Job Search Behavior as a Multidimensional Construct:
A Review of Different Job Search Behaviors and Sources

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Abstract
Both theoretical models of job search and empirical research findings suggest that job search behavior is not a unidimensional construct. This chapter addresses the multidimensionality of job search behavior and provides a systematic review of the different job search behaviors and sources studied in the job search literature and their relationships with antecedent variables and employment outcomes. Organized within three major dimensions (effort-intensity, content-direction, temporal-persistence), job search effort and intensity, job search strategies, preparatory and active job search behaviors, formal and informal job sources, specific job search behaviors, job search quality, job search dynamics, and job search persistence are discussed. This review strongly suggests that considering all the dimensions of job search behavior is essential for understanding job search success in both practice and research, resulting in a number of key implications for job seekers and employment counselors as well as crucial directions for future research.

Keywords: Job search behavior, job search effort, job search intensity, job search strategy, job source, networking, job search quality, job search dynamics.


**Introduction**

As individuals search for work following graduation or job loss, or to pursue career opportunities, job search has become so pervasive and frequent that it is now considered to be an integral part of working life. At the same time, there has been a dramatic increase in research on job search and unemployment, including a meta-analysis that has identified job search behavior as a major determinant of finding employment (Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001). However, various definitions of what constitutes job search behavior exist and most of them suggest that it is not a unidimensional construct. Accordingly, different operationalizations of job search behavior have been used in previous research (Wanberg, 2012). Whereas some studies have focused on the time and effort that job seekers invest in their search, others have looked at the nature of the sources used to identify job opportunities or the specific search activities that people engage in. Given that most research has only included one or a few aspects of job search behavior, it is difficult to integrate previous findings and there is a lack of a clear understanding of the different dimensions of job search behavior and how they relate to each other as well as to antecedent variables and outcomes. Such understanding is important, given that some research suggests that the predictors and consequences of job search depend on the specific job search behaviors or sources applied (Saks, 2006; Van Hoye, Van Hooft, & Lievens, 2009). As such differences are ignored by a unidimensional approach, a multidimensional perspective on job search behavior is likely to enhance our knowledge of the job search process and to improve our prediction of crucial employment outcomes.

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to put forth job search behavior as a multidimensional construct and to review the different job search behaviors and sources identified in the job search literature and their relationships with other variables. By doing so,
previous research on job search behavior is systematically integrated and key gaps in our current knowledge are revealed. Ultimately, this chapter aims to create awareness among researchers as well as job seekers and employment counselors that effective job search behavior goes a long way beyond merely putting a lot of effort into job search and that considering all the dimensions of job search behavior is essential for understanding job search success in both research and practice.

**Definition and Dimensions of Job Search Behavior**

Even though various definitions of job search behavior exist, most of them have recognized its multidimensional nature. For instance, Schwab, Rynes, and Aldag (1987) proposed that job search behavior consists of the sources used to acquire information about job vacancies as well as the intensity with which such information is pursued. Soelberg (1967) developed a sequential model of job search behavior and distinguished a phase of planning job search (i.e., allocating resources to job search and identifying search generators or sources to produce initial job alternatives) from a job search and choice phase (i.e., activating search generators, collecting information on job alternatives, and evaluating job alternatives, Power & Aldag, 1985).

Similarly, Barber, Daly, Giannantonio, and Phillips (1994) suggested that job search behavior refers to identifying the existence of job opportunities and gathering more detailed information on selected job alternatives.

More recently, Kanfer et al. (2001) defined job search behavior as the product of a dynamic self-regulatory process that begins with the identification of and commitment to an employment goal. This goal subsequently activates search behavior designed to bring about the desired goal. Accomplishing or abandoning the employment goal is posited to terminate the job search process and associated job search efforts and activities. Given that job search behavior is
largely self-regulated, Kanfer et al. (2001) further conceptualized that it is likely to vary across individuals along three major dimensions: effort-intensity (effort and frequency of job search activity), content-direction (activities engaged in and quality of these activities), and temporal-persistence (dynamic processes and persistence in job search).

