the job search process; measures of job search intensity include the frequency with which job seekers submit their resumes or fill out job applications in an active effort to gain employment (Blau, 1994) and the act of accepting employment symbolizes the end of the job search process (Kanfer et al., 2001).

The arguments brought forth through the integration of goal-setting theory, image theory and self-regulation theory can be extended to the decision to apply to a job opportunity. Specifically, I suggest that rather than apply to many job advertisements, job seekers with high levels of JSC should apply to a smaller subset of job advertisements than those with low JSC. That is, because clear goals make better referent standards compared to vague goals (Carver & Scheier, 1981), high levels of JSC should allow individuals to engage in self-monitoring and self-restraint, important parts of self-regulation (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). In other words, JSC should facilitate a rigorous screening stage, such that job seekers with high JSC would be less likely to apply to job opportunities that would not facilitate goal achievement.

H4: Job search clarity will be negatively related to the willingness to apply to jobs.

Importantly, the screening stage restricts the range of possible choices evaluated in the choice stage (Beach, 1990); options that are deemed acceptable in the screening stage move on to the choice stage. Within the choice stage, the logic that high levels of JSC should allow job seekers to undergo a more rigorous screening process and utilize self-restraint should continue to hold true. In other words, consistent with goal setting theory's assertion that clear goals make better referent standards than vague goals (Locke & Latham, 1990), high levels of JSC should lead job seekers to be less willing to accept employment opportunities.

H5: Job search clarity will be negatively related to the willingness to accept jobs.

METHOD

Sample

Searching for employment is a common activity and a relevant scenario for undergraduate students who are seeking employment for the summer months or upon graduation. Following the research design of Beach and Strom (1989), I recruited undergraduate students (N=124) from a mid-size Canadian university to participate in a scenario study in exchange for research credit. Six participants were removed from the study due to non-response or systematic patterns of responding, making the final sample size 118. Of these participants, the average age was 20.3 years, 46% were female, 46% were Caucasian, 34% Asian, and 20% indicated other ethnicities. On average, these individuals had held 1.37 full-time jobs and 2.48 part-time jobs with 3.66 employers. Almost all of participants (97%) had conducted job searches in the past, with 87% reporting that they have conducted multiple job searches. Further, 73% of participants

were in their third year of study. Accordingly, participants' work experience and career stage should increase the realism of the scenario as they are nearing the school-to-work transition.

Procedure

Participants first completed an online profile that assessed individual, situational and demographic differences. To reduce fatigue, participants were invited to the research lab one week later to complete the second part of the study. Participants were presented with a scenario asking them to imagine they had just graduated from university, were unemployed, and in the process of searching for a job.

Given concerns of using undergraduate students as research participants (Peterson, 2001), and in order to alleviate common-method variance, a mixed-methods design, with both qualitative and quantitative measures was used, thereby allowing the scenario study to be more realistic and increase participant commitment. Some constructs (i.e., job search goals) were measured via open-ended questions, while others (e.g., likelihood to accept or apply to a job, job search strategies) were measured via Likert-type questions. After indicating their job search goal, reflecting on their job search plans and completing measures for intended search strategies, participants examined 16 job advertisements (based on actual advertisements) and indicated their application and acceptance intentions for each. The job advertisements were presented randomly for each job seeker to protect against ordering effects. The choice of presenting participants with 16 job advertisements was based on a qualitative pilot study wherein participants self-reported spending approximately an hour or two per day, searching for jobs and applying to anywhere between 5-20 jobs per week. Coupled with recent reports (e.g., Nitch-Smith, 2016) that job seekers tend to apply to 16 jobs each week and given that participants had a limited time frame to complete the study (e.g., two hours), 16 job advertisements were determined to be manageable.

Measures

Job search clarity was measured by asking participants to respond to an open-ended question which asked, “What is the goal of your job search?” The approach is like that used by Fort et al. (2011), who asked job seekers to indicate the type of job they were seeking and to give as many details as possible. However, given the interest in investigating antecedents to JSC, participants were not directly asked to specify as many details as possible in order to minimize distortion of participants’ responses. Next, the author and two graduate students, blind to the purposes of the research study, coded the clarity of the job search goals. The coding was done in several stages. First, a separate file was created that included only participants’ job search goals and unique identifiers. This ensured that the coding of responses was not influenced by participants’ responses on other questions (e.g., prevent against confirmation bias). Next, each rater read the definition of JSC (Wanberg et al., 2002), as well as goal clarity (Locke & Latham, 1999). Each job search goal was coded in terms of its enumeration (i.e., the number of attributes specified; Locke & Latham, 1999). For example, a goal to get a job in one's educational field has two attributes enumerated: (1) getting a job; (2) that is in one’s field. In comparison, the goal to get a job in one's educational field in a specific location has three enumerated elements; the third being location. This allowed for the coding of JSC to be assessed as an integer, thereby allowing for regression analysis rather than MANOVA based on categories. Where differences existed, the raters discussed the specificity of the goal until agreement was reached. Guidelines for inter-rater reliability suggest inter-class coefficients (ICC) between .60 and .74 are good and ICCs between .75 and 1.00 are excellent (Cicchetti, 1994). The ICC for this study was .84 suggesting excellent inter-rater reliability,

Job search self-efficacy ($\alpha = .71$) was measured with ten items based on the work of Saks and Ashforth (1999). Respondents were asked to indicate how confident they could successfully do a number of job search activities, including "use social networks to obtain job leads" and "prepare resumes that will get you job interviews", where 1 = not at all confident and 10 = totally confident.

Situational variables were measured with a single item each. Specifically, *work experience* was measured by the question "How many full-time jobs have you held in your career, thus far?"

Job search strategies were measured using a subset of the scale developed by Crossley and Highhouse (2005). Given concerns regarding participant fatigue, the highest-loading three items for each strategy were selected. Participants were asked to consider how they planned to approach their job search and indicate their agreement with several statements based on a 5-point scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree). *Exploratory job search strategy* ($\alpha = .76$) was measured with three items, including "I will follow up on most leads including long shots". *Haphazard job search strategy* ($\alpha = .64$) was measured with three items, including "My approach to gathering job-related information could be described as random." *Focused job search strategy* ($\alpha = .70$) was measured with three items, including "My information gathering efforts will focus on specific jobs." The low internal consistency for the haphazard strategy is consistent with previous research. Specifically, Koen et al. (2010) found an internal consistency of $\alpha = .59$ for the haphazard strategy. Previous research has also demonstrated low internal consistency for the focused job search strategy ($\alpha = .64$; Crossley & Highhouse, 2005). It may be that, as a broad measure of patterns of job search behaviour, the measure for job search strategies are formative (i.e., represents an index) rather than reflective in nature (Diamantopolous, Riefler & Roth,

2008). If so, measures of internal consistency measures may not be applicable (Wilcox, Roy & Einer, 2008).

Willingness to apply (α ranged from .91 to .97 across all job advertisements) was measured based on the work of several researchers (i.e., Crant & Bateman, 1990; Highhouse, Beadle, Gallo & Miller., 1998). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree (where 1=not at all likely, 7=extremely likely) to three items including "I would probably apply for this job " and "I would exert a great deal of effort to get a job at this organization" for each of the 16 job advertisements. The willingness to apply to jobs was thus calculated as an aggregated score of all 16 composite measures of intention to apply.

Willingness to accept (α ranged from .91 to .97 across all job advertisements) was based on Harris and Fink's (1987) work on acceptance intentions. Participants indicated agreement (1=not at all likely, 7=extremely likely) to two items "If you were offered the job, would you accept it?" and "If you were offered the job, would you accept it immediately?" for each of the 16 job advertisements. The willingness to accept jobs was thus calculated as an aggregated score of all 16 composite measures of intention to accept.

Gender was included as a control variable given previous research that demonstrates gender-based differences in job search behaviour (Kanfer et al., 2001). Participants were asked to indicate their gender as either male or female. This was then transformed into a binary variable where 1=male and 0=female.

ANALYSIS

To examine the validity of my model, I conducted confirmatory factor analysis, using AMOS (Arbuckle, 2003). I compared the fit of my proposed eight-dimensional model (model 1) with

three alternative models³. To determine model fit, I used the overall model Chi-Square measure as well as the Chi-Square/df ratio, which according to Byrne (2001) should be below 3, though ideally as low as possible. Further indicators of fit include a normed fit index (NFI), an incremental fit index (IFI), a Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and a comparative fit index (CFI) of .90 or higher, as well as by a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) less than or equal to .08 (Byrne, 2001). Hu and Bentler (1999) suggested that stricter criteria on CFI and RMSEA should be considered, such that models with CFI values less than .90 and RMSEA values greater than .08 be considered deficient, models with CFI between .90 and .95 and RMSEA greater than .06 and less than .08 as acceptable, and models with CFI greater than .95 and RMSEA less than .06 as good (Mathieu & Taylor, 2006). I compared potential models using the Chi-Square difference test as well as change in CFI. Cheung and Rensvold (2002) proposed a standard for ΔCFI such that differences smaller than or equal to -.01 indicate the null hypothesis of invariance between models should not be rejected.

Work experience, JSC and the aggregated scores of willingness to apply to and accept jobs were modeled as single-item latent variables with error variance set to zero (Petrescu, 2013). I compared the fit for my proposed model (Table 1, Model 1) with three others. As seen in Table 1, the proposed model had the best fit to the data. However, the proposed model failed to reach .90 for CFI. An examination of factor loadings revealed they were all significant and varied between .31 and .88, so I investigated to modification indices (> 20) to see where fit could be improved. Allowing the error terms for two items of the exploratory strategy to covary with the error term for the composite of willingness to apply to jobs led to adequate model fit.

³ In model 2, I loaded the three job search strategies on to one latent factor. In model 3, I loaded all job search behaviours (i.e., strategies, willingness to apply, willingness to accept) on to one factor; in model 4, I loaded all items on to a single factor.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

Regression analysis was used to test all hypotheses. Consistent with the sequential process of job search, individual, situational and biographical variables were regressed on the dependent variables in the first step, followed by JSC in the second step.

RESULTS

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, correlations and scale reliabilities for the variables examined within this study. As expected, the correlation matrix reveals a positive relationship between JSC and the focused job search strategy, as well as a negative relationship between JSC and the number of jobs participants were willing to accept. Surprisingly, the correlation between JSC and job search self-efficacy, haphazard strategy and exploratory strategy were not significant.

[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]

Hypotheses 1 predicted a positive relationship between job search self-efficacy and JSC. As indicated in Table 3, this hypothesis was not supported ($\beta = -.08$, $p = .42$). To note, though insignificant, the relationship between job search self-efficacy and clarity was negative, opposite to the positive relationship predicted.

[INSERT TABLE 3 HERE]

Hypotheses 2 predicted that one's work and post-secondary experience would be positively related to JSC. Hypothesis 2 was supported as the number of full-time jobs participants had was positively related to JSC ($\beta = .17, p = .05$).

Hypotheses 3abc predicted relationships between JSC and job search strategies. The results provide partial support of these hypotheses. Specifically, as outlined in Table 4, JSC was significantly related to the focused strategy ($\beta = .24, p = .01$), supporting hypothesis 3a. However, JSC was not related to the use of the exploratory ($\beta = .07, p = .55$) or haphazard strategy ($\beta = .14, p = .26$). Hypotheses 3b and 3c were not supported.

[INSERT TABLE 4 HERE]

Hypotheses 4 and 5 predicted a negative relationship between JSC and the willingness to accept or apply to jobs, respectively. As shown in Table 5, the relationship between JSC and willingness to apply was not significant ($\beta = -.07, p = .46$), providing no support for hypothesis 4. Hypothesis 5 was supported as a significant negative relationship was found ($\beta = -.23, p = .01$).

[INSERT TABLE 5 HERE]

PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to better understand JSC in terms of its antecedents and consequences. I found that situational differences amongst job seekers (i.e., number of full-time jobs) explained significant variance in JSC. Specifically, consistent with Super's (1990) career

development theory, full-time work experience was positively related to JSC. This is also consistent with Zikic and Saks (2009) finding that using career resources, undergoing training and engaging in career exploration is positively related to JSC.

Surprisingly, job search self-efficacy was not a significant predictor of JSC. Mixed results have been found for job search self-efficacy and JSC; Cote et al. (2006) found a significant positive relationship, whereas Fort et al. (2011) found a non-significant negative relationship. Interestingly, Fort et al. (2011) also assessed participants' JSC through an open-ended question, whereas Cote et al. (2006) utilized a closed-ended scale measure of JSC. This suggests that the results of this study may be in part due to the way in which JSC clarity was measured. Specifically, it could be that closed-ended scale measures of self-efficacy and JSC are impacted by social desirability – the tendency for participants to present themselves in a positive manner (Holden & Fekken, 1989). Previous research suggests that self-efficacy measures can be inflated as a result of social desirability (Silverthorn & Gekoski, 1995). Alternatively, it may be that open-ended responses and subsequent coding do not adequately capture JSC. Future research should continue investigating the self-efficacy and JSC relationship, as well as alternative ways of assessing key job search concepts.

In terms of behavioural outcomes, consistent with past theorizing (Stevens & Beach, 1996), JSC was positively related to the focused job search strategy, though not significantly related to exploratory or haphazard job search strategies. This may, in part, be due to the scenario study which resulted in participants reporting their perceived rather than actual intentions or behaviours. Interestingly, gender was related to both haphazard and exploratory job search strategies such that male participants seemed more inclined to use the haphazard strategy and less inclined to use the exploratory strategy. Previous research has found gender differences in

job search behaviour, such that males report putting forth more effort in their job search (Kanfer et al., 2001). The few extant studies that have investigated job search strategies did not find significant gender differences in their use (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Koen et al., 2010). However, outside of job search, research has found that young females engage in more planning than young males (Naglieri & Rojahn, 2001), possibly due to neurological differences in executive functioning that facilitate self-regulation in females (Welsh & Pennington, 1988). Given the need for job seekers to self-regulate throughout the search, future research should continue to investigate gender differences.

The impact of JSC was further explored through hypotheses that JSC would be related to the willingness of participants to apply to and accept jobs. Interestingly, contrary to the hypotheses that JSC would result in more “screening out” of job advertisements at both the application and acceptance stages of job search, the results support only the latter. As a follow-up, I created a count variable that reflected the number of jobs advertisements for which participants indicated that they would be more willing than not to apply (i.e., jobs for which their willingness to apply was higher than 4 on a 7-point scale). On average, participants indicated a willingness to apply to 59.7% (9.53) of the 16 jobs. In contrast, participants indicated a willingness to accept 50.3% (8.06) of the 16 jobs. Accordingly, it seems that JSC may help job seekers regulate their behaviours, though later than anticipated. This begs the question: why are job seekers’ willing to apply to jobs they are (less) willing to accept? Such results are troubling because the inefficient use of one’s resources may impact job seekers emotional well-being and motivation the longer the job search persists (Bartholomew et al., 2011; Chow et al., 2015). It could be that the very act of decision making is depleting job seekers’ self-regulation abilities. Specifically, Vohs, Finkenauer, et al. (2007) found that when individuals were faced with

options and were instructed to either (1) choose with no deliberation, (2) deliberate but not choose, or (3) deliberate and choose, it was the former condition (i.e., choosing without deliberating) that consumed the least resources. In this way, choosing to apply to numerous jobs, even those which you may not accept, may delay the deliberation process and may serve to temporarily conserve self-regulatory resources, though may be more costly in terms of time and energy expended applying. Given the abundance of popular press reports regarding the challenging labour market, it may also be that individuals are willing to apply to jobs they may not want to accept, in order to alleviate the risk of not being able to find employment at all. Future research should seek to understand why job seekers are willing to apply to jobs that they are not necessarily willing to accept.

Overall, the research herein provides preliminary insight that the relationship between JSC and subsequent job search behaviour may be more nuanced than existing empirical evidence suggests. Specifically, previous research reports that JSC increases job search behaviour (Cote et al., 2006; Zikic & Saks, 2009). Although the job seekers in this study did not appear to screen out opportunities at the application stage, evidence of self-restraint was found at the acceptance stage. Though preliminary, this is the first empirical evidence to suggest that JSC impacts the quality of job search behaviour, rather than simply increase the quantity of their behaviour. Additional research that examines the impact of JSC on a range of specific and broad job search behaviours is therefore needed in order to gain a more fulsome understanding of how JSC impacts the job search process (van Hoye, 2018).

Despite the interesting insights in terms of JSC, the limitations of the study must be acknowledged. Most concerning is the use of a scenario-based study using undergraduate students rather than actual job seekers. Doing so allowed for careful study of job search

decisions, though the future research is needed with actual job seekers to increase the realism and thus validity, which may also improve the internal consistency of the haphazard strategy scale. Finally, JSC was measured qualitatively, rather than through the Likert-type scale utilized in previous research. Accordingly, Study 2 aims to build on Study 1 by using established measures with actual job seekers to overcome these gaps and further elucidate the role of JSC in the job search process.

STUDY 2

Study 1 provides preliminary evidence regarding the regulatory function of JSC in the context of a scenario study. The purpose of Study 2 is to extend these findings in the context of unemployed job seekers – individuals who are currently unemployed and actively searching (Boswell et al., 2012). Doing so is an important step in answering the question: what is the role of JSC in the job search process? Though past research advocates for job seekers to increase their JSC (e.g., Cote et al., 2006; Koen et al., 2010; van Hooft et al., 2012; Zikic & Saks, 2009), this advice runs counter to research on goal setting on complex tasks. Specifically, numerous studies (e.g., Earley et al. 1989; Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989; Mone & Shalley, 1995; Vollmeyer et al., 1996) have found that individuals with non-specific (e.g., “do your best”) goals are likely to use strategies focused on seeking out and using information (i.e., learning) and in turn, out perform individuals with specific goal. As such, the focus of this study is on further developing JSC’s nomological network in order to clarify the relationship between JSC and job search behaviours. Specifically, I continue to investigate the finding that JSC influences the quality of job seekers behaviours by exploring its relationship to quantity-based measures of job search behaviours (e.g., job search intensity, number of applications submitted), as well as quality-based measures (e.g., job search strategies). Doing so extends past research by disentangling the relationship

between JSC and numerous job search behaviours – including job search strategies, job search intensity (i.e., active job search behaviours, preparatory job search behaviours), and the specific behaviours of applying for a job for which one may be over or underqualified. This is a necessary step in understanding the nuances of how goals impact behaviours in the context of job search and thus for developing evidence-based interventions for job seekers (Lui et al., 2014). Moreover, the simultaneous examination of numerous job search behaviours builds on previous research that only examine the effort-intensity dimension of job search behaviour (van Hoya, 2018). Exploring a fuller range of job search behaviours, as well as the relations among them, allows for refinement of process models of job search, and should elucidate potential antecedents of employment outcomes.

A secondary goal of this study is to build on the finding from Study 1 that job seekers are willing to apply to jobs that they are not willing to accept. Specifically, recognizing that job search is an emotional and exhausting process (Vinokur & Caplan, 1987) and job seekers may make risky decisions based on emotions rather than logic (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005), I investigate whether a job seeker's tendency to take or avoid risks (i.e., risk-propensity; Meertens & Lion, 2008) impacts their job search behaviours.

Job Search Behaviours

Job seekers must engage in several behaviours while searching for a job, such as updating their resumes, contacting potential employers, submitting applications and participating in networking events and interviews (Blau, 1994; Kanfer et al., 2001; van Hoya, 2018). Broadly speaking, job search behaviour is conceptualized as multi-dimensional, organized across three major dimensions (1) effort-intensity; (2) content-direction; and (3) temporal-persistence (Kanfer et al., 2001; van Hoya, 2018).

The effort-intensity dimension of job search behaviour is the most frequently studied (van Hove, 2018). For example, research reveals that job search intensity, the frequency with which job seekers engage in a number of important behaviours (Blau, 1993; 1994), is positively related to the number of interviews and offers, and negatively related to the length of one's job search (Kanfer et al., 2001). The conclusion of this line of research is that effective self-regulation occurs when job seekers increase the quantity of their behaviours.

In contrast, the content-direction dimension of job search behaviour has a more explicit focus on the type of behaviours in which job seekers engage. For example, job seekers may contact employers over the phone, in-person, online or through other means. As such, this dimension of job search behaviour has a more explicit emphasis on the specific type of behaviours job seekers are engaging in, and by extension, the quality of those behaviours. For example, job search strategies— defined as how job seekers seek out and use information in their job search (Stevens & Beach, 1996) — is more reflective of the content-dimension of job search behaviour; rather than focusing on the amount of behaviours, job search strategies measure where job seekers are directing their efforts. The conclusion of this line of research is that effective self-regulation occurs when job seekers increase the quality of their behaviours.

Finally, the temporal-persistence dimension reflects the notion that job searches occur over time, and thus the change in job seekers behaviour, whether in intensity or direction, is an important aspect to consider (van Hove, 2018). Research in this realm focuses on the dynamism of job search behaviour and thus requires researchers to study job search behaviours at multiple points in time. The conclusion of this line of research is that effective self-regulation occurs when job seekers are resilient over time (Moorhouse & Caltabiano, 2007).

It is important to note that the multiple dimensions of job search behaviour are related to one another; they are not meant to be mutually exclusive (van Hoyer, 2018). For example, job search intensity can be separated into two types of behaviours: preparatory, which includes the collection and organizing of information, and active, which includes the interaction between job seekers and prospective employees (e.g., through applications and interviews; Blau, 1993,1994). Preparatory and active behaviours reflect both the effort-intensity and the content-dimension of job search behaviour (van Hoyer, 2018). Empirical evidence demonstrates active job search behaviours are a stronger predictor of employment outcomes than are preparatory behaviour (e.g., Blau, 1993; Saks, 2005; Saks & Ashforth 2000), thereby underscoring the utility of examining multiple dimensions of job search behaviour, as well as their antecedents and outcomes.

Antecedents of Job Search Behaviours

Consistent with goal setting theory's assertion that goals lead to the development of strategies to facilitate goal achievement (Locke & Latham, 1990), it can be expected that JSC will relate to job search strategies. Specifically, consistent with image theory's (Beach, 1993) assertion that clearer goals lead to a more methodical and rigorous screening process as compared to unclear goals, and consistent with the hypotheses in Study 1, JSC should be positively related to focused strategies and negatively related to the haphazard strategy.

H1: Job search clarity will be positively related to the use of (a) focused and (b) exploratory job search strategies, and (c) negatively related to the use of a haphazard job search strategy.

Turning now to the topic of risk-taking, research has demonstrated an association between impulse control and trait measures of risk-taking (e.g., Herman et al., 2018). Taking risks, whether large or small, represents the willingness of individuals to be vulnerable (Colquitt et al., 2007). Risk is inherent in every decision that individuals make as they must choose amongst alternatives, each of which varies in terms of possible outcomes, likelihoods and subjective values (Allais, 1953; Arrow, 1965). Risk-taking is relevant to one's career, especially when determining whether to change employers or careers (Nicholson & West, 1988). Such changes necessitate a job search, an inherently risky process as job seekers become vulnerable to rejection with every application submitted or interview attended.

Risk propensity recognizes that people deal with risk in different ways; some wish to take risks while others choose to avoid risks (Meertons & Lion, 2008). Research demonstrates that individuals who wish to avoid risk engage in more planning before they engage in an activity (Cloninger, 1987; Meertons & Lions, 2008). In other words, self-regulatory behaviours (e.g., planning) can help alleviate risk. Indeed, research suggests that poor self-regulators are more likely to take risks than those that are skilled at self-regulation (Magar et al., 2008). Thus, it may be expected that risk-propensity is related to job seeker's job search strategies.

Creating structure, that is engaging in more planning behaviours and developing a plan helps individuals avoid risks as they can collect more information and thus make more informed (i.e., less risky) decisions (Meertons & Lions, 2008). Past research has demonstrated that planning behaviours are an antecedent of the focused job search strategy (Koen et al., 2010), suggesting a negative relationship between risk propensity and the focused strategy. Similarly, the exploratory job search strategy aims to collect the most information as compared to the other strategies, given its focus on a broader range of employment options and sources of information

(van Hoya, 2018). In terms of the haphazard strategy, research has shown that risk-taking is related to impulsivity – that is, a tendency to react in an unplanned way (Chamorro et al., 2013), which parallels the haphazard strategy, characterized by passive information search and very little structure (van Hoya, 2018). As such, it may be expected that risk-taking propensity is related to job search strategies such that:

H2: Risk-propensity is negatively related to (a) focused and (b) exploratory job search strategy, and (c) positively related to haphazard job search strategy.

As explained above, job search strategies reflect the content-direction dimension of job search behaviour, whereas job search intensity reflect the effort-intensity dimension. The very act of goal setting increases effort (Locke & Latham, 1990) and empirical evidence supports a positive relationship between JSC and job search intensity (Cote et al., 2006; Guerrero & Rothstein, 2012; Zikic & Saks, 2009). However, the notion that JSC should increase the use of all job search behaviours is inconsistent with the quality of self-regulation perspective; individuals must not simply increase their behaviours (i.e., effort-intensity), in general, but, more specifically, should increase behaviours that will facilitate goal achievement while decreasing (i.e., resisting) those that do not. Indeed, Baumeister and Vohs (2007) argued that “...the most common function of self-regulation is to stop impulses from producing behavio[u]r” (p. 4). In other words, both the effort-intensity and content-dimension aspects of job search behaviour are important. Goal-systems theory (Kruglanski et al., 2002) provides a useful framework for exploring the multi-dimensionality of job search behaviour.

Goal-systems theory integrates the cognitive and motivational components of goals. It focuses on goal-systems, defined "as the mental representations of motivational networks

composed of inter-connected goals and means" (Kruglanski et al., 2002, p. 334). From a cognitive perspective, goals are inherently connected to the means (i.e., strategies) used to attain them. The number of means represents the number of available options to achieve a goal and is referred to as the equifinality set of the goal (Kruglanski et al., 2002). Some goals have multiple ways in which they can be achieved (i.e., have a large equifinality set) whereas other goals can only be achieved in a singular way (i.e., have a small equifinality set). The size of an equifinality set has important implications for the goal-striving process: large equifinality sets give individuals more choice as to which mean to rely on and also allows individuals to change strategies (i.e., substitute one mean for another) in the event that they are not making progress toward their goal. Small equifinality sets restrict the range of possible behaviours and leave few options for a change of strategy if progress is not being made.

Integrating goal setting theory, image theory, and goal-systems theory suggests that goals with high levels of clarity would have smaller equifinality sets when compared to goals with low levels of clarity. Take, for example, the specific goal of finding a job at a specific organization. The set of activities that an individual can use to achieve this goal are limited because the job must be within a specific organization; the job seeker in this case may check the company website, make cold calls, or visit the organization (among other behaviours). In contrast, a vague goal, such as finding a job in one's educational field, allows for an increased number of organizations to be targeted, and the job seeker may visit the website, call, or visit each of these organizations. In other words, the clarity of a goal directly impacts the range of possible behaviours; clear goals have narrower criteria for success as compared to those that are less clear (e.g., Locke et al., 1987), and thus fewer means are available to accomplish the goal (Kruglanski et al., 2002).

Extending this logic to the context of job search suggests that JSC is negatively related to the size of one's equifinality set. Indeed, a tenet of goal setting theory is that clear goals focus individual's attention toward actions that will facilitate goal accomplishment, and away from other behaviours (Latham et al., 2018). By virtue of having fewer means with which to achieve their goal, job seekers may engage in a less intense job search as compared to a job seeker with high levels of JSC. This suggests that the relationship between JSC and job search intensity is negative, which is in direct opposition to empirical evidence (Cote et al., 2006; Wanberg et al., 2002; Zikic & Saks, 2008) and the effort inducing function of goals as per goal setting theory. These competing hypotheses may be resolved through Pierce and Aguinis's (2013) meta-theoretical principle: too much of a good thing effect (TMGT effect).

The crux of Pierce and Aguinis's (2013) TMGT effect is that relationships which are typically viewed as positive, can be negative past a certain (i.e., inflection) point. Empirical evidence supports the TMGT effect. For example, Grant (2013) found that there was a curvilinear relationship between extraversion and performance for salespersons, and Le and colleagues (2011) found that conscientiousness had a curvilinear relationship with task performance. Accordingly, the TMGT effect suggests that researchers should consider non-linear relationships between variables when supported by theoretical arguments.

In the context of job search, as explained above, high levels of JSC may restrict the range of possible behaviours beyond a certain point. In other words, JSC could be positively or negatively related to job search intensity. The TMGT perspective reconciles the conflicting hypotheses and suggests that both relationships can hold if an inflection point is considered (Pierce & Aguinis, 2013). That is, the motivational effects of goal setting may increase behaviours up to a certain point, predicting a positive relationship between JSC and job search

intensity, at which point the regulating effects of JSC may apply, predicting a negative relationship. To that end, a curvilinear, inverted-U-shaped relationship between JSC and job search intensity is proposed. More specifically, it is predicted that individuals with moderate JSC should engage in a more intensive job search than those with low or high JSC.

H3: The relationships between job search clarity and (a) preparatory and (b) active job search intensity are a curvilinear inverted-U shape, such that the relationships are initially positive but becomes weaker as job search clarity increases.

Finally, in line with van Hoyer's (2018) suggestion to study specific job search behaviours, and consistent with numerous conceptualizations that JSC facilitates high-quality job search behaviour because it focuses job seekers attention and helps minimize distractions during goal-striving (e.g., van Hooft et al., 2012), I also consider the specific job search behaviour of applying to jobs for which one is over or under-qualified. In terms of the dimensionality of job search behaviour, applying to more jobs would reflect the intensity-effort dimension, whereas having job seekers reflect on the direction of their efforts (e.g., if they are applying to jobs for which they are over or underqualified) also allows for the assessment of the content-direction dimension. Doing so is also consistent with the notion that resisting behavioural impulses are essential for effective self-regulation (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Accordingly, it is expected that JSC should decrease the likelihood that job seekers apply to jobs for which they are over- or under-qualified.

H4: Job search clarity is negatively related to the number of applications submitted for jobs in which job seekers deem they are (a) under-qualified and (b) over-qualified.

It may also be that risk-propensity relates to the decision to apply to jobs for which one is over or under-qualified. To be specific, as mentioned earlier, individuals who wish to avoid risk (i.e., those low in risk-propensity) engage in more planning than those who wish to take risks. To date, the job search literature has largely argued that applying to more jobs will improve one's chances of finding employment (e.g., Kanfer et al., 2001). That said, the recruitment and selection literatures recognize the importance of fit; both job seekers and prospective employers are encouraged to consider the compatibility between the individual in the organization when making decisions (Kristoff, 1996). Relevant to the current study is the concept of demands-abilities fit – whether job seekers abilities are aligned with the demands of the job (Edwards, 1996). Research demonstrates that individuals who are either under- or over-qualified for their jobs – that is, who have low demands-abilities fit – experiences negative psychological outcomes such as strain (Edwards, 1996). In this view, applying to jobs for which job seekers are under- or over-qualified could be considered risky. In other words,

H5: Risk-propensity is positively related to the number of applications submitted for jobs in which job seekers deem they are (a) under-qualified and (b) over-qualified.

METHOD

Sample

Data were collected using an online research company (Zoomerang). In order to participate, individuals had to be unemployed and actively searching for employment. The original sample consisted of 187 participants though thirteen were dropped due to non-responses on more than half of the items. A further 29 participants were removed as they indicated they had not applied for any job in the last month, suggesting they were not actively searching for a job. The final sample consisted of 143 participants; 41.3% were female, the mean age was 42.08,

48.3% were Caucasian, 20.3% European, 4.2% Asian, 4.2% African, 4.2% Latin, Central or South American and 18.9% indicated another ethnicity. On average, participants had held 2.16 full-time jobs and had 15.97 years of work experience.

Measures

Job search clarity ($\alpha = .74$) was measured using four items based on the work of Wanberg et al. (2002) and Zikic and Saks (2009). Three extant studies have measured JSC (Cote et al., 2006; Wanberg et al., 2002; Zikic & Saks, 2009), and each of these studies have utilized different measures. The items used for this study were selected based on the original definition of job search clarity (Wanberg et al., 2002), and thus did not include items that were suggestive of a need to have help clarifying their job search goals (e.g., "I need help deciding what type of work I would really enjoy"), nor items specific to specific types of job seekers (e.g., new entrant job seekers: "I have a set goal for the type of job I want to have when I graduate."). The items chosen for the purposes of this study include "I have a clear idea of the type of job that I want to find", "I have a clear idea of the type of company I want to work for", "I have a clear idea of where I want to work" and "I do not have very clear job search objectives" (reverse scored). Participants responded on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree).

Risk-propensity ($\alpha = .76$) was measured using Meertens and Lions (2008) seven-item risk propensity scale. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with seven statements, where 1=totally disagree and 5=totally agree. Sample items include "I prefer to take-risks" and "I do not take risks with my health" (reverse-scored). Thus, higher scores reflect higher risk-taking tendencies.

Job search strategies were measured using the scale developed by Crossley and Highhouse (2005). *Exploratory job search strategy* ($\alpha = .79$) was measured with six items,

including “I gather as much information about all the companies that I can.” *Haphazard job search strategy* ($\alpha = .80$) was measured with four items, including “My approach to gathering job-related information could be described as random.” *Focused job search strategy* ($\alpha = .75$) was measured with six items, including “My information gathering efforts focus on specific jobs.” Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with the statements based on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree).

Job search intensity was measured as a two-dimensional construct in order to capture both the effort-intensity and content-direction dimensions. Participants were asked to indicate how frequently they engaged in twelve different job search behaviours over the past two weeks, where 1=Never (0 times) and 5=Very frequently (10 or more times) using the items from Blau (1993, 1994) and Kopelman et al. (1992). *Preparatory job search behaviours* ($\alpha = .75$) included six measures such as “read the help wanted/classified ads in a newspaper, journal, professional association, or on the internet” and *active job search behaviours* ($\alpha = .72$) was measured through six items including “telephoned a prospective employer.”

The number of applications submitted for jobs in which job seekers were *under and over-qualified* were measured by two items, one reflecting each direction of behaviour. Specifically, job seekers were asked to report how many applications they had filled out over the past four weeks, and then further asked how many of those were jobs for which they were underqualified, and then overqualified.

Control Variables. Though not the focus of the present study, consistent with Study 1, I included measures of job search self-efficacy and past work experience in order to explore their role as antecedents to JSC, as well as to control for their effects on job search

behaviour. Past research suggests job search self-efficacy is one of the best predictors of job search behaviour (Kanfer et al., 2001). Thus, *job search self-efficacy* ($\alpha = .88$) was measured with ten items based on the work of Saks and Ashforth (1999). Respondents were asked to indicate how confident they were that they could successfully complete a number of job search behaviours, including "use social networks to obtain job leads" and "prepare resumes that will get you job interviews", where 1 = not at all confident and 10 = totally confident.

Consistent with the finding of Study 1 that past work experience impacts JSC, the *number of full-time jobs* that job seekers have had was introduced as a control variable. This was measured with a single item, wherein participants entered the number of full-time jobs they have held.

Finally, *gender* was used as a control variable given results that show that males typically engage in a more intensive job search than females (Saks, 2005) and the results of Study 1 which found gender differences in job search strategies. Participants were asked to indicate their gender through a single item.

ANALYSIS

To examine the validity of the proposed model, I conducted confirmatory factor analysis, using AMOS (Arbuckle, 2003). To determine model fit, I used the same standards described above in Study 1. Number of applications submitted for which one was under- and over-qualified were each modeled as single-item latent variables with error variance set to zero (Petrescu, 2013).