This chapter builds on the multidimensionality of job search behavior implied by these definitions and relies on the three dimensions proposed by Kanfer et al. (2001) to organize, review, and discuss the different kinds of job search behaviors and sources that have been studied in the literature (see Table 1 for a (non-exhaustive) overview). Whereas previous research has mainly focused on the effort-intensity dimension, research on the other two dimensions (i.e., the content and dynamics of job search behavior) is relatively scarce but equally or even more important.

**Job Search Effort and Intensity**

The vast majority of job search studies has operationalized job search behavior in terms of effort or intensity, which essentially refers to how hard one tries to find a job. Measures of *job search effort* assess the general amount of energy and time devoted to job search, with no reference to specific job search behaviors (e.g., “Within the last six months, I focused my time and effort on job search activities”, rated on a 5-point Likert-scale, ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*, Blau, 1993). Measures of *job search intensity* require individuals to indicate the frequency with which they have engaged in a number of specific job search activities during a given time period (e.g., “Within the last six months, I talked with friends or relatives about possible job leads”, rated on a 5-point scale, with 1 = *never (0 times)*, 2 = *rarely (1 or 2 times)*, 3 = *occasionally (3 to 5 times)*, 4 = *frequently (6 to 9 times)*, and 5 = *very frequently*
(at least 10 times), Blau, 1994). Typically, these items are averaged to produce a composite score of overall job search intensity (Kopelman, Rovenpor, & Millsap, 1992).

On a theoretical level, both job search effort and intensity assess the extent to which individuals engage in job search. However, job search effort refers more to the subjectively felt investments made in job search, which can be cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral, whereas job search intensity focuses more on the level of performing concrete search behaviors (Saks, 2005). In addition to this theoretical distinction, there are some methodological differences (Van Hooft & Klehe, this volume). Compared to general measures of job search effort, asking more concretely how many times individuals have carried out specific behaviors is likely to aid correct recall and reduce exaggeration (Kanfer et al., 2001). In addition, the detailed response scale provides a more objective frame of reference that allows for a better comparison across individuals (e.g., checking job sites for vacancies four times in a month might be experienced as a large effort by one job seeker, but as a small effort by someone else). There is also an important caveat, however, as measures of job search intensity require a better knowledge of the studied sample of job seekers than effort measures. Specifically, the list of job search activities included needs to be exhaustive and representative for the ways in which individuals look for jobs (Kanfer et al., 2001). In addition, the exact response scale and time period have to be chosen deliberately, to allow for sufficient interindividual variation. In line with these discussed similarities and distinctions, research generally finds that job search effort and intensity represent related but distinct constructs (Blau, 1993; Saks, 2006).

The effort-intensity dimension of job search behavior is the only one that had been sufficiently investigated to be included in Kanfer et al.’s (2001) job search meta-analysis. Results indicate that both job search effort and intensity were significantly and positively related to
finding employment. Moreover, the best predictors of job search effort and intensity combined were extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience, employment commitment, and self-efficacy. However, notable differences emerged in the pattern of relationships with antecedents and outcomes. Overall, job search intensity tended to show stronger relationships with individual difference and situational antecedent variables than job search effort. Moreover, for a few antecedents, relations were in the opposite direction. For instance, individuals higher in neuroticism reported more job search effort, but less job search intensity. More neurotic job seekers are more likely to experience negative feelings during job search, thus needing to invest more time in managing their emotions, leaving less time for carrying out concrete search behaviors (Zimmerman, Boswell, Shipp, Dunford, & Boudreau, 2012). This might explain why their subjectively felt effort is higher, whereas their intensity of performing search behaviors is lower.