Given the sample size ($N=143$) and high ratio of items ($k=41$) to the number of factors ($l=9$), I followed the lead of Koen et al. (2010) who utilized Hall, Snell and Singer Foust's (1999) recommendations of item parceling to more accurately capture overall fit. First, I fit the original

time 1 measurement model (Table 6, model 1) that assumed the presence of nine correlated factors defined by the four to seven items based on their respective scales. As expected, the item-based model's fit did not reach acceptable levels, likely due to the relatively small sample size. Consistent with the recommendations of Hall et al. (1999) and the procedure used by Koen et al. (2010), I parceled items within a given factor based on content analysis and exploratory factor analysis to create smaller subscales. To do so, I combined items from each scale into parcels of two to three items, calculated the average of each item group, and used those as indicators of the latent variables (Hall et al., 1999). The resulting model, (Table 6, model 2) showed acceptable fit to the data, significantly better than a common factor model (Table 6, model 3) and a model (Table 6, model 4) that assumed that all job search behaviours (i.e., preparatory job search intensity, active job search intensity, job search strategies, submitting job applications for which one is over/underqualified) represented a common factor. Taken together, results support the measurement model.

[INSERT TABLE 6 HERE]

To determine if common method variance may have inflated the relationships between variables, I conducted Harmon's one-factor test as per Podsakoff and Organ (1986). Specifically, I conducted an unrotated factor analysis on all items of interest; if less than 20% of the total variance is explained by the first factor, then common method variance is not a serious concern (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). The first factor accounted for 16.03% of the total variance, suggesting that common method variance was not a significant concern.

To alleviate multicollinearity concerns, all regression models were run using centered values of the independent variables (Aiken & West, 1991). More specifically, the quadratic term for JSC was calculated by first centering JSC and then squaring it (Gelman,

2008). Regression analyses were used to test hypotheses 1 and 2. Control variables (job search self-efficacy, gender, number of full-time jobs) were entered in the first step, followed by JSC and risk propensity in the second step. Hypothesis 3 was tested using hierarchical polynomial regression analysis. In Step 1, the control variables (job search self-efficacy, gender, number of full-time jobs) were entered in a regression model predicting job search intensity. In Step 2, JSC and risk propensity were included. In Step 3, the quadratic term for JSC was entered. A statistically significant effect of the quadratic term at this step would provide support for hypothesis 3. Hypotheses 4 and 5 were tested by examining the correlations between variables.

RESULTS

Table 7 provides the descriptive statistics, correlations and reliabilities for this study.

[INSERT TABLE 7 HERE]

Hypotheses 1abc predicted a positive relationship between JSC with the job search strategies of focused and exploratory job search strategies, as well as a negative relationship with haphazard job search strategy. Table 8 shows results of the regression analyses testing these hypotheses. After controlling for job search self-efficacy, number of full-time jobs, and gender, JSC was positively related to the use of both focused ($\beta = .27$, $p = .01$), and exploratory ($\beta = .31$, $p < .001$) job search strategies, and negatively related to the haphazard job search strategy ($\beta = -.43$, $p < .001$). Thus, hypotheses 1abc were supported.

[INSERT TABLE 8 HERE]

Hypotheses 2abc predicted a negative relationship between risk-propensity and focused and exploratory job search strategies, as well as a positive relationship between JSC and haphazard job search strategy. As seen in Table 6, risk propensity was negatively related to the use of focused job search strategies ($\beta = -.27$, $p = .01$), though not related to exploratory ($\beta = .03$, $p = .62$) or haphazard ($\beta = -.03$, $p = .72$) job search strategies. Thus, hypotheses 2a was supported and 2b and 2c were not supported.

Hypothesis 3 was that the relationship between JSC and job search intensity was curvilinear. As above, the study herein measured both preparatory (Hypothesis 3a) and active job search intensity (Hypothesis 3b). The results of the hierarchical polynomial regression analyses are shown in Table 8 and 9 for hypothesis 3a and 3b, respectively. As can be seen in Table 9, the quadratic effect of JSC in Step 3 of the regression model predicting preparatory job search intensity was not statistically significant ($\beta = -.27$, $p = .06$), but it was approaching significance and was in the hypothesized direction. Thus, hypothesis 3a is not supported.

[INSERT TABLE 9 HERE]

As can be seen in Table 10, the quadratic effect of JSC in Step 3 of the regression model predicting active job search intensity was statistically significant ($\beta = -.36$, $p = .01$), as was the linear term for job search clarity ($\beta = .49$, $p = .001$) and risk- propensity ($\beta = .19$, $p = .02$). Thus, hypothesis 3b is supported.

[INSERT TABLE 10 HERE]

Following up on the relationship between the quadratic term of JSC and active job search intensity - the sign of the quadratic effect was negative, indicating that the relationship resembles

an inverted-U shape. This means that an increase in JSC will initially lead to increased active job search intensity, but the relationship will become weaker when job search clarity increases past a certain point. This point reflects the inflection point - which can be calculated as $-b_1/2b_2$, where b_1 is the unstandardized coefficient of the linear term and b_2 is the unstandardized coefficient of the quadratic term (Weisberg, 2005). Thus, the inflection point can be calculated as $-(.48)/2(-.08) = 3$, representing a moderate level of job search clarity (on a Likert-type scale from 1 to 5)⁴. This can also be seen in Figure 3, below.

[INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE]

Hypotheses 4 and 5 predicted a relationship between JSC, risk-propensity and the number of applications submitted to jobs wherein job seekers deemed themselves to be under- or over-qualified, respectively. These hypotheses were tested through examining correlations. As displayed in Table 5, JSC was not significantly related to applications submitted, in terms of total number ($r = -.04$, $p = .66$), under-qualified ($r = -.05$, $p = .53$), or over-qualified ($r = -.04$, $p = .56$), providing no support for hypothesis 4a and b. Risk-propensity was significantly related to applications submitted, in terms of total number ($r = .25$, $p = .01$) and over-qualified ($r = .28$, $p = .001$), but not under-qualified ($r = .16$, $p = .06$). Thus, hypothesis 5b is supported, but not 5a.

Post Hoc Analysis

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the antecedents of job search behaviours. That said, in Study 1, it was found that job search self-efficacy was not a significant

⁴ Though the quadratic term for JSC was not a significant predictor of preparatory job search behaviour, it was approaching significance ($p = .06$). Thus, it is prudent to note that the inflection point would be calculated as: $-b_1/2b_2 = -.33/2(-.06) = 2.75$

predictor of JSC, inconsistent with both social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001) and previous research (e.g., Cote et al., 2006). Thus, post-hoc, I regressed job search self-efficacy on JSC. The results revealed that, after controlling for the number of full-time jobs ($\beta = .06$, $p = .98$) and gender ($\beta = .05$, $p = .34$), job search self-efficacy was positively related to JSC ($\beta = .44$, $p < .001$).

DISCUSSION

The goal of Study 2 was to better understand the antecedents of a range of job search behaviours. Building on the core findings of Study 1, that JSC restricted some, but not all, job search behaviours, Study 2 explored how JSC and risk propensity impacted both the effort-intensity and content-direction of job search behaviours. To do so, Study 2 utilized a sample of actual job seekers as compared to a scenario study (Study 1), thereby increasing external validity through investigating actual job search behaviours rather than intentions.

I found that JSC was related to all the job search strategies as expected. Specifically, JSC was positively associated with focused and exploratory search strategies, and negatively associated with the haphazard strategy. Further, I found that JSC was more strongly correlated to the exploratory strategy ($r = .45$) than the focused job search strategy ($r = .28$). As originally conceptualized, JSC was thought to be most closely related to the focused job search strategy (Stevens & Beach, 1996). The findings of the current study may be explained by the recursive nature of the job search process. At the beginning of one's job search, lower levels of JSC may lead individuals to use an exploratory job search strategy, which in turn, allows job seekers to better understand the employment opportunities that exist and in turn, plan and implement appropriate strategies as they seek to self-regulate toward goal achievement. In doing so,

individuals may be better able to evaluate to which jobs, positions and organizations they are most attracted, thereby increasing their JSC. This is consistent with Zikic and Saks's (2009) finding that using career resources, undergoing training and engaging in career exploration was positively related to JSC. In this way, an exploratory job search strategy seems to parallel a self-regulated learning strategy; by engaging in actions designed to acquire more information about the employment environment, job seekers may become more self-aware and decisive as they move forward (Zimmerman, 1990). Future research should consider how JSC influences initial strategy selection, as well as the recursive nature between these variables.

In terms of strategies, I also found a negative relationship between risk propensity and the focused job search strategy. This suggests that individuals who like to take risks are less likely to rely on a focused job search strategy. This is consistent with research that demonstrates individuals who like to avoid risks engage in more planning behaviours (Meertons & Lion, 2008), ostensibly to reduce the chance of poor outcomes. Although empirical support is limited, the focused job search strategy is associated with positive employment outcomes, such as job satisfaction and fit perceptions (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Koen et al., 2010), the focused job search strategy seems to be a promising way in which job seekers can avoid the risk of gaining low-quality employment. Though risk propensity was not significantly related to the other job search strategies, the control variable of job search self-efficacy was significantly related to exploratory (positive) and haphazard (negative) strategies, though not the focused job search strategy. Moreover, JSC seemed to mediate the effects of job search self-efficacy and the haphazard strategy. Consistent with social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001), it appears that job seekers low in self-efficacy are less likely to set clear job search goals, which in turn, results in more reliance on a haphazard strategy. For the exploratory strategy, job search self-efficacy and

JSC are positively related – believing in one’s competence and having a clear goal results in more actively seeking out a wide range of opportunities. In contrast, job search self-efficacy was not related to the focused search strategy, consistent with Koen et al.’s (2010) finding that career confidence was related to exploratory, but not other job search strategies. Theoretically, the unique antecedents of each strategy support a multi-dimensional conceptualization of job search strategies and highlights the need for ongoing research into the unique antecedents and outcomes of each job search strategy.

Furthermore, Study 2 extends the findings of other studies (e.g., Cote et al., 2006; Zikic & Saks, 2009) regarding the relationship between JSC and job search intensity. In contrast to other studies (Cote et al., 2006; Guerrero & Rothstein, 2012; Zikic & Saks, 2009), I investigated JSC and risk-propensity as antecedents of both dimensions of job search intensity (i.e., preparatory and active). Doing so led to the finding, consistent with Study 1, that the relationship between JSC and job search behaviours is more nuanced than previously thought. Specifically, past research demonstrates a positive relationship between JSC and a broad measure of job search intensity. I found that JSC was not significantly related to preparatory job search behaviours (e.g., exploring job advertisements) and found a curvilinear relationship between JSC and job intensity, such that the relationship is initially positive and becomes negative at a moderate level of JSC. This finding is consistent with the notion that JSC should help job seekers regulate their behaviours (van Hooft et al., 2012), as well as goal-systems theory (Kruglanski et al., 2002) and a growing body of literature that recognizes that the relationships between psychological variables and key outcomes may not be linear (e.g., Grant, 2013; Le et al., 2011; Pierce & Aguinis, 2013).

It is too early to tell how this curvilinear relationship may impact job seekers' job search outcomes. On one hand, high levels of JSC may better enable job seekers to reserve their efforts for those employment opportunities that best match their job search goal, ostensibly enabling them to self-regulate more effectively (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). At the same time, however, goal-systems theory would suggest that such self-imposed behavioural constraints may be problematic if the job seeker is unable to achieve their goal. More specifically, having fewer means to accomplish one's goal (i.e., a smaller equifinality set), suggests that if one job opportunity proves to be unsuccessful, the individual will have fewer alternative opportunities from which to select. Future research should explore both the positive and negative long-term effects of JSC on job seekers' well-being, decision making and job search behaviour.

Investigating job search behaviour as a multi-dimensional construct also offers insight into a literature which tends to favour the effort-intensity dimension over the content-direction or temporal-persistence dimensions (van Hove, 2018). Though no relationships were hypothesized above, an examination of the correlation matrix (Table 5) shows a unique pattern of correlations between preparatory and active job search intensity, job search strategies (i.e., focused, exploratory and haphazard), and the specific behaviours of applying to jobs for which one is under- or over-qualified. Specifically, in Study 2, the exploratory strategy was positively correlated with both preparatory ($r = .47, p < .01$) and active ($r = .46, p < .01$) job search intensity, as well as applying to more jobs ($r = .21, p < .05$), whether under-qualified ($r = .21, p < .05$) or over-qualified ($r = .18, p < .05$). These positive relationships are consistent with the notion that job seekers using an exploratory strategy seek out more information (i.e., engage in more preparatory behaviours) and consider more opportunities (i.e., engage in more active behaviours, apply to more jobs) than other search strategies (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005). In

comparison, the focused strategy was positively correlated with preparatory behaviours ($r = .17$, $p < .05$), and negatively correlated to the number of jobs applied to, in total ($r = -.26$, $p < .01$) and the number of jobs applied to for which the job seeker was over-qualified ($r = -.20$, $p < .05$). These results are consistent with the notion that focused job seekers restrict job seeker efforts to a small subset of employers. Interestingly, the haphazard strategy was related to the focused strategy ($r = .18$, $p < .05$), but no other dimensions of job search behaviour. More research should investigate the interrelationships between various types of job search behaviours. A profile approach to analysis, as has been taken in the careers (e.g., Briscoe & Hall, 2006) and goal orientation (e.g., Yeo et al., 2008), may offer unique insights to the job search literature.

Theoretical Implications

The two studies herein contribute to the job search literature by answering general calls for researchers to consider quality at earlier stages of the job search process (e.g., Boswell et al., 2014; van Hooft et al., 2012). In particular, the studies in this chapter suggest that in the context of job search, clear goals facilitate conscious self-regulation (Karoly, 1993) in some respects, though clear goals may not be enough to ensure job seekers make high-quality job search decisions and thus engage in high-quality behaviours. Risk propensity, for example, also seems to have an impact on the quality of job seekers' behaviours.

The results of both studies highlight that more research is needed that applies, extends and tests goal setting related theories in the job search literature. Given the complexity of the job search process, more emphasis is needed to disentangle the nuanced relationship between goals and multiple types of job search behaviours (Boswell et al., 2012). This includes considering whether the integration of multiple theories suggest complex, and potentially non-linear,

relationships between variables of interest, such as job search clarity and job search intensity. Busse and colleagues (2015) suggest that the TMGT effect can be understood by considering both the benefits and the costs of an antecedent on an account. For example, increasing the quantity of one's job search behaviours may allow the job seekers to obtain more job interviews (Kanfer et al., 2001), but it also consumes self-regulatory resources which in turn may hinder the job seekers' ability to manage impressions effectively (Vohs, Baumeister & Ciarocco, 2005), ultimately making it challenging to gain employment. In other words, the benefits of increasing job search intensity may, at some inflection point, be overshadowed by the costs of doing so.

Finally, the research herein answers and re-affirms the call to simultaneously investigate multiple dimensions of job search behaviour (van Hooft, 2018). Though job search intensity is the most often studied job search behaviour and best-known predictor of employment outcomes, significance variance remains unexplained (Kanfer et al., 2001). This may be due to job search intensity research emphasizing the quantity, rather than quality of job search behaviour (van Hooft et al., 2012). Consistent with the arguments above, given that job search is conceptualized as a self-regulatory process, it is incumbent on research to investigate behaviours as a multi-dimensional construct, employing theory to disentangle the nuanced relationships between antecedents, behaviours, and job search and employment outcomes. Doing so recognizes the inherent complexity of the job search process and may provide more actionable advice for job seekers.

The studies herein echo concerns addressed elsewhere (e.g., Boswell et al., 2012) of the use of scenario studies in job search research. While Study 1 found no relationship between job search self-efficacy and job search clarity, Study 2 demonstrated a significant, positive relationship, consistent with past research (e.g., Cote et al., 2006). Moreover, the measurement

issues regarding scale reliability in Study 1 were not present in Study 2. However, situational and qualitative studies can be particularly valuable as a means of preliminary investigations; given that job search is an emotional and exhausting process (Vinokur & Caplan, 1987), it would be prudent for researchers to ground their propositions in theory, testing and refining those propositions in a way that limits their impact on actual job seekers, such as through scenario studies.

Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, the results of both studies show that although goals facilitate conscious self-regulation (Karoly, 1993), high levels of JSC did not prevent job seekers from engaging in low-quality behaviours (e.g., applying to jobs they have low intentions of accepting). Participants in both studies demonstrated a willingness (intended or actual) to utilize their resources (e.g., time, effort) to apply to jobs that they deemed a low fit with their abilities (e.g., they were under- or over-qualified) or were not inclined to accept. In other words, both studies provide preliminary evidence that job seekers face challenges in engaging in effective self-regulation and may need help self-regulating. Recall that in Chapter 2, I argued that self-regulation can be achieved by moving through different phases learning, beginning with instruction by or observation of others, imitation and practicing in controlled conditions prior to self-regulating on one's own in a dynamic environment (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 1997). Accordingly, it may be beneficial for career counsellors to help job seekers move thoughtfully through the decision-making process in terms of the types of jobs for which they should apply. For example, helping job seekers establish implementation intentions – that is, to specify under which conditions they should (or should not) act (Achtziger, Gollwitzer & Sheeran, 2008) may

help facilitate self-control and in turn, help job seekers realize their goals. Implementation intentions in an if-then format may be particularly useful, such as “if I am an under-qualified for the job, I will not apply for it” or “if I would not accept the job, I will not apply for it.” Doing so recognizes that job seekers must actively resist certain impulses rather than assume such self-control is automatic (Hofmann, Freise & Strack, 2009). Indeed, as Latham and Locke (1991, p. 240) have suggested, “although people are natural self-regulators in that goal-directedness is inherent in the life process, they are not innately effective self-regulators”.

Social support and intentional recognition of potential distractors and courses of action for dealing with them is particularly important given that job search is an emotional process (Vinokur & Caplan, 1987), which may limit job seekers’ ability to think rationally (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005). Indeed, in Study 2, risk-propensity was correlated with applying to more jobs, including those for which one was overqualified which may represent an emotional rather than a logical response and from a self-regulation perspective, may indicate poor self-control (de Ridder, Lensvelt-Mulder, Finkenauer, Stok, & Baumeister, 2012). Alongside of implementation intentions, career counselors could help job seekers be more vigilant or focused in their job search efforts – that is, to focus on increasing the quality of their job search efforts – by reminding job seekers of their goals, as well as the risk of finding poor employment or running out of personal resources (Shah, Friedman & Kruglanski, 2002).

Limitations and Future Research

The findings of Study 2 must be considered in terms of its limitations. First and foremost, the findings cannot be extended to job search and employment outcomes as these were not measured in this study. However, a large body of evidence shows the intensity-outcome link (Cote et al., 2006; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks & Ashforth, 1999; Saks & Ashforth, 2000; Wanberg

et al., 2002) and growing evidence has sought to understand the strategies-outcome links (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Koen et al., 2010). Future research should follow job seekers for a longer period to replicate and validate these findings.

Furthermore, both studies utilized self-report data. Arguably, as job search is a self-regulated process, it follows that job seekers would have the most accurate ability to report their behaviours as compared to others, making it difficult to utilize other sources of data to study the pertinent relationships. Nonetheless, future research should explore other means of measuring job search constructs.

Finally, the data in Study 2 was collected at one point in time, thus the cross-sectional nature of this research prevents causal inferences about the nature of the data and introduces concerns about common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2012). To minimize the potential for common method bias, I adopted both design and procedural methods outlined by Podsakoff and Organ (1986) including choosing behavioural (i.e., job search strategies) and factually based measures (e.g., number of jobs applied for) to minimize subjectivity in responses (Spector & Fox, 2003). Additionally, new sets of instructions were introduced for each, explaining the anchors for each to interrupt routinized responding (Gardner, Cummings, Dunham & Pierce, 1998). Further research can extend these results through a longitudinal design.

CONCLUSION

The studies in Chapter 3 take a nuanced approach in examining the effects of JSC in terms of the quantity and quality of job search behaviour. Specifically, Study 2 found a curvilinear relationship between JSC and active job search intensity, such that JSC initially increases active job search intensity, but decreases intensity at moderate levels of job search clarity. This finding

is consistent with Study 1 which found that JSC regulates some behavioural intentions (i.e., the intention to accept a job) but not all (i.e., the intention to apply to a job). Together, the findings of both studies highlight the complex context in which job searches exist, re-asserting that job search researchers need to integrate theory in order to further understand the relationships between variables. Herein, this was accomplished by developing hypotheses grounded in theory (e.g., goal-systems, goal setting, image theory) to understand how JSC relates to the quality of job search decisions and intended and actual behaviours. More theoretically driven research that explores the antecedents and consequences of JSC and job search behaviours is recommended.

CHAPTER 4:

**JOB SEARCH AS AN ACHIEVEMENT SITUATION: UNDERSTANDING
THE IMPACT OF GOAL ORIENTATION ON JOB SEEKER'S GOALS,
BEHAVIOURS AND OUTCOMES**

ABSTRACT

Individuals' preferences in achievement situations (i.e., goal orientations; GO) have been shown to impact the goals individuals set, the behaviours they engage in, and ultimately the level of performance they achieve. In this chapter, I integrate GO theory into the unfolding model of job search to extend the conceptualization of job search clarity, arguing that it should be multi-dimensional to represent both learning (i.e., job search clarity – process; JSC-P) and performance (i.e., job search clarity – outcomes; JSC-O) goals. My results reveal JSC-P and JSC-O have different antecedents and outcomes. Moreover, learning-approach GO facilitates higher quality self-regulatory behaviours in the job search process as compared to performance-avoid GO through its impacts on JSC-P and job search strategies. Though typically considered dysfunctional, I provide preliminary evidence that performance-avoid GO may offer some positive benefits through its impact on JSC-O, which in turn impacts both job search strategies and job satisfaction once employed. Implications for theory, practice and future research are discussed.

JOB SEARCH AS AN ACHIEVEMENT SITUATION: UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF GOAL ORIENTATION ON JOB SEEKER'S GOALS, BEHAVIOURS AND OUTCOMES

A large body of research suggests that goal orientation (i.e., goal preferences in achievement situations; Dweck, 1986; Payne et al., 2007) has far-reaching impacts on self-regulation strategies. Specifically, goal orientation (GO) impacts the types of goals individuals set, the behaviours they are likely to engage in (or avoid), and how they cope with setbacks (Button et al., 1996; Payne et al., 2007). A growing body of evidence suggests that GO impact how job seekers self-regulate and the outcomes they achieve (e.g., Creed et al., 2009; da Motta Veiga & Turban, 2014; Kanar, 2017; Noordzij et al., 2013; van Hooft & Noordzij, 2009). However, to date, research has not examined how GO impacts the goals job seekers set, or the behaviours they engage in, with the exception of job search intensity (Creed et al., 2009; da Motta Veiga & Turban, 2014; van Hooft & Noordzij, 2009) and seeking guidance from others (Kanar, 2017). These represent important gaps in the literature; job searches begin when individuals establish and commit to a job search goal (Kanfer et al., 2001), suggesting that the goals job seekers set are foundational to the quality of their job search (van Hooft et al., 2013). Job search intensity appears to be unrelated to the quality of job search outcomes (e.g., employment quality; van Hooft, 2018), suggesting that more research is needed to uncover the pathways between job search goals, behaviours and employment quality.

The study in this chapter aims to address several research gaps by examining the impact of GO on job seekers' goals, behaviours and outcomes. Specifically, the goal of the current study is to develop and test a process model that examines the direct and indirect effects of three types of GO (i.e., learning-approach, performance-approach and performance-avoid) across the goal-

establishment, goal-striving and goal-achievement stages of the job search process. Specifically, I explore the relationships between GO in the context of job search and job search goals (i.e., job search clarity), job search behaviours (i.e., strategies) and outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction, satisfaction with job search). Figure 4 summarizes the conceptual framework used herein.

[INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE]

This study makes several contributions. First, this study adds to existing models of job search that suggest that situational differences directly and indirectly influence job search behaviour through the mediating role of goals, and that behaviours in turn influence job search outcomes (Blau, 1993; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2005; van Hooft et al., 2013). That said, most job search research is limited as it often overlooks the direct and indirect role of goals (Boswell et al., 2012; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2005). I add to this research by investigating how job search GO influence goals, behaviours and outcomes, allowing for a comprehensive examination of the unfolding nature of job search process.

Second, drawing on goal setting theory's assertion that for complex tasks, including job search (Latham et al., 2018), individuals should set learning rather than performance goals, I extend the conceptualization of JSC to include learning goals, thereby answering the many unheeded calls to investigate the role of goals in the job search process (Boswell et al., 2004; Boswell et al., 2012; Kanfer et al., 2001; Lui et al., 2014; Saks, 2005; van Hooft et al., 2012). In Chapter 3, I explored the impact on JSC on important behaviours such as the decision to apply to a job, or accept a job, job search intensity and job search strategies. The results provided important insights in terms of how JSC impacts both the quality and quantity of job search

behaviour. The present study builds on these results by seeking to replicate the finding that JSC impacts job search strategies and extends it by introducing another form of JSC – job search clarity – process (JSC-P), defined as the extent to which job seekers have a clear understanding of what they need to learn as they search for work. Doing so recognizes that individuals can have multiple types of goals, the efficacy of which depends on the complexity of the context (Locke & Latham, 1990). Moreover, I extend the nomological network of JSC by exploring it as an intervening mechanism between goal orientations, behaviours and outcomes.

Third, I also extend a growing body of research within job search that predominantly focuses on the impacts of learning-approach GO (Kanar, 2017) by examining the impacts of performance-approach and performance-avoid GOs. It is important to examine performance-approach and performance-avoid GOs because (a) GOs are not mutually exclusive - individuals can score high on all dimensions (Button et al., 1996); (b) one cannot assume that learning-approach GO is the only one leading to positive self-regulation strategies; and (c) if performance-approach and performance-avoid GOs are associated with counterproductive job search strategies, one can reduce the occurrence of these strategies by interventions aimed at reducing performance-approach and performance-avoid GOs in job seekers. Elucidating the nomological network of multiple GOs in the context of job search is a theoretically and practically meaningful way to advance the job search literature. Specifically, by integrating GO theory with goal setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) and theorizing on job search quality (e.g., van Hooft et al., 2013), I develop a more nuanced understanding of mechanisms in the job search process. I accomplish this by building on meta-analytic evidence that job search interventions are more effective when they encourage learning and goal setting (Liu et al., 2014), as well as a large body of evidence that suggests GO can be induced (e.g., Button et al., 1996;

Dragoni, 2005; Noordzij et al., 2013; van Hooft et al., 2009). This line of research, grounded in theory, can help inform practical interventions to help job seekers develop high-quality and avoid low-quality search strategies as they manage the complex and emotional process of looking for a job (McKee Ryan et al., 2005).

To accomplish the aims of this chapter, I recruited undergraduate students (N=168) who were beginning a job search as part of their co-operative education program and followed them for several weeks. Six weeks into their new positions, participants (n=106) responded to a survey assessing their satisfaction with the job and their job search. This chapter proceeds in the following way: first, I review the literature on GOs making the link between GOs and effective self-regulation; second, I review existing literature on GO in the context of job search; next, I leverage insights from past research, goal-setting theory and GO to develop an integrated model of the job search process.

Goal Orientation

Goal orientation is both a trait and state variable that broadly varies across two types: 1) learning GO and 2) performance GO (Dweck, 1986). Individuals with a learning GO tend to focus on increasing their knowledge and task mastery, whereas individuals with a performance GO tend to focus on how they are perceived by others (Dweck, 1986; Elliot & Dweck, 1988). Individuals with a learning GO tend to believe that competence can be developed over time. That is, one's knowledge, abilities, and task mastery can grow over time through effort. Thus, in order to be successful in an achievement situation, individuals with a learning GO believe they need to put in the effort. In contrast, individuals with a performance GO tend to believe that competence is fixed: one either has the ability to be successful or one does not and, by extension, needing to put forth effort suggests that one is incompetent (Dweck, 1986; Elliot & Dweck, 1988).

Generally, a learning GO is associated with more adaptive behaviours and positive outcomes than a performance GO (Payne et al., 2007; VandeWalle et al., 1999; Yeo & Neal, 2004).

Elliot and Thrash (2002) built on the learning vs. performance distinction by introducing two additional dimensions: approach and avoidance. Individuals with an approach orientation tend to focus more on the possibility of success and see obstacles as challenges that can be conquered. Individuals with an avoidance orientation tend to focus more on the possibility of failure, are more attuned to negative stimuli and see challenges as threats to one's self, often leading to negative coping behaviours such as withdrawal (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996). Generally, approach orientations are associated with more adaptive behaviours and outcomes than avoidance orientations (Radosevich et al., 2004).

Taken together, GOs can be organized as a 2x2 matrix such that there are four possible GOs: learning-approach, learning-avoid, performance-approach or performance-avoid. Individuals with a learning-approach GO tend to focus on increasing their competence by focusing on learning, improving their skills and collecting information to facilitate mastery (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986). Individuals with a learning-avoid GO tend to focus on avoiding loss of competence (Elliot & McGregor, 2001). Individuals with a performance-approach GO tend to focus on demonstrating their competence by focusing on managing impressions such that they are perceived as highly capable (Elliot, 1997; Elliot & McGregor, 2001). Individuals with a performance-avoid GO tend to focus on avoiding creating impressions of incompetence, including avoiding failure (Elliot, 1997; Elliot & McGregor, 2001).

Research has typically favoured a three-component conceptualization (i.e., the trichotomous goal framework; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996) that does not include learning-avoid (Xu et al., 2018), largely due to a lack of construct clarity (Payne et al., 2007). Though GO has been

examined in the job search context, no study has examined the learning-avoid dimension (da Motta Viega & Turban, 2014; Kanar, 2017; Noordzij et al., 2013; van Hooft & Noordzij, 2009). Kanar (2017) argued that learning-avoid GO may not be relevant for the job search context as research suggests learning-avoid GO is most relevant in samples wherein individuals have highly developed skills and fear losing them (Elliot, 2005). Accordingly, consistent with existing studies, herein, I consider a three-component conceptualization of GO.

Research consistently demonstrates that GO impacts motivation and performance (Payne et al., 2007; Rawsthorne & Elliot, 1999; Utman, 1997). Broadly speaking, a learning GO has more beneficial effects on behaviours and performance as compared to performance GO, especially compared to performance-avoid GO (Latham et al., 2018; Payne et al., 2007). Specifically, learning-approach GO has been positively linked with self-set goal level (Payne et al., 2007), intentions to put forth effort (Stevens & Gist, 1997), persistence, and deep learning (Elliot et al., 1999; Elliot & McGregor, 2001; Kaplan & Midgley, 1997). Moreover, because learning-approach GO facilitates adaptive behaviours (Dweck, 1986), it is believed to be especially important on complex tasks (Utman, 1997) such as job search (Latham et al., 2018). In contrast, performance-avoid GO seems to be dysfunctional (Brophy, 2005) given its association with low self-efficacy, anxiety, avoidance of help-seeking, fear or failure, and self-handicapping strategies (Conroy & Elliot, 2004; Elliot & McGregor, 2001).

Goal Orientation and Job Search

A growing body of empirical evidence on GO in the context of job search is largely consistent with the core findings above (e.g., da Motta Viega & Turban, 2014; Kanar, 2017; Noordzij et al., 2013; van Hooft & Noordzij, 2009). Notably, some studies have examined job seekers' job search GO (e.g., Creed et al., 2009; da Motta Viega & Turban, 2014; Kanar, 2017),

whereas others induced GO through a training intervention that includes goal setting exercises⁵ (e.g., Noordzij et al., 2013; van Hooft & Noordzij, 2009).

Several studies demonstrate that state learning-approach GO is positively related to job search intensity (Creed et al., 2009; da Motta Viegas & Turban, 2014; van Hooft & Noordzij, 2009) and learning behaviours such as guidance seeking (Kanar, 2017) and learning from failure (Noordzij et al., 2013). For example, Noordzij et al. (2013) recruited unemployed job seekers to participate in a training session to induce a learning-approach GO. Their results demonstrated that, compared to the control group, those in the training session had higher levels of state learning-approach GO and lower levels of state performance-avoid GO. Moreover, their analyses suggests that learning-approach GO was positively related to learning from failure, an awareness of alternative means of searching for a job, as well as self-efficacy, which in turn positively related to intentions to engage in job search behaviour, as well as employment status measured a year later. Taken together, learning-approach GO seems to impact how job seekers self-regulate, as well as their behaviours and outcomes. Moreover, learning-approach GO has been positively linked to the number of job offers received, even after controlling for the number of interviews (Creed et al., 2009) and the likelihood of finding employment (van Hooft & Noordzij, 2009).

In contrast, performance-approach GO has been shown to be unrelated to job search intensity and negatively related to the number of job offers (Creed et al., 2009). Interestingly, van Hooft and Noordzij (2009) found that trait performance-approach GO was related to intended, though not actual job search behaviour, and no significant relationship for state performance-approach GO and intended or actual job search behaviours, nor on the ability to find employment. The

⁵ It is important to highlight that given the dysfunctional nature of performance-avoid GO (Brophy, 2005), researchers have not induced a performance-avoid orientation. Indeed, Noordzij et al. (2013) have also expressed concern about the ethicality of inducing a performance-approach GO given research that suggests it is not beneficial on complex tasks such as job search.

results for performance-approach GO may be explained by the complexity of job search; as with performance goals, performance-approach orientation is best-suited for routine tasks that can be mastered (Davis et al., 2005; Elliot & Thrash, 2002; Latham & Seijts, 2006). In other words, performance-approach GO is unlikely to yield positive effects on a complex task such as job search.

Only three job search studies have examined performance-avoid GO. In a study of new entrant job seekers, Kanar (2017) found that performance-avoid GO was positively related to anxiety. Additionally, in a study of 233 unemployed job seekers, Noordzij et al. (2013) found a significant negative relationship between performance-avoid GO and job search intentions (Noordzij et al., 2013). Creed et al. (2009) did not find significant relationships between performance-avoid GO and job search intensity and the number of job interviews or offers.

Taken together, existing research on GO in the context of job search seems to underscore the beneficial effects of learning-approach GO (Creed et al., 2009; da Motta Veiga & Turban, 2014; Kanar, 2017; Noordzij et al., 2013; van Hooft & Noordzij, 2009). Comparatively less evidence exists regarding the impacts of performance-approach and performance-avoid GO on job search behaviours and outcomes, highlighting the nascent state of the literature (Kanar, 2017). The present study aims to extend existing literature by further exploring the direct and indirect effects of GO on job search. Critically, the consequences of GO parallel the unfolding model of the job search process suggesting that careful application of GO theory to the context of job search may offer numerous insights and points of intervention.

Goal Orientation and Goal Establishment

Meta-analytic evidence (Payne et al., 2007) suggests that GO has a direct impact on the goals that individuals set. Outside of job search, Brett and VandeWalle (1999) demonstrated that trait

GO was related to goal content. In a sample of 262 MBA students participating in a training program on presentation skills, they found that a learning-approach GO was positively related to the goals of developing new and refining existing skills (i.e., learning goals). Performance-avoid GO was positively related to the goal to be viewed positively in comparison to others and avoiding negative evaluations (i.e., outcome goals).

Recall that in Chapter 2, I argued that JSC reflects a clear performance goal as it enumerates numerous standards that signal goal achievement (i.e., effectively finding a job that meets predetermined job criteria) and is thus heretofore referred to as JSC-Outcomes (JSC-O). Accordingly, I argue that performance GOs are related to JSC-O because they energize behaviour which directs an individual toward getting a job (working hard; Seijts & Latham, 2006), rather than on the development of strategies to getting a job (working smart; Seijts & Latham, 2006). Specifically setting a clear outcome goal may signal to important others (e.g., potential employers, friends, career counselors) that the job seeker is well-informed in terms of their abilities and does not need to seek guidance to move forward (Elliot & Moller, 2003). In doing so, setting a clear outcome goal is consistent with the performance-approach GO's focus on demonstrating competence, as well as performance-avoid GO's focus on avoiding displays of incompetence.

Hypothesis 1: a) Performance-approach and b) performance-avoid goal orientation are positively related to JSC-O.