With respect to outcomes, Kanfer et al.’s (2001) meta-analysis showed that job search effort was more strongly related to employment status and to shorter job search duration whereas job search intensity was a better predictor of job offers. Job offers represent a proximal job search outcome, whereas employment status and job search duration are more distal employment outcomes (Brasher & Chen, 1999). Investing more time in concrete search behaviors (captured best by job search intensity) is likely to produce more job interviews and offers, but actually obtaining employment is dependent on many other factors, some of which might be included only in measures of job search effort (e.g., proper planning, thorough preparation).

In sum, these meta-analytical findings provide further support for job search effort and intensity being related yet distinct constructs, which capture only partially overlapping aspects of
job search behavior and explain both shared and unique variance in job search success (Kanfer et al., 2001).

**Content and Direction of Job Search Behavior**

To find information on job opportunities and follow up on them, job seekers can apply a myriad of different sources and behaviors. For instance, to identify potential jobs, individuals can consult job ads in newspapers, listings on job sites, or people they know that are working for the company. To gather in-depth information on vacancies and apply for them, job seekers can contact prospective employers by phone or pay them a visit (i.e., walk-in) or submit an online application. Even though it is likely that people prefer certain search methods over others and that the outcomes of job search differ according to the methods applied (Saks, 2006), the often used global measures of job search effort and intensity are not able to grasp these differences. Therefore, we also need to consider the specific content and direction of the search activities that job seekers engage in (Kanfer et al., 2001). To this end, different job search strategies, preparatory and active job search behaviors, formal and informal job sources, and specific job search behaviors are discussed in this section. In addition, the quality with which these various search activities are carried out is also addressed.

**Job Search Strategies**

On the basis of image theory, Stevens and Beach (1996) suggested that the job search process starts with the adoption of a goal. Whereas some job seekers might have a clear idea of the type of job they desire (which is also referred to as job search clarity, Wanberg, Hough, & Song, 2002), others might only have a very fuzzy idea. These variations in goal clarity are assumed to be related to differences in strategies for goal achievement (Stevens & Beach, 1996). When the goal is clearly defined, job search will be more focused on specific sources that are
likely to offer desired job features. When the goal is more diffuse, job seekers are likely to use a broader range of sources to learn about multiple types of job options. Along these lines, previous research has identified three distinct strategies for searching information about possible jobs (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005). Job seekers applying a focused search strategy concentrate their efforts on a small number of carefully screened potential employers, identified early in the search process. They have clear employment goals and only apply for jobs that they are qualified for and are interested in. Job seekers following an exploratory search strategy have some idea of the type of job they want, but still are open to opportunities that may present themselves. Therefore, they examine several potential employment options and actively gather job-related information from various sources. Job seekers using a haphazard search strategy do not have a clear idea of what they are looking for and apply a trial and error approach to their search. They passively gather information both inside and outside their area of educational and vocational experience.

Research on these job search strategies is scarce, but there is some evidence that they represent a useful dimension of job search behavior, related to employment outcomes. A haphazard strategy seems to be the least preferable search strategy, as it relates negatively to the number of job offers, satisfaction with the job search process, and satisfaction with the new job (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005). On the contrary, a focused search strategy appears to produce the most positive outcomes, given its positive relationship with job offers, job search satisfaction, and job satisfaction (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Koen, Klehe, Van Vianen, Zikic, & Nauta, 2010). An exploratory strategy relates positively to number of job offers and job search satisfaction, but negatively to reemployment quality (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Koen et al., 2010).
Koen et al. (2010) also investigated how the four dimensions of career adaptability relate to individuals’ use of the different job search strategies. Career decision-making (i.e., certainty about what career to pursue) and planning (i.e., future career orientation and planfulness) were negatively associated with the use of a haphazard search strategy. Career exploration (i.e., exploring career options) and confidence (i.e., self-efficacy beliefs about achieving career goals) were positive predictors of applying an exploratory strategy. A focused search strategy was positively predicted by career planning and negatively by career exploration.