Both GO and goal-setting theories recognize the importance of learning goals for complex tasks. On this basis, I introduce the concept of JSC-Process (JSC-P). I define JSC-P as having a clear idea as to the behaviours and strategies needed to successfully achieve one's job

search goal. As such, JSC-P reflects a learning goal, recognizing that an emphasis on learning is the best way to achieve success on a complex task, such as job search (Seijts & Latham, 2005; Latham et al., 2018). Because individuals with a learning GO view competence as malleable, they are more motivated to seek out feedback and gather information in order to master the task, as opposed to those with a performance GO who see competence as fixed (Dweck, 1986; VandeWalle et al., 2000). Doing so allows those with a learning GO to be adaptable, a key component of self-regulation (Diefendorff & Lord, 2008). Consistent with the above theorizing, as well as research evidence that learning-approach GO is positively related to self-regulatory behaviours in the job search process (Noordzij et al., 2013), I argue that learning-approach GO will positively relate to JSC-P given its emphasis on skill development and mastery.

Hypothesis 2: Learning-approach is positively related to JSC-P.

Now that I have developed hypotheses for the relationship between GO and goal setting, I turn to the next stage in the job search process: goal-striving. Extant models of job search suggest that both individual differences (e.g., GO) and goal characteristics (e.g., JSC) impact job search behaviours (e.g., strategies).

Goal Orientation and Goal Striving

In Chapter 3, and consistent with the theorizing of Stevens and Beach (1996), Study 2 found that JSC-O was positively related to the use of the exploratory and focused strategies, and negatively related to the use of a haphazard strategy. The current study builds on these findings by suggesting that JSC-P and JSC-O are uniquely related to the use of exploratory, focused, and haphazard job search strategies. These strategies capture how job seekers collect and process information with respect to job opportunities (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Koen et al., 2010).

As discussed in both Studies 1 and 2 (Chapter 3) job search strategies represent important job search behaviours. As defined previously, a *focused* strategy is when a job seeker collects information about a relatively small and clearly defined number of job opportunities, an *exploratory* strategy is when a person collects information from a relatively large number of job opportunities and a *haphazard* strategy is when a person seeks job opportunities in a somewhat random manner (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Stevens & Beach, 1996).

Importantly, evidence suggests that setting specific learning goals can facilitate self-regulation by drawing attention away from the outcome and towards the process of seeking out, analyzing and applying information, leading to an increase in individuals' performance capacity and task motivation (e.g., Seijts & Latham, 2005; van Hooft & Noordzig, 2009; Zimmerman & Bonner, 1996). Recall that setting goals motivates individuals to develop strategies to achieve those goals (Locke & Latham, 1990). Research demonstrates that individuals who set learning goals spend more time seeking out and analyzing information (Seijts & Latham, 2005) thereby allowing them to gain the requisite knowledge to facilitate performance (Fitts, 1964; Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989; Zimmerman & Bonner, 1996). Learning is especially critical in an employment context that is constantly changing and thus calls attention to individuals' capacity to learn and adapt (Savickas et al., 2009). Given the exploratory strategy's emphasis on seeking out and processing information from a wide range of opportunities, it is expected that learning-approach GO is positively related to the exploratory job search strategy through the mediating role of JSC-P. This argument recognizes that clear learning goals (i.e., high levels of JSC-P) facilitate more knowledge and skill development than do clear performance goals (Miller, Lehman & Koedinger, 1999).

Hypothesis 3: JSC-P mediates the relationship between learning-approach GO and the use of an exploratory job search strategy.

In contrast, because JSC-O is conceptualized as a clear outcome goal, it may impede job seekers' learning processes by focusing job seekers' attention solely on the end state (e.g., finding a job) rather than understanding which means (e.g., behaviours) will allow them to achieve their employment goals (Newell & Simon, 1972). Indeed, Locke and Latham (2006) argued that focusing on a specific performance outcome during complex tasks may lead to "tunnel vision" (p. 266) (see Seijts & Latham, 2001; Latham & Brown, 2006). Specifically, having a specific performance goal (i.e., high levels of JSC-O) is thought to limit learning behaviours such as information and feedback seeking. In other words, I do not expect JSC-O to be related to the exploratory strategy. Instead, high JSC-O is expected to lead jobs seekers to concentrate on a small number of opportunities consistent with the focused job search strategy.

Interestingly, a focused job search strategy may align with the goals of both performance-approach and performance-avoid GO. Specifically, recall that fear of failure is an antecedent of performance-avoid GO (Elliot & Thrash, 2002). Additionally, research demonstrates that by refraining from seeking feedback, performance-avoid oriented individuals can protect themselves from other's negative assessments (Payne et al., 2007). In the process of searching for a job, this may be borne out by limiting one's search efforts to a small subset of potential employment opportunities. Specifically, by not applying to opportunities, performance-avoid job seekers may avoid being negatively evaluated by perspective employers.

The focused job search strategy may also be preferred by performance-approach job seekers. Recall that individuals with both performance-approach and performance-avoid GOs have an

implicit belief that ability is unchangeable and that exerting high levels of effort is indicative of incompetence (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Limiting one's search efforts to a small subset of potential employment opportunities may be a practical way in which job seekers with a performance-approach GO can demonstrate their competence and confidence in themselves. By restricting the number of employment opportunities that they apply to, performance-oriented job seekers can signal that they do not need to apply to many jobs in order to obtain one. Moreover, by applying to fewer opportunities, performance-oriented individuals may also limit the risk of being rejected, thereby minimizing opportunities to feel incompetent.

Hypothesis 4: JSC-O mediates the relationship between a) performance-approach GO and b) performance-avoid GO and the use of a focused job search strategy

Thus far, I have considered the impact of GO, JSC-O and JSC-P on focused and exploratory, but not haphazard strategy. The haphazard strategy is thought to occur when job seekers do not have a clear job search goal (i.e., low JSC-O) and thus seem to engage in a trial-and-error type approach to their job search (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Stevens & Beach, 1996). Importantly, research suggests that for some individuals, performance goals lead to feelings of anxiety, which in turn, may lead them to “try anything and everything” to achieve their goal – ultimately, resulting in the use of inefficient task-relevant strategies (Seijts & Latham, 2001). Seijts and Latham offer the example of a novice golfer with a goal of achieving a score of 95 (i.e., a clear outcome goal). Focusing on the score may prevent the novice golfer from learning about the techniques (e.g., how to swing the club effectively) or tools (e.g., the purpose of different clubs). Ultimately, this might lead the novice golfer to haphazardly change clubs without rationale, hoping to improve their performance, but because they have not acquired

the knowledge to do so, they are likely to inefficiently cycle through several strategies. In other words, a haphazard strategy does not facilitate learning, and is thus expected to be negatively related to learning-approach GO and JSC-P.

Hypothesis 5: JSC-P mediates the relationship between learning-approach GO and the use of a haphazard job search strategy.

To continue, performance-avoid GO tends to be dysfunctional and indicative of poor self-regulation (Brophy, 2005) as indicated by its association with fear of failure, procrastination and anxiety (Elliot & McGregor, 2001; Kanar, 2017). Consistent with this, research suggests that the haphazard strategy represents low-quality self-regulation in job search, given its negative association with job search and employment outcomes (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; van Hove, 2018). Thus, in terms of direct effects, it is expected that performance-avoid GO is positively related to the haphazard strategy. In terms of indirect effects, recall that previously, I predicted that performance-avoid GO would be positively related to JSC-O and in Study 2, I hypothesized and found a negative relationship between JSC-O and the haphazard strategy. Consistent with the notion that goals facilitate conscious self-regulation (Ouellete & Wood, 1998), setting a clear outcome goal may be one way in which job seekers with a performance-avoid GO are able to mitigate the dysfunctional effects of performance-avoid GO. In other words, performance-avoid GO is predicted to have a direct negative relationship with the haphazard strategy, the effects of which can be alleviated through the mediating role of JSC-O.

Hypothesis 6: Performance-avoid GO is positively related to the use of a haphazard strategy.

Hypothesis 7: JSC-O mediates the relationship between performance-avoid GO and the use of a haphazard job search strategy.

Goal Orientation and Goal Achievement

Finding employment marks the end of the job search process, leading much job search research to assess the success of job search efforts through employment status (i.e., employed or unemployed), the number of job offers received, or the length of time needed to find a job (Kanfer et al., 2001). However, it's important to highlight that finding employment is not synonymous with finding high-quality employment (van Hooft et al., 2012). From a quality perspective, employment outcomes are typically assessed through multiple measures, including job satisfaction, satisfaction with the job search and measures of fit (e.g., needs-supply, person-job, etc.) (e.g., Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Koen et al., 2010; van Hooft et al., 2011, 2012; Wanberg et al., 2002). Though meta-analytic evidence and other research has outlined several antecedents of employment status, number of job offers or length of time to find employment (e.g., job search intensity, job search effort), these antecedents do not predict meaningful variance in employment quality (Kanfer et al., 2001; Vinokur & Schul, 2002; Wanberg et al., 2002).

Moving beyond intensity-effort measures of job search behaviours (i.e., job search intensity) and toward content-direction (i.e., job search strategies) measures may help bridge the gap in terms of antecedents to employment quality (Koen et al., 2010; van Hooft et al., 2018). Preliminary evidence on the relationship between job search strategies and quality of outcomes is mixed. One study (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005) found that the haphazard strategy is negatively related, and the focused strategy was positively related, to quality of employment outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, satisfaction with job search). Koen et al. (2010) found no significant relationship between the haphazard and focused strategies and employment quality, as assessed by needs-

supply fit, job satisfaction and turnover intentions. For the exploratory job search strategy, Crossley and Highhouse (2005) found a positive relationship with satisfaction with job search, and Koen et al. (2010) found a negative relationship with employment quality. Rather than posit new connections between job search strategies and outcomes, I investigate relationships hypothesized elsewhere (e.g., Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Koen et al., 2010) in order to offer additional validity through replication. Specifically, I examine job satisfaction – one of the most frequently studied attitudes in organizational behaviour (Tett & Meyer, 1993) – as well as satisfaction with job search. As conceptualized by Crossley and Highhouse (2005), satisfaction with job search represents a reflective measure wherein job seekers think about the process they used to look for jobs and whether they would use it again. Given the current study's focus on the adaptive and dysfunctional nature of learning-approach and performance-avoid GOs, respectively, I am interested in investigating whether job seekers demonstrate an appreciation for the process they used.

Hypothesis 8: (a) Exploratory and (b) focused job search strategies are positively related, and (c) a haphazard job search strategy is negatively related, to job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 9: (a) Exploratory and (b) focused job search strategies are positively related, and (c) a haphazard job search strategy is negatively related to, satisfaction with job search.

METHOD

Students in the co-operative education program at a mid-sized Canadian university were invited to participate in a study on job search through advertisements posted on the research participation pool website. The advertisements asked for students, who were about to embark on

a job search for their upcoming semester of co-operative education, to participate in a multi-wave study over four time periods. In exchange for participation, participants were offered research participation credits to be allocated as bonus marks to their coursework for participating through Times 1 to 3, as well as a gift card of small-monetary value to Amazon for participating at Time 4. Interested students signed up via an online website.

Four waves of data were collected. Conversations with Career Services at the university helped organize the timing for this study. Specifically, based on advice that most students do not begin formally looking for employment for their co-operative education term until early in the preceding semester, Time 1 took place within the first two weeks of the semester prior to the work term. Participants attended an in-person session that explained the purpose and process of the research study, answered any questions they had and then completed a computer-based questionnaire that measured individual differences (e.g., GOs), biographical variables (e.g., gender, employment history), as well as their job search goals (e.g., JSC-P and JSC-O). Participants were also asked whether they had gained employment at this time; seven participants indicated they had and were thus removed from further data analysis.

Participants were contacted two weeks later (Time 2) via e-mail. This two-week interval was selected based on a number of factors, including reducing demands on the participants who were simultaneously looking for employment and enrolled at the university with a full-time course load, as well as the timelines imposed by Career Services at the university for how the job search process would unfold. At Time 2, e-mails were sent to participants directing them to complete an online questionnaire that assessed their job search goals (e.g., JSC-O, JSC-P) and current employment status (e.g., employed or unemployed). One hundred and ninety-nine out of the 204

original participants completed the study at Time 2, for a 97.5% response rate. Fifteen participants had found employment at this time.

Time 3 occurred an additional two weeks later; again, this time lapse was selected based on the advice of Career Services. At Time 3, e-mails were once again sent to participants, directing them to complete an online questionnaire that asked about behaviours over the previous two weeks (e.g., job search strategies), and current employment status (e.g., employed or unemployed). One hundred and sixty-eight participants responded at Time 3 (82.4% response rate), at which time an additional 48 participants had found employment.

Time 4 occurred once participants were employed, approximately four months after Time 3. Following advice from Career Services, as well as research that suggests that individuals experience elevated levels of satisfaction in the beginning of new employment opportunities (Boswell et al., 2009), participants were contacted eight weeks into their 16-week job placement. A total of 106 participants responded at Time 4, resulting in a final response rate of 51.9%.

Measures

Goal orientation was measured at Time 1 using Elliot and McGregor's (2001) goal orientation measure and contextualizing it within the process of job search as has been utilized in other research (e.g., Kanar, 2017; Noordzij et al., 2013). Specifically, learning-approach GO ($\alpha = .68$) was assessed with three items including "I want to learn as much as possible from my job search." Performance-approach GO ($\alpha = .91$) was assessed with three items including "It is important for me to do well compared to others in this job search." Performance-avoid GO ($\alpha = .70$) was assessed with three items including "My fear of performing poorly in my job search is what motivates me." Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with each item on a 7-point Likert type scale (1=not at all true of me; 7=very true of me).

Job search clarity - Outcomes ($\alpha = .88$) was measured at Time 2 using three items based on the work of Wanberg et al. (2002) and Zikic and Saks (2009). Sample items include “I have a clear idea of the type of company I want to work for” and “I do not have very clear job search objectives” (reverse scored) (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree).

Job search clarity - Process ($\alpha = .79$), was measured using three items created for the purposes of this study based on the work of Brett and VandeWalle (1999). Sample items include “I know what job search skills I need to further develop” and “I have a clear idea of how I will build my job search skills” (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree).

Job search strategies were measured at Time 3 using the three-dimensional scale by Crossley and Highhouse (2005). *Exploratory* ($\alpha = .86$) was measured with five items, including “I gather as much information about all the companies that I can” and “I try to get my resume out to as many organizations as possible.” *Haphazard* ($\alpha = .87$) was measured with four items. Examples include “My approach to gathering job-related information could be described as random” and “I do not really have a plan when searching for my job.” *Focused* ($\alpha = .81$) was measured with six items, including “My information gathering efforts focus on specific jobs” and “I gather information only for jobs that I know I qualify for.” Participants were asked to reflect on their behaviour over the course of their job search thus far indicate their agreement with the statements based on a 5-point scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree).

Job satisfaction ($\alpha = .82$) was measured at Time 4 with two items based on the work of Cammann and colleagues (1983). These items were “All in all, I am satisfied with my job” and “In general, I don’t like my job” which was reverse-coded (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree).

Satisfaction with job search ($\alpha = .79$) was also measured at Time 4 with four items based on the work of Crossley and Highhouse (2005). Sample items include “I am happy with the way I went about finding this job” and “I would search for another job using the same techniques that I used to find this one” (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly disagree).

Control Variables

Gender (coded as 1=male; 0=female), *financial need* and *work experience* are often reported as correlates of job-search behaviours and outcomes (Kanfer et al., 2001; Wanberg et al., 2002) and were therefore used as control variables. All were measured at Time 1. *Financial need* ($\alpha = .80$) was assessed with four-items based on the work of Vinokur and Caplan (1987) and Wanberg et al. (2002). A sample item includes “It is difficult for me to live on my total income right now” (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree). *Work experience* was assessed by asking participants to indicate the number of full-time jobs they have held in their career thus far. Following Koen et al. (2010), I also included *job-search intensity* ($\alpha = .93$) at Time 3 to test the incremental value of job search strategies in predicting the proposed outcomes. Participants indicated how frequently (1=never [0 times] to 5=very frequently [at least 10 times]) they had engaged in 13 job-search behaviours over their job search thus far (Blau, 1994).

Analyses

The three dimensions of GO, as well as JSC-O, and job satisfaction were negatively skewed. As a result, these variables were squared transformed following the advice of Osborne (2008). Doing so alleviated skewness concerns. The proceeding analysis was conducted using the transformed variables.

As recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), I first conducted confirmatory factor analyses to test the fit of my measurement models at Time 1, Time 2, Time 3 and Time 4,

followed by a measurement model across all time periods. Next, I used structural equation modeling to test the hypotheses.

While sample bias is a concern in multi-wave studies, I find it may not be a cause for concern here because gender ($F = 2.41, p = .12$), age ($F = .05, p = .83$), year of study ($F = .09, p = .76$) and work experience ($F = .29, p = .59$) from the first wave of data collection were not significantly different from those who dropped out of the study.

RESULTS

Measurement model

To test for conceptual distinctness across the scales used, I conducted confirmatory factor analysis, using AMOS (Arbuckle, 2003). I compared the proposed measurement model with alternatives that emerged. To determine model fit, I used the same standards described above in Study 1 and 2.

[INSERT TABLE 11 HERE]

Time 1 Measurement Model

The original Time 1 measurement model (Table 11, model 1) assumed the presence of three correlated factors that represent the constructs learning-approach, performance-approach, and performance avoid GO. Each factor was defined by three items per their respective scales. Two additional models, one (Table 11, model 2) with 9 items loading on two factors (learning, performance) and the other (Table 11, model 3) with all nine items loading on a common factor were also assessed. The original three-component model had the best fit.

Time 2 Measurement Model

The original Time 2 measurement model (Table 11, model 4) assumed the presence of two correlated factors that represent the constructs JSC-O and JSC-P. Each factor was defined by three items as per their respective scales. A second model with all six items defining a common factor was also assessed (Table 11, model 5). The original, two component model had the best fit.

Time 3 Measurement Model

The original Time 3 measurement model (Table 11, model 3) assumed the presence of three correlated factors that represent each job search strategy. Three items showed low loadings (i.e., less than .40) onto their corresponding factor and were thus excluded from further analyses. The excluded item from the focused job search strategy⁶ showed the lowest factor loading in the original scale, as was one of the excluded items from the exploratory job search strategy⁷ (cf., Crossley & Highhouse, 2005). The other excluded item from the exploratory job search strategy⁸ was amongst the highest factor loading in the original scale, though the difference may be explained, in part, by the different type of job seeker (Boswell et al., 2012) – herein, participants are undergraduate students actively searching for work through the help of Career Services and their co-operative education program, whereas the original scale was developed in a sample of multiple types of participants (e.g., employed individuals and undergraduate students) reflecting on past job search experiences. Deleting these items led to an improved model fit (Table 11, model 7) and increased validity and reliability without meaningfully changing the operational

⁶ From the focused job search strategy scale: “I had a clear idea of what qualities I wanted in a job”.

⁷ From the exploratory job search strategy scale: “I gathered information about all possible job opportunities, rather than setting out for something specific”.

⁸ From the exploratory job search strategy scale: “I gathered as much information about all the companies that I could”.

definition of the scales. Correlations between factors were weak (i.e., less than .30). Nonetheless, to ensure that the factors represented distinct constructs, I compared the adjusted model (Table 11, model 7) with a common factor model (Table 11 model 8) to represent a common factor. The findings suggest the adjusted three factor model has the best fit.

Time 4 Measurement Model

The original Time 4 measurement model (Table 11, model 9) assumed the presence of two correlated factors. A second model with all six items defining one common factor was also assessed (Table 11, model 10). The original, two-factor model had the best fit.

Times 1 to 4 Measurement Model

The original measurement model for all variables measured from Time 1 to Time 4 (Table 11, model 11) assumed the presence of ten factors. A second model with all 34 items defining four common factors (one for each time period) was also assessed (Table 11, model 12), as was a common factor model (Table 11, model 13). The original two factor model had the best fit ($\Delta\chi^2 = 623.07$, $p < .05$; $\Delta CFI = .28$ and $\Delta\chi^2 = 1228.81$, $p < .05$; $\Delta CFI = .56$, respectively).

Structural Model

Table 12 presents the means, standard deviations, internal consistencies, and correlations between the variables measured at Times 1 through 4. Consistent with expectations, learning-approach and performance-avoid GOs were related to clarity of job seekers goals, which in turn were related to the job search strategies in which they engaged. Contrary to expectations, performance-approach GO was not related to JSC-O, and none of the job search strategies were significantly correlated with employment outcomes (job satisfaction, satisfaction with job search).

[INSERT TABLE 12 HERE]

To test the hypotheses, I used a structural equation model comparison procedure (Byrne, 2001) as outlined by Mathieu and Taylor (2006). Specifically, the relationships between job search GO, JSC (outcomes and process) and job search strategies, were tested based on data called on participants who completed all measures from Time 1 to 3 ($N = 168$). The estimated relationships between the predictor variables and employment outcomes were based on the participants who participated at Time 4 ($n = 106$) using maximum likelihood estimation procedures.

Following the recommendations of Mathieu and Taylor (2006), numerous models were compared. Compared models included (a) a saturated model that included all direct and indirect relationships between all variables; (b) a direct model, assuming only direct relationships between GO and outcomes assuming no links with job search clarity or job search strategies; (c) the first indirect model, assuming only indirect relationships between GO and employment outcomes via job search clarity; (d) the second indirect model, assuming only indirect relationships between GO and employment outcomes via job search strategies; (e) the third indirect model, assuming indirect relationships between GO and employment outcomes via both job search clarity and job search strategies; (f) the proposed model (see Figure 2), which represents a more parsimonious version of the indirect models; and (g) the final model, which includes adjustments to the proposed model based on the additional direct paths that were significant in the prior models (see Figure 6). Finally, I tested for the stability of the final model after including control variables. The SEM analyses for the competing models are summarized in Table 13.

[INSERT TABLE 13 HERE]

Alternative Models

The saturated model (Table 13, model 1) exhibited poor fit to the data. The model showed four non-hypothesized direct effects: between learning-approach GO and exploratory job search strategy, learning-approach GO and haphazard job search strategy, JSC-P and the focused job search strategy, as well as between JSC-O and job satisfaction.

The direct model (Table 13, model 2) exhibited very poor fit to the data and was not significantly different from the saturated model. These results suggest the indirect links between GO and at least one of job search clarity or job search strategies are relevant (Mathieu & Taylor, 2006).

I tested three indirect models to accommodate the four waves of data that were collected. The first indirect model (Table 13, model 3) exhibited poor fit to the data. Similarly, the second and third indirect models (Table 13, model 4 and 5, respectively) exhibited poor fit to the data. Taken together, these results suggest that job search clarity and job search strategies might play a role in indirectly linking goal orientation to employment outcomes (Mathieu & Taylor, 2006).

[INSERT FIGURE 5 HERE]

Proposed model

The proposed model (Table 13, model 6) provided a level of fit that was approaching acceptable levels. The proposed model did not fit significantly better than the saturated model, suggesting the importance of direct and indirect effects between goal orientation and outcomes (Mathieu & Taylor, 2006). Accordingly, I included the four direct paths that were significant in the saturated model to the final model. That is, I included the effects of learning-approach GO on

the exploratory job search strategy, learning-approach GO on haphazard job search strategy, JSC-P on focused job search strategy and the effects of JSC-O on job satisfaction.

Final model

The final model (Table 13, model 7) yielded a good fit to the data, better than the proposed ($\Delta\chi^2 = 31.32, p < .05; \Delta CFI = .12$) and saturated models ($\Delta\chi^2 = 7.29, p > .05; \Delta CFI = .02$). For example, the saturated model was deemed deficient as TLI was below .90, RMSEA exceeded .08 and the Chi-Square/df ratio exceeded 3 (Byrne, 2001; Mathieu & Taylor, 2006).

Hypothesis 1a predicted a positive relationship between performance-approach GO and JSC-O. Contrary to Hypothesis 1a, the relationship was not significant ($\lambda = .03, p = .17$). Hypothesis 1b, which was that performance-avoid GO was positively related to JSC-O was supported ($\lambda = .19, p = .05$). In line with Hypothesis 2, which predicted a positive relationship between learning-approach GO and JSC-P, a significant positive relationship was found ($\lambda = .23, p < .001$). Hypothesis 3 predicted that JSC-P mediated relationship between learning-approach GO and the exploratory job search strategy. The significant, positive relationship between JSC-P and exploratory job search strategy was retained ($\lambda = .23, p < .001$), even after adding the non-hypothesized direct path between learning-approach GO and the exploratory job search strategy found ($\lambda = .21, p = .01$), providing partial support for Hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 4a, that JSC-O mediates the relationship between performance-approach GO and the focused job search strategy, was not supported given that hypothesis 1a was not supported. However, Hypothesis 4b, JSC-O mediates the relationship between performance-avoid GO and the focused job search strategy was supported ($\lambda = .32, p < .001$). Hypothesis 5, that JSC-P would be negatively related to the haphazard strategy was not supported ($\lambda = .03, p = .99$),

though a non-proposed direct link between learning-approach GO and haphazard was significant ($\lambda = -.19$, $p = .04$). Hypothesis 6 predicted a negative relationship between performance-avoid GO and haphazard strategy and was supported ($\lambda = .30$, $p = .01$), as was Hypothesis 7 that predicted a relationship between JSC-O and haphazard strategy ($\lambda = -.24$, $p = .01$).

Hypotheses 8abc predicted relationships between job search strategies and job satisfaction, however neither the focused ($\lambda = .11$, $p = .28$), exploratory ($\lambda = .23$, $p = .78$) or haphazard ($\lambda = .10$, $p = .28$) strategy was related to job satisfaction. However, a non-proposed significant and positive relationship was found between JSC-O and job satisfaction ($\lambda = .28$, $p = .002$). Finally, Hypotheses 9abc predicted significant relationships between job search strategies and satisfaction with job search. In support of hypotheses 9a and 9c, significant relationships were found between exploratory ($\lambda = .23$, $p = .01$) and haphazard ($\lambda = -.37$, $p < .001$). strategies and satisfaction with one's job search. Hypothesis 9b, that the focused job search strategy would be related to satisfaction with one's job search was not supported ($\lambda = .05$, $p = .59$). These results are summarized in Figure 6.

[INSERT FIGURE 6 HERE]

In total, 5% of the variance in JSC-P was explained by learning-approach GO and 4% of the variance in JSC-O was explained by performance-avoid GO. In terms of job search strategies, 12% of the total variance in exploratory job search strategy was explained by learning-approach GO and JSC-P, 17% of the total variance in focused job search strategy was explained by JSC-P and JSC-O, and 12% of the total variance in haphazard job search strategy was explained by performance-avoid GO, learning-approach GO and JSC-O. In terms of job search outcomes,

12% of the variance in job satisfaction was explained by JSC-O and 16% of the variance in satisfaction with job search was explained by haphazard and exploratory job search strategies.

Indirect effects

To summarize, the results suggest that JSC serves as a mediator between GO and job search strategies and outcomes, and that job search strategies serve as a mediator between GO, JSC and satisfaction with job search. To test the significance of these indirect effects, I ran a bootstrap procedure in AMOS, using bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (Cheung & Lau, 2008). The results of this analysis suggest that the indirect effect between performance-avoid GO and the haphazard and focused job search strategies are significant ($\lambda = -.04$, $p = .01$, CI $[-.13, -.01]$; $\lambda = .07$, $p = .03$, CI $[.01, .16]$ respectively), as is the indirect effect between performance-avoid GO and job satisfaction ($\lambda = .09$, $p = .03$, CI $[.02, .16]$). The indirect effect between learning-approach GO and exploratory and focused job search strategies are significant ($\lambda = .10$, $p = .01$, CI $[.02, .12]$; $\lambda = .06$, $p = .02$, CI $[.04, .21]$ respectively), as is the indirect effect between learning-approach GO and satisfaction with job search ($\lambda = .12$, $p = .02$, CI $[.03, .22]$). The indirect effect between JSC-P and satisfaction with job search is also significant $\lambda = .09$, $p = .03$, CI $[.02, .23]$). In other words, all indirect effects are significant, supporting partial mediation.

Control Variables and Job Search Intensity

In order to determine if the significant relationships in the final model remained after controlling for gender, financial need, previous full-time work experience, I allowed these variables to covary with each component of GO, as well as have a link to each other variable in the model (Table 11, model 8). The standardized regression weights of the relationships reported in the final model remained relatively consistent – most relationships remained unchanged. Those that were impacted experienced marginal changes of +/- .02 with two exceptions: the

relationship between exploratory job search strategy and satisfaction with job search decreased by .05 and the relationship between JSC-O and the focused job search strategy decreased by .07. None of the control variables were significantly related to either JSC-O, focused or exploratory job search strategies. However, gender (where 1=male and 0=female) was significantly related to both job satisfaction ($\lambda = -.31$, $p = .01$) and satisfaction with job search ($\lambda = -.11$, $p = .04$).

The stability of the standardized regression weights remained when job search intensity was set to covary with the variables in the final model. The only meaningful relationship that emerged was between performance-approach GO and job search intensity ($\lambda = .23$, $p = .01$). Job search intensity was not significantly related to either dimension of JSC and did not add to the prediction of job satisfaction or satisfaction with job search. These results replicate those of Koen et al. (2010) who argued that the quality of job seekers efforts is more important than the quantity of those efforts.

DISCUSSION

This study predicted that GO would have direct and indirect effects on the ways in which job seekers self-regulate during their search. Building on GO theory (Dweck, 1986), goal setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) and integrative models of job search quality (van Hooft et al., 2012), I explored the relationships between GO, JSC, job search strategies and employment quality. The results confirm that state learning-approach GO results in higher quality job search behaviours (i.e., exploratory and focused strategies) than does performance-avoid GO (i.e., haphazard strategy), building on extant research that learning-approach GO impacts the quantity of job search behaviours and outcomes (e.g., job search intensity, the number of offers received and employment status; Creed et al., 2009; Noordzij et al., 2013; van Hooft & Noordzij, 2009). Specifically, I demonstrated for the first time that learning-approach GO impacts the goals job

seekers set for themselves, as well as has a direct relationship with job search strategies.

Critically, learning-approach GO is positively related to exploratory job search strategy and negatively related to haphazard strategy, which in turn impact feelings of satisfaction with one's job search. The results confirm the importance of examining goal constructs given the foundational role of goals in the job search process (Boswell et al., 2012; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2005).

The results herein are consistent with meta-analytic results that found performance-approach GO was largely unrelated to the proximal and distal outcomes under study (Payne et al., 2007), as well as the results of van Hooft and Noordzij (2009) who found no significant effects of performance-approach GO on job seekers' behaviours or outcomes. Inconsistent with past research, I did find that performance-approach GO was related to job search intensity, though no other significant relationships were found. For example, neither performance-GO nor job search intensity were significantly related to employment outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction, satisfaction with job search).

In terms of performance-avoid GO, I build on past literature that demonstrates its maladaptive role in the context of job search by demonstrating for the first time that performance-avoid GO is positively related to the haphazard job search strategy, which past research and theorizing considers to be low-quality (e.g., Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; van Hooft et al., 2012), a result that is confirmed in the present study.

Interestingly, performance-avoid GO was positively related to JSC-O which was in turn related to both the focused job search strategy (theorized to be the highest quality strategy; van Hooft et al., 2012; van Hooft, 2018) and job satisfaction. The indirect effects between performance-avoid GO and these positive behaviours and outcomes were significant. Though

typically considered dysfunctional, some researchers have acknowledged that beneficial outcomes of performance-avoid goals may exist (e.g., Cury et al., 2002). The results of this study provide preliminary evidence that performance-avoid GO may lead individuals to set performance goals, which in turn, may promote positive behaviours (i.e., a focused job search strategy) and outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction). Alternatively, as previous research has demonstrated that personality can impact feelings of job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2005), it may be that performance-avoid job seekers evaluate their job satisfaction higher to avoid feelings of incompetence. Future research should explore this possibility.

In addition, the current study introduced the concept of JSC-P to the literature, demonstrating that it is conceptually distinct from JSC-O and significantly related to job search strategies. To do so, I leveraged insights from both GO and goal-setting theories that suggest that for complex tasks such as job search, learning (i.e., process) goals tend to be more effective than performance (i.e., outcome) goals. Results showed that JSC-P is positively related exploratory and focused job search strategies, adding to the limited amount of empirical evidence that explores antecedents of job search strategies (van Hove, 2018).

Regarding the outcomes, my results showed that JSC-O was positively related to job satisfaction. Also, an exploratory job search strategy and a haphazard job search strategy were positively and negatively related to job seekers' satisfaction with job search, respectively. Although not hypothesized, it is interesting to note that gender was related to both outcomes, such that participants who identified as female experienced more satisfaction than those who identified as male. It may be that the males in the current study had higher expectations that were consequently unmet, as compared to their female counterparts. Specifically, past research has shown that university-aged males tend to hold higher expectations in terms of salary as compared

university-aged females (Schweitzer et al., 2014). If the expectations of participants who identify as males were not met, it could explain the differences in satisfaction.

In contrast to my hypotheses, no significant relationships were found between job search strategies and job satisfaction. As mentioned earlier, previous research is mixed in terms of job search strategies and employment quality (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Koen et al., 2010). My results are consistent with Crossley and Highhouse in finding a significant relationship between exploratory (positive) and haphazard (negative) strategies with satisfaction with job search, though no such relationship was found for the focused strategy. Though the focused job search strategy is thought to represent the highest quality strategy (van Hooft et al., 2012; van Hove, 2018), empirical evidence to support this is limited at best. This may be because the focused job search strategy is consistent with the concept of "tunnel vision" (p. 266) (see Seijts & Latham, 2001); Diefendorff and Lord (2008) argued that effective self-regulation occurs when individuals are flexible and use a variety of means to attain goals. A focused job search strategy does not reflect such flexibility and as a result, may not be as representative of effective self-regulation as previously thought.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The results of the present study contribute to the growing body of evidence that GOs are meaningful constructs with explanatory power in the context of job search. Previous work has emphasized the positive role of learning-approach GO (e.g., Creed et al., 2009; da Motta Viega & Turban, 2014; Noordzij et al., 2013). The present study underscores the importance of investigating multiple GOs. Recall that GOs are not mutually exclusive (Button et al., 1996); job seekers may reap benefits from having a learning-approach GO, though may also be impacted (positive or negatively) by performance GOs. By investigating the links between multiple GOs

and subsequent goal setting, behaviours and outcomes, we can gain a fuller understanding of the positive and negative impacts of GO. Such knowledge is theoretically and practically important; uncovering these mechanisms helps develop our theoretical understanding of the self-regulatory process of job search, which in turn improves our ability to design job search interventions that lead to success. Moreover, as GOs can be induced (Button et al., 1996; Kozlowski et al., 2001), GOs provide a pathway for job search interventions, including improving upon those used by Noordzij and colleagues (2013). For example, having career counselors or important others frame the job search process as an opportunity to further develop one's knowledge and skills, rather than focus on the demonstration of those skills, as well as reminding job seekers of their ability to continuously learn may be useful for inducing a learning GO (Button et al., 1996; Payne et al., 2007).

The current study highlights that a learning-approach GO can lead to beneficial outcomes (e.g., satisfaction with job search, job satisfaction) through the mediating roles of a JSC-P, JSC-O and the exploratory job search strategy. Moreover, consistent with the results of Koen et al. (2010), I found no evidence that the focused job search strategy is positively related to employment outcomes. This has important practical implications; although focused job search strategy is thought to represent the highest quality job search strategy (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Stevens & Beach, 1996; van Hooft et al., 2012; van Hoyer, 2018), empirical evidence offers only limited evidence of its benefits. Based on the accumulated evidence to date, it appears to be too early for career counselors and supportive others to recommend that job seekers rely on a focused job search strategy. Integrating self-regulation and career development perspectives suggest that a focused job search strategy may be most beneficial when individuals have mastered the complex task of job search (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 1997) – perhaps in the

establishment or maintenance phase of one's career, though not during the exploration stage (Super, 1990). Future research should investigate this possibility.