Another approach to job search strategies is based on decision-making theory (Van den Berg & Uhlendorff, this volume) and distinguishes a maximizing strategy from a satisficing strategy. Whereas maximizers look for the single best option, requiring an exhaustive search of all possibilities, satisficers seek until they encounter a “good enough” option that crosses the threshold of acceptability (Iyengar, Wells, & Schwartz, 2006). Research indicates that graduating students who apply a maximizing strategy to their job search obtain objectively better employment outcomes (i.e., 20% higher starting salaries) than students following a satisficing strategy (Iyengar et al., 2006). However, maximizers are less satisfied with these outcomes and experience more negative affect throughout the job search process. Given that maximizers investigate more options, engage in more social comparisons, and are fixated on securing the best option, they are more likely to have unrealistically high expectations and to feel regret for missed options. Therefore, job seekers following a maximizing decision-making strategy seem to be “doing better” objectively, but are “feeling worse” subjectively, at least in the short term (Iyengar et al., 2006).

Clearly, more research is needed in this area, given that job search strategies seem to be important predictors of job search success. For instance, despite the conceptual link between job
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search goals and strategies, this relationship has not yet been empirically investigated (Van Hoye & Saks, 2008). Moreover, strategies seem to be related to the quality of job search behavior (see later section), given that they affect the search behaviors that job seekers will perform in order to realize their goals as well as the likelihood of success (Van Hooft, Wanberg, & Van Hoye, 2013).

**Preparatory and Active Job Search Behaviors**

On the basis of sequential models of the job search process (Barber et al., 1994; Soelberg, 1967), Blau (1994) distinguished between preparatory and active job search behaviors. In the *preparatory search* phase, individuals gather information about potential job leads through various sources such as job ads, job sites, and friends. Subsequently, job seekers follow up on these job leads by performing *active job search behavior* such as contacting and applying to prospective employers. Measures of preparatory and active job search behavior are typically based on intensity measures (Saks, 2006). Instead of calculating an overall score of job search intensity, separate scores are computed to reflect the frequency of performing either preparatory (e.g., read the help wanted/classified ads in a newspaper) or active (e.g., fill out a job application) job search activities (Blau, 1993). As such, measures of preparatory and active job search behavior reflect both the effort-intensity and content-direction dimensions of Kanfer et al.’s (2001) framework. In this chapter, they are placed under the content-direction dimension, given that the content of job search behavior (i.e., preparatory versus active) is explicitly considered.

Findings indicate that both preparatory and active job search behavior are positively related to employment outcomes (Saks & Ashforth, 1999). However, active job search behavior is a stronger predictor (Blau, 1993; Saks, 2006; Saks & Ashforth, 2000) and in line with a sequential view on job search, it mediates the effects of preparatory search behavior (Blau, 1994). Moreover, individuals do not always actively pursue their job search after the preparatory phase,
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for instance when no attractive job options have been identified. Along these lines, Blau (1994) found that the relationship between preparatory and active job search behavior was stronger for job seekers with higher job search self-efficacy beliefs.

In terms of antecedents, higher financial need and job search self-efficacy are related to a higher intensity of both preparatory and active job search behaviors (Blau, 1994; Crossley & Stanton, 2005; Saks & Ashforth, 1999, 2000). In addition, among employed job seekers, active job search behavior is predicted by lower job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Blau, 1994).

Conceptually related to active job search behavior is the construct of job seeking assertiveness, which refers to the ability to identify one’s rights and choices during job search and to act upon them while respecting the rights and choices of others (Schmit, Amel, & Ryan, 1993). Assertive job search behaviors include directly contacting employers for information on job openings and making follow-up calls regarding the status of an application (Becker, 1980). Contrary to the intensity-based measurement of active job search behavior, the Assertive Job-Hunting Survey (Becker, 1980) requires job seekers to indicate how likely they are to perform the listed assertive search behaviors. Despite this methodological difference, active and assertive job search behaviors are conceptually related (but not the same), as they both involve behaviors associated with contacting and applying to potential employers. However, assertive job search behavior also reflects elements of job search quality (see later section), as it does not only assess whether these search behaviors (e.g., contacting employers) are likely to be performed (e.g., “I avoid contacting potential employers by phone or in person because I feel they are too busy to talk with me”, reverse coded), but also how well they are likely to be carried out (e.g., “I would ask an employer who did not have an opening if he knew of other employers who might have job
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openings”). Even though assertive search behaviors are often recommended in the popular job search literature, almost no empirical research has examined their effects. As a notable exception, Schmit et al. (1993) reported a positive relationship between job seeking assertiveness and finding a job.