Moreover, my results extend the results of past research, both within and outside the context of job search, by demonstrating a potentially positive outcome of performance-avoid GO. Individuals with a performance-avoid GO are motivated by wanting to avoid perceptions of incompetence; setting and striving for goals may be one way in which performance-avoid oriented individuals are able to avoid perceptions of incompetence. This is not to suggest that the dysfunctional consequences of performance-avoid GO should be ignored; rather, it opens the possibility that some level of performance-avoid GO could yield positive effects, similar to the evidence that demonstrates stress can have a positive impact on motivation at low to moderate levels (e.g., Levi, 1990; Wilke et al., 1985). This is especially true given that GOs are not mutually exclusive; it could be that a performance-avoid GO paired with a learning-approach GO helps individuals avoid perceptions of incompetence by motivating individuals to build their competence. Importantly, past research that explores GO profiles (i.e., that identifies sub-populations with similar patterns of GO) has found clusters characterized by high learning-approach, high-performance and moderate performance-avoid, as well as a large cluster of individuals characterized by moderate to high learning- and performance-approach, as well as a moderate level of performance-avoid (Pastor et al., 2007). Exploring GO profiles in the context of job search may provide additional insight in terms of the goals that job seekers set, the behaviours in which they engage and the outcomes they achieve.

Additionally, I contribute to the literature by introducing the concept of JSC-P, highlighting the importance of incorporating goal content in order to understand the self-regulatory processes of job search. Herein, I replicate the results of Study 2 (Chapter 3) that demonstrated for the first

time that JSC-O significantly relates to job search strategies and extend these findings by demonstrating that JSC-P and JSC-O have different nomological networks (i.e., antecedents and consequences). Moreover, I extend the results of Noordzij et al. (2013) who demonstrated the efficacy of a learning-approach GO intervention by demonstrating that some job seekers have, consciously or unconsciously, adopted a state learning-approach GO and are reaping the benefits of doing so. However, other job seekers (i.e., those with a performance GO) may benefit from interventions aimed at inducing a state learning-approach GO. This suggests that career counselors may wish to encourage job seekers to set clear process goals (i.e., develop high JSC-P) in order to develop their competence using an exploratory strategy, and afterward, develop JSC-O. As research demonstrates that assigned learning goals yields beneficial effects on performance (Latham & Locke, 2007), career counselors may set goals for job seekers, or work with them to establish goals that are focused on discovering knowledge and strategies to complete job search tasks.

Future Research and Limitations

The results of this study must be considered alongside its limitations. First and foremost, the study recruited participants who were seeking temporary rather than permanent employment. Though this experience is meaningful for career development, future research should seek to replicate the findings in other job search contexts (e.g., new entrants, unemployed or employed job seekers; Boswell et al., 2012). Moreover, though the study introduced JSC-P, it did so without employing the rigorous scale development procedures outlined by Hinkin (1995). To note, the same can be said for measures used to assess JSC-O and job search strategies. Though the measurement models and coefficient alpha's reached acceptable levels, well-constructed scales may improve the literature's ability to offer evidence-based interventions.

As the contemporary employment context experiences increased volatility, including record high unemployment levels in the face of a global pandemic (Statistics Canada, 2020), future research should explore how JSC-P and JSC-O impacts job seekers' self-regulation and persistence over time. It could be expected that the relationship between learning GO, JSC-P and exploratory job search strategies may allow job seekers to be more adaptable and persistent under volatile conditions, whereas the relationship between performance GOS, JSC-O and focused job search strategies may limit job seekers' adaptability.

A strength of this study is the data collection over four time periods. Nonetheless, job search behaviours were only assessed at one time, making it impossible to determine how GOs impacted job seekers' behaviours throughout one's search. How, or if, individuals persist in the face of obstacles is likely to be impacted by GOs and should be investigated further in future research. Moreover, future research should keep in mind that environmental cues can impact one's GO (Button et al., 1996; Kozlowski et al., 2001). This is important as the inherent nature of job search may induce a state performance GO; searching for employment necessitates that job seekers compete with one another for a limited number of employment opportunities. In order to do so, job seekers must demonstrate their competence via resumes, cover letters and interviews. Indeed, van Hooft and Noordzig (2009) utilized the cues of competition and outperforming others to induce a performance GO. Given the potentially negative outcomes associated with a performance GO, future research should explore this possibility. Finally, although I tested for common-method bias, Podsakoff and Organ's (1986) method also has its limitations. Following the advice of Podsakoff et al. (2012), I also collected measures at different times, changed the response format, and offered clear instructions in order to reduce ambiguity of scale items.

CONCLUSION

The current study demonstrates that applying GO theory as a framework allows for a deeper understanding of the unfolding and self-regulatory nature of job search. Specifically, I find that the exploratory and focused job search strategies appear to be adaptive given their relationship to learning goals, as well as positive outcomes in the job search process. Moreover, the haphazard job search strategy appears to be consistent with poor self-regulation, whereas the relationship between focused job search strategies and employment outcomes remains unclear. Uncovering such adaptive and maladaptive behavioural patterns is important as the right job search strategies can facilitate feelings of satisfaction once employment is gained.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Goals may be the most important part of self-regulation (Kanfer, 1990; Vancouver, 2000), given their capacity to influence individuals' thoughts, behaviours and outcomes (Locke & Latham, 1990; Zimmerman, 2000). Despite this, goals have rarely been studied in the self-regulatory processes of job search (Boswell et al., 2012; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2005). This is a significant research gap given the downstream effects that goals can have on the unfolding process of searching for a job, the nuances that govern the relationship between goal characteristics and performance (Locke & Latham, 1990), and the malleability of goals that suggest they are a critical avenue for job search interventions (Lui et al., 2014).

My dissertation developed and began a program of research that examines job search goals by focusing on JSC; a theoretically and practically meaningful goal characteristic. Goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) suggests that setting clear goals foster performance, especially when goal content (e.g., learning vs. performance) matches the context (e.g., complex vs. simple task). Though job search has been characterized as a complex task (Latham et al., 2018) and thus would benefit from learning goals, existing research seems to advocate for job seekers to set clear performance goals (e.g., Cote et al., 2006; Zikic & Saks, 2009). Through integrating goal setting theory with self-regulation theories (Vancouver, 2000; Zimmerman, 2000), image theory (Beach, 1993), goal-systems theory (Kruglanski et al., 2002), and GO theory (Dweck, 1986; Elliot & Dweck, 1988), I explored the effects of clear performance goals, as well as clear learning goals. In doing so, I built on existing job search research to extend JSC's nomological network, demonstrating for the first time that JSC is related to job search strategies (Study 2) and validating this finding across in another sample of job seekers (Study 3). Additionally, I argued for and demonstrated the benefits of a multi-dimensional

conceptualization of JSC. Specifically, clear learning goals and clear performance goals were differentially related to antecedents (i.e., GOs), behaviours (i.e., job search strategies) and outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction, satisfaction with job search). This finding demonstrates that job search research must move beyond the typical assumption that job seekers share the common goal of finding employment (Boswell et al., 2004; Kanfer et al., 2001; van Hove & Saks, 2008) and instead investigate the nuances within goal characteristics in order to improve our understanding of the job search process and ultimately, provide more effective interventions.

Through careful application of theoretical frameworks, my research extends prior research by elaborating on the role of clear goals in explaining job search behaviours and outcomes. Central to this is the notion that effective self-regulation is not necessarily reflected by the amount or frequency behaviours as implied by a large body of job search research but engaging in more of the right behaviours and less of the wrong behaviours. Disentangling the relationships between quality and quantity of job search behaviours is critical in advancing our understanding of the range of possible job search behaviours, as well as their outcomes, which in turn allows can inform the development of job search interventions. My research (Study 1 and 2) reveals that clear performance goals may help job seekers be more selective toward the end of their job search (i.e., in accepting jobs), though not throughout the process of searching (i.e., in applying to jobs that may not be a good fit). Clear learning goals seem to facilitate exploratory behaviours and in turn facilitate satisfaction with the job search process (Study 3). Indeed, viewing job search as an opportunity to learn seems to have several beneficial for job seekers throughout the process; it facilitates the setting of clear learning and performance goals, the use of the exploratory strategy and the avoidance of the haphazard strategy. In turn, learning-approach GO has an indirect effect on both satisfaction with one's job search and job satisfaction

once employed. My research affirms that situational differences (e.g., GO) and goals (e.g., JSC) are meaningful predictors of job search behaviours and outcomes and thus warrant careful study.

Taken together, my research highlights the importance of applying theoretical frameworks in order to explain meaningful variance in job search behaviours and outcomes, beyond that explained by traditionally studied variables such as job search self-efficacy and job search intensity, respectively. Moreover, while the overarching conclusion of previous job search research has suggested that job seekers must work harder – that is, they should increase their job search intensity – in order to find employment, my research argues for the benefits of working smarter – that is, job seekers should focus on learning – in order to achieve more subjective measures of job search success (i.e., satisfaction). As such, the studies herein are another piece in of the puzzle that is emerging to understand quality and quantity in job search, in terms of goals, behaviours and outcomes (van Hooft et al., 2012).

The job search literature is inherently practical; the need to search for a job numerous times over one's career coupled with the complexity of navigating the multiple stages of the job search process and has contributed to the popularity and necessity of research in this domain. I argue in this dissertation that program of research that focuses on goals is critical in order to (a) further our understanding of the unfolding process of job search; (b) recognize that the complexity of the job search process impacts the relationships between key constructs; and (c) develop evidence-based implications for job seekers. While my research primarily focused on the construct of JSC, there are many other goal constructs that, if examined in the context of job search, can advance job search literature. The job search context provides an opportunity for researchers to apply, extend and test theory, while also offering the benefits of evidence-based research to guide interventions.

APPENDIX A: TABLES

Table 1

Goodness-of-fit indices and model comparisons for the measurement models tested

	χ^2	df	p	χ^2/df	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	RMSEA upper 90%	Model comparison	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	p
1: Original (23 items on 8 factors)	277.77	206	.00	1.35	.68	.89	.84	.88	.06	.07				
2: Six factor	446.09	219	.00	2.04	.49	.66	.52	.62	.09	.11	2-1	168.32	13	.00
3: Four factor	458.60	225	.00	2.04	.48	.64	.52	.51	.09	.11	3-1	180.83	19	.00
4: One factor	678.74	230	.00	2.95	.23	.31	.11	.25	.13	.14	4-1	400.97	24	.00

N=108. NFI=normed fit index, TLI=Tucker-Lewis index, IFI=incremental fit index, CFI=comparative fit index, RMSEA=root mean square error of approximation.

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations and Reliabilities

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Job Search Self-Efficacy	3.61	.73	(.71)								
2 # of Full Time Jobs	1.37	1.23	-.05	--							
3 Gender ⁺	.54	.50	.12	.13	--						
4 Job Search Clarity	3.53	1.30	-.10	.18	.08	--					
5 Focused	3.36	.89	.23**	-.07	.18	.21*	(.70)				
6 Exploratory	4.04	.74	.00	-.06	-.12	.02	-.10	(.76)			
7 Haphazard	2.61	.79	.00	-.11	.29**	.08	.26*	-.22*	(.66)		
8 Willingness to Apply	65.41	11.32	-.05	.10	-.05	-.06	-.15	.34*	-.03	--	
9 Willingness to Accept	65.37	12.27	-.08	-.02	-.11	-.23**	-.17	.19*	-.02	.77**	--

***.* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**.* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

+ 1=male; 0=female;

Table 3

Regression Results: Antecedents to Job Search Clarity

Predictor	Job Search Clarity	
	β	t(112)
Job Search Self-Efficacy	-.08	-.89
# Full-Time Jobs	.17	1.81*
Gender ⁺	.06	.66
R ²	.04	

+ 1 = male; 0 = female; * $p < .05$

Table 4
Regression Results: Antecedents of Job Search Strategies

Predictor	Focused		Haphazard		Exploratory	
	β	t(111)	β	t(111)	β	t(111)
<i>Step 1</i>						
Job Search Self-Efficacy	.11	1.19	-.09	-.97	.01	.06
# Full-Time Jobs	-.10	-1.08	-.12	-1.33	.07	.69
Gender ⁺	.07	.70	.28	3.06*	-.18	-1.88***
R ²	.03		.09**		.03	
<i>Step 2</i>						
Job Search Self-Efficacy	.13	1.43	-.07	-.85	.01	.12
# Full-Time Jobs	-.14	-1.52	-.15	-1.58	.05	.56
Gender ⁺	.05	.55	.27	2.98*	-.18	-1.92***
Job search clarity	.24	2.60*	.14	1.54	.07	.73
ΔR^2		.05*		.02		.01
Total R ²		.08*		.11		.04

+ 1 = male; 0 = female; * $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .10$

Table 5
Regression Results: Antecedents of Willing to Apply and Accept Jobs

Predictor	Willingness to Apply to Jobs		Willingness to Accept Jobs	
	β	t(111)	β	t(111)
<i>Step 1</i>				
Job Search Self-Efficacy	-.07	-.68	-.08	-.83
# Full-Time Jobs	.11	1.14	-.01	-.12
Gender ⁺	-.05	-.55	-.10	-1.07
R ²	.02		.02	
<i>Step 2</i>				
Job Search Self-Efficacy	-.07	-.74	-.10	-1.05
# Full-Time Jobs	.12	1.24	.03	.29
Gender ⁺	-.05	-.50	-.19	-.94
Job search clarity	-.07	-.70	-.23	-2.47**
ΔR^2		.00		.05**
Total R ²		.02		.07**

+ 1 = male; 0 = female; ** $p < .05$

Table 6
Goodness-of-fit indices and model comparisons for the measurement models tested

	χ^2	df	p	χ^2/df	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	RMSEA upper 90%	Model comparison	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	p
1: Proposed (41 items on 9 factors)	1234.92	745	.00	1.66	.56	.76	.71	.75	.07	.08				
2: Parcel model	170.63	85	.00	2.01	.82	.90	.84	.90	.08	.10	2-1	1064.29	660	.00
3: Parcel common factor	638.51	119	.00	5.37	.34	.39	.29	.38	.18	.19	3-2	467.88	34	.00
4: Parcel common behavioural factor	517.91	116	.00	4.46	.47	.53	.43	.52	.16	.17	4-2	347.28	31	.00

N=143. NFI=normed fit index, TLI=Tucker-Lewis index, IFI=incremental fit index, CFI=comparative fit index, RMSEA=root mean square error of approximation.

Table 7: Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations and Scale Reliabilities

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Gender+	.41	.49	--												
2 # Full Time Jobs	2.16	5.37	.08	--											
3 Self-Efficacy	5.90	1.67	.07	.13	.88										
4 Job Search Clarity	3.60	.76	-.04	.05	.44**	.74									
5 Risk-Propensity	3.28	.36	-.13	.10	.06	-.09	.76								
6 Focused	3.43	.65	.16	.02	.13	.28**	-.29**	.75							
7 Exploratory	3.58	.66	-.04	.02	.39**	.45**	.02	-.04	.79						
8 Haphazard	2.68	.79	.03	.07	-.21*	-.44**	.02	.18*	-.24**	.80					
9 Intensity - Preparatory	2.64	.75	.02	.13	.41**	.26**	.09	.17*	.47**	.00	.75				
10 Intensity - Active	2.51	.74	-.14	.13	.27**	.26**	.21*	-.05	.46**	.05	.65**	.72			
11 # Applications	14.26	14.53	-.11	.05	-.03	-.04	.25**	-.26**	.21*	.04	.19*	.37**	--		
12 # Underqualified	3.16	6.09	.02	.11	-.06	-.05	.16	-.12	.21*	.09	.20*	.19*	.51**	--	
13 # Overqualified	6.41	9.99	-.10	.02	-.01	-.04	.28**	-.20*	.18*	.03	.18*	.31**	.77**	.42**	--

Scale reliabilities are on the diagonal in parentheses.