**Formal and Informal Job Sources**

As outlined in the previous section, preparatory job search consists of collecting job-related information from various sources (Blau, 1994). Both the recruitment and job search literature have generally divided these different means through which job seekers learn about job opportunities into formal and informal sources (Saks, 2005; Zottoli & Wanous, 2000). *Formal job sources* refer to the use of public intermediaries that exist primarily for recruitment purposes including employment agencies, job ads, and campus placement offices (Barber et al., 1994). *Informal job sources* involve either no intermediaries (e.g., re-hires and walk-ins) or private intermediaries such as current or former employees, friends, relatives, or acquaintances (Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Measures of job sources typically present individuals with a list of various formal and informal sources and ask them to indicate whether or not they have used each particular source (Saks, 2006). These items are then summed to reflect overall usage of formal versus informal job sources. Alternatively, intensity-based measures might be used, as these allow to capture variations into the extent to which each source has been used (e.g., once versus multiple times; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2009).

Considerable empirical evidence suggests that job seekers are more likely to find employment as well as obtain higher-quality jobs (i.e., higher job satisfaction, better fit perceptions, lower turnover) through the use of informal job sources than through formal sources (Granovetter, 1995; Zottoli & Wanous, 2000). Two major theoretical explanations for these
source differences have been investigated, both of which have received some empirical support (Breaugh, 2008; Griffeth, Hom, Fink, & Cohen, 1997; Saks, 1994; Williams, Labig, & Stone, 1993; Zottoli & Wanous, 2000). The realistic information hypothesis states that informal sources provide more accurate and specific information about what the job entails than formal sources (Breaugh, 2008). This allows job seekers to apply for jobs that better fit their interests and skills as well as to submit better-prepared applications, increasing the likelihood of positive employment outcomes. In addition, a substantial proportion of job opportunities is never communicated through formal sources, so if job seekers do not include informal sources in their search, they are not even aware of these vacancies and hence cannot apply (Granovetter, 1995).

The individual differences hypothesis proposes that informal sources are used by other types of job seekers than formal sources (Williams et al., 1993). These pre-existing differences would then explain the later differences in employment outcomes between formal and informal job sources instead of source usage as such. For instance, Ellis and Taylor (1983) found that individuals with lower self-esteem were more likely to rely on formal sources for identifying job opportunities. Similarly, Saks and Ashforth (2000) observed that job seekers with higher job search self-efficacy beliefs made more use of informal job sources. Given that self-esteem and job search self-efficacy are positively associated with receiving job offers, finding employment, and shorter search duration (Kanfer et al., 2001), these underlying individual differences might (partly) explain the effects of formal and informal source usage on employment outcomes. In further support of this assumption, Kirnan, Farley, and Geisinger (1989) observed that job seekers applying through informal sources had higher scores than applicants from formal sources on a biographical inventory used in the selection procedure to assess applicants’ educational and work-related background. Again, these results suggest that higher-quality applicants, with higher
chances of job search success, are more likely to rely on informal sources in their job search, implying that individual differences offer an alternative explanation for the effects of job source usage on employment outcomes.

Even though informal sources of job information typically yield better search results than formal sources, evidence suggests that sometimes formal sources perform better (e.g., Saks & Ashforth, 1997) and informal sources can even have negative effects (Saks, 2006). Along these lines, Van Hoye et al. (2009) found that the effects of networking on employment outcomes