***.* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**.* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

+ 1 = male; 0=female

Table 8
Regression Results: Antecedents of Job Search Strategies

Predictor	Focused		Haphazard		Exploratory	
	β		β	t(139)	β	t(139)
<i>Step 1</i>						
Job Search Self-Efficacy	.12	1.42	-.23	-2.75**	.40	5.09**
# Full-Time Jobs	-.01	-.12	.09	-1.11	-.03	-.37
Gender ⁺	.15	1.84	.04	.45	-.07	-.87
R ²		.04		.06*		.16**
<i>Step 2</i>						
Job Search Self-Efficacy	.02	.23	-.04	-.45	.25	2.94**
# Full-Time Jobs	.02	.22	.10	1.24	-.03	-.45
Gender ⁺	.14	1.71	.00	.03	-.04	-.50
Job search clarity	.26	2.93**	-.43	-4.96**	.35	4.15**
Risk-taking propensity	-.26	-3.20**	-.03	-.36	.04	.50
ΔR^2		.13**		.14**		.09**
Total R ²		.17**		.20**		.25**

+ 1 = male; 0 = female; * $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$

Table 9
Hierarchical Regression Results: Antecedents of Preparatory Job Search Intensity

Predictor	Step 1 (R ² = .17)*		Step 2 (ΔR^2 = .01)		Step 3 (ΔR^2 = .02)	
	β	t(136)	β	t(136)	β	t(136)
Job search self-efficacy	.40	5.14*	.35	4.00*	.34	3.94*
# Full-Time Jobs	.08	.99	.07	.89	.06	.71
Gender ⁺	-.02	-.23	.00	.00	-.01	-.15
Job search clarity			.11	1.23	.33	2.24**
Risk propensity			.07	.84	.13	.84
Job search clarity ²					-.27	-1.87

+ 1 = male; 0 = female; * $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$

Table 10
Hierarchical Regression Results: Antecedents of Active Job Search Intensity

Predictor	Step 1 (R ² = .11)*		Step 2 (ΔR^2 = .05**)		Step 3 (ΔR^2 = .04**)	
	β	t(136)	β	t(136)	β	t(136)
Job search self-efficacy	.27	3.40*	.18	1.99**	.17	1.90
# Full-Time Jobs	.11	1.30	.09	1.06	.07	.84
Gender ⁺	-.16	-2.04**	-.12	-1.55	-.14	-1.77
Job search clarity			.19	2.14**	.48	3.31*
Risk propensity			.19	2.35**	.19	2.38**
Job search clarity ²					-.36	-2.51*

+ 1 = male; 0 = female; * $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$

Table 11
Goodness-of-fit indices and model comparisons for the measurement models tested

	χ^2	df	p	χ^2/df	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	RMSEA upper 90%	Model comparison	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	p
Time 1 measurement models														
1: Original (9 items on 3 factors)	44.39	24	.01	1.85	.93	.97	.93	.96	.07	.10				
2: Two factor	115.25	26	.00	4.43	.81	.85	.73	.84	.14	.17	2-1	70.86	2	.00
3: Common factor	180.08	27	.00	6.67	.71	.74	.55	.73	.18	.21	3-1	135.69	3	.00
Time 2 measurement models														
4: original (6 items on 2 factors)	9.00	8	.34	1.13	.98	.99	.99	.99	.03	.10				
5: common factor	123.48	9	.00	13.72	.72	.73	.36	.73	.28	.32	5-4	114.48	1	.00
Time 3 measurement models														
6: original (16 items on 3 factors)	238.23	101	.00	2.36	.68	.79	.70	.78	.09	.11				
7: adjusted (13 items on 3 factors)	132.99	62	.00	2.15	.77	.87	.79	.86	.08	.10	7-6	105.24	39	.00
8: common factor	352.42	65	.00	5.42	.40	.45	.19	.42	.16	.18	8-7	219.43	3	.00
Time 4 measurement models														
9: Original (6 items on 2 factors)	169.05	76	.00	2.22	.83	.92	.87	.91	.07	.09				
10: Common factor	216.58	65	.00	3.33	.70	.77	.67	.76	.12	.14	10-9	47.53	11	.00
Times 1 to 4 measurement models														
11: Original (34 items on 10 factors)	853.67	519	.00	1.65	.69	.85	.82	.84	.06	.07				
12: Four factor	1476.74	527	.00	2.81	.46	.57	.50	.56	.10	.11	12-11	623.07	8	.00
13: Common factor	2082.48	527	.00	3.95	.24	.30	.18	.28	.13	.14	13-11	1228.81	8	.00

N=168. NFI=normed fit index, TLI=Tucker-Lewis index, IFI=incremental fit index, CFI=comparative fit index, RMSEA=root mean square error of approximation.

Table 12
Means, Standard Deviations and Scale Reliabilities

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Control Variables																
1 Gender ^a	.55	.50														
2 Work Experience ^b	1.35	1.06	.16*													
3 Financial Need	2.51	.96	-.02	.06												
Goal Orientations (Time 1)																
4 Learning-Approach	5.72	.77	.00	-.11	.04	(.68)										
5 Performance-Approach	5.72	.88	.09	-.05	.00	.31**	(.91)									
6 Performance-Avoid	4.27	1.26	.02	-.02	.03	.30**	.40**	(.70)								
Job Search Clarity (Time 2)																
7 JSC-Process	4.83	1.02	-.10	.05	.04	.27**	.10	.08	(.79)							
8 JSC-Outcomes	5.58	1.10	-.11	-.01	.01	.19*	.11	.21**	.38**	(.88)						
Job Search Behaviour (Time 3)																
9 Job Search Intensity	2.50	.61	.03	-.01	.21**	.17*	.23**	.04	-.02	-.07	(.93)					
10 Exploratory Strategy	3.00	.64	-.04	-.04	.03	.27**	.13	.05	.29**	.13	.00	(.86)				
11 Focused Strategy	3.49	.58	-.13	-.09	.09	.10	.05	.10	.29**	.38**	.06	-.06	(.81)			
12 Haphazard Strategy	2.34	.63	.05	-.02	.02	-.14	-.04	.18*	-.09	-.20**	.02	.18*	-.17*	(.87)		
Employment Outcomes (Time 4)																
13 Job Satisfaction	4.04	.85	.04	.05	-.04	-.09	-.06	-.03	-.09	-.04	.13	-.01	-.09	.12	(.81)	
14 Satisfaction with Job Search	3.76	.76	.09	.02	-.04	.07	.04	.04	.03	-.01	.07	.11	.10	.03	.44**	(.79)

Scale reliabilities are on the diagonal in parentheses. $N=168$ for control variables, goal orientations, job search clarity and job search behaviour and $n=106$ for indicators of employment quality.

* $p < .05$ (2-tailed); ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed).

^a 1=male; 0=female

^b number of full-time jobs participants have held

Table 13**Goodness-of-fit indices and model comparisons for the structural models tested.**

Structural Model	χ^2	df	p	χ^2/df	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	RMSEA upper 90%	Model comparison	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	p
1: saturated	20.10	6	.00	3.35	.93	.95	.42	.94	.12	.18				
2: direct	159.35	32	.00	4.98	.43	.48	.02	.43	.15	.18	1-2	139.25	26	.00
3: indirect, version 1	119.77	27	.00	4.44	.57	.63	.15	.58	.14	.17	1-3	99.67	21	.00
4: indirect, version 2	98.93	22	.00	4.50	.64	.70	.14	.65	.15	.17	1-4	78.83	16	.01
5: indirect, version 3	60.64	19	.00	3.19	.78	.84	.46	.81	.12	.15	1-5	40.54	13	.01
6: proposed	58.71	23	.00	2.55	.78	.86	.62	.84	.10	.13	1-6	38.61	17	.02
7: final	27.39	19	.10	1.44	.90	.97	.89	.96	.05	.09	1-7	7.29	13	.89
8: final with control variables	26.40	19	.12	1.39	.92	.98	.84	.97	.05	.09	6-7	31.32	4	.00

N=168. NFI=normed fit index, TLI=Tucker-Lewis index, IFI=incremental fit index, CFI=comparative fit index, RMSEA=root mean square error of approximation.

APPENDIX B: FIGURES

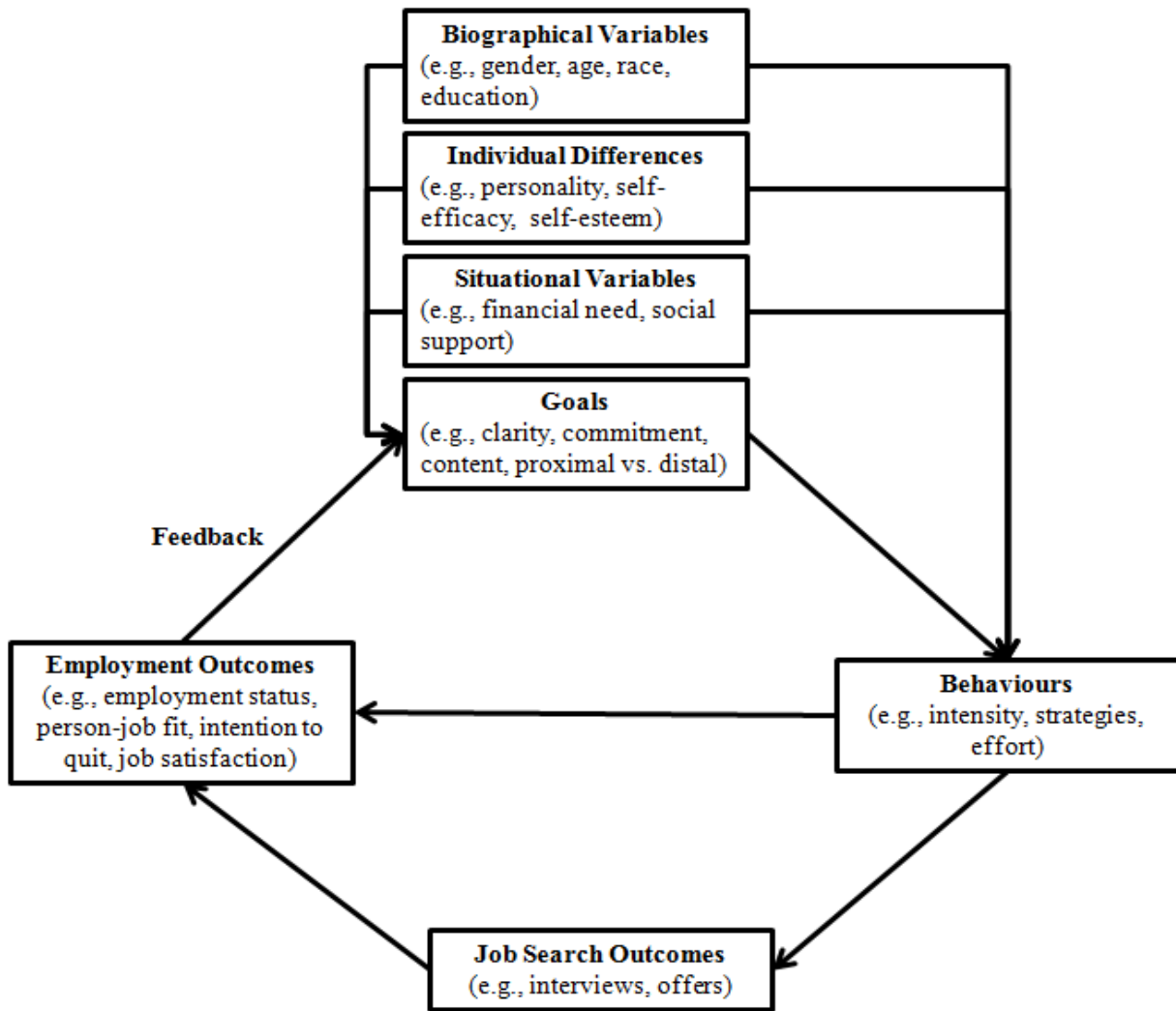


Figure 1: The Multi-Stage and Sequential Job Search Process

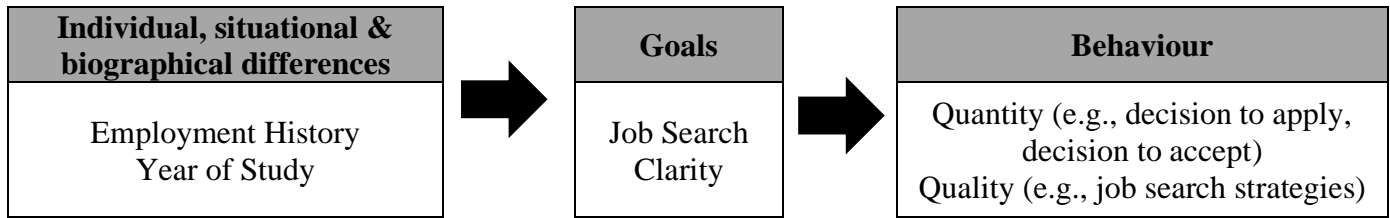


Figure 2: Self-Regulatory Framework

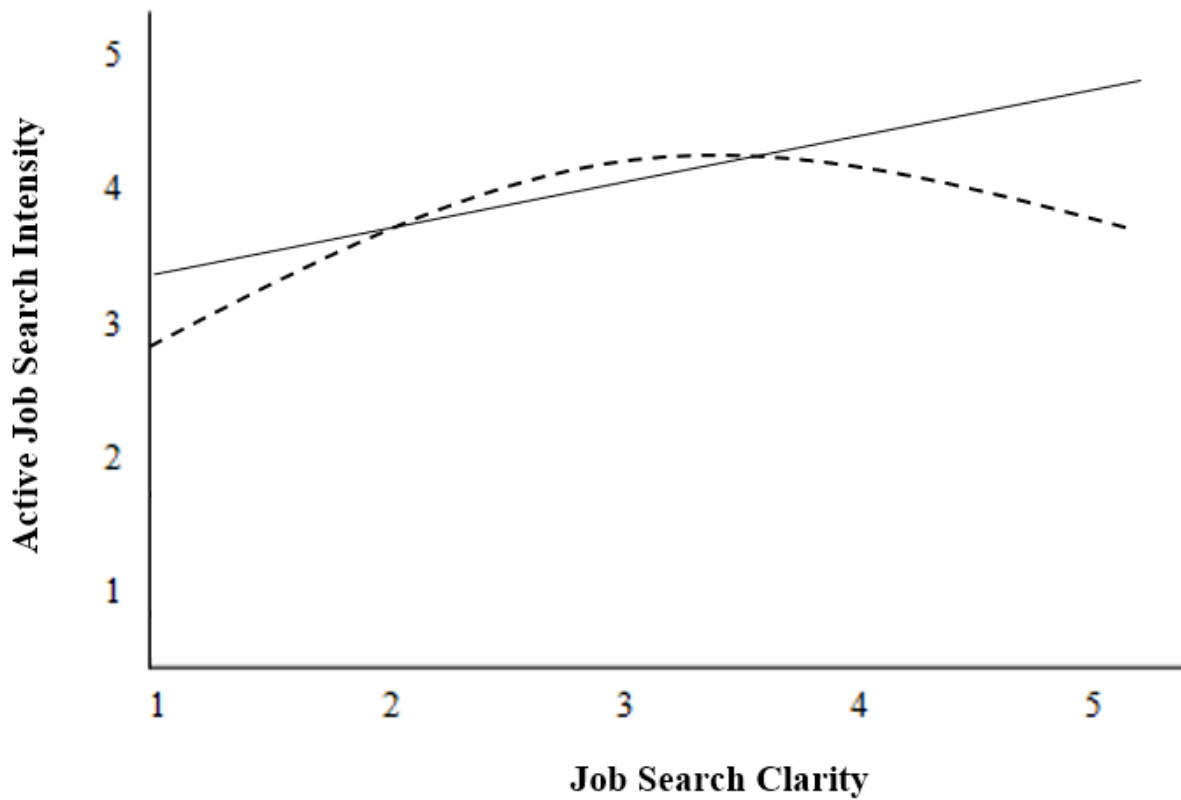


Figure 3: Quadratic vs. Linear Effects of Job Search Clarity on Active Job Search Intensity



Figure 4: Conceptual model of the role of goal orientation in the job search process

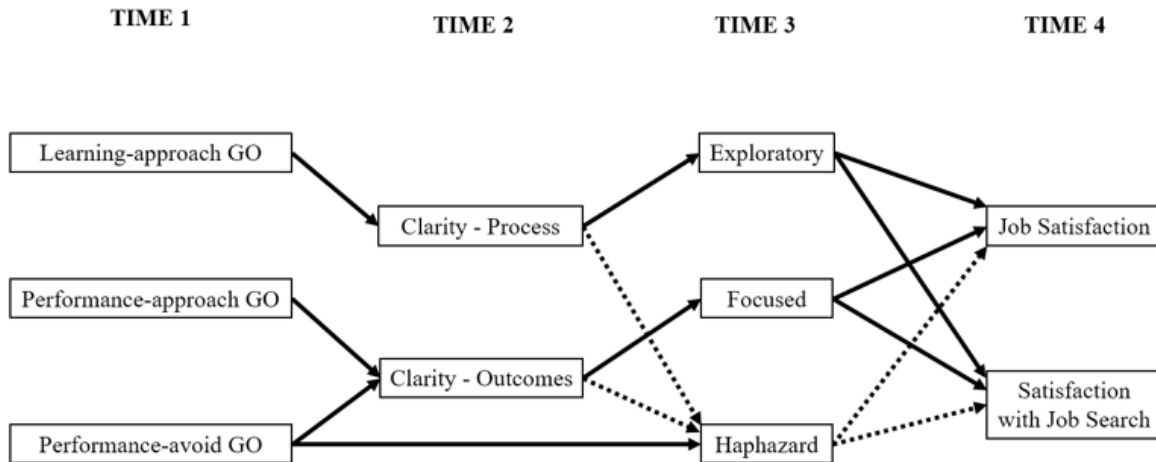


Figure 5: Proposed Structural Model

Solid lines indicate hypothesized positive relationships. Dashed lines indicate hypothesized negative relationships.

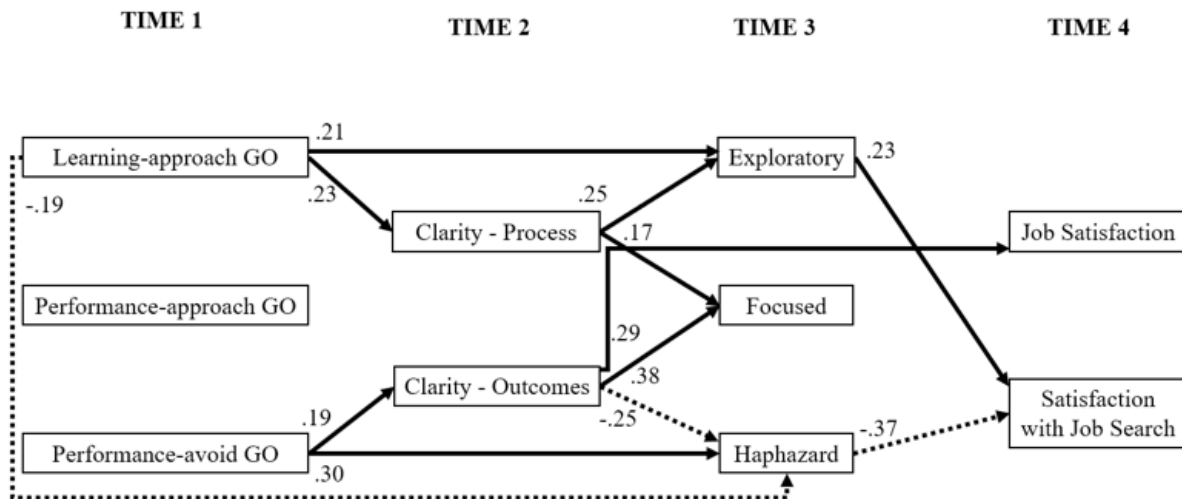


Figure 6: Final Structural Model

Solid lines indicate hypothesized positive relationships. Dashed lines indicate hypothesized negative relationships.

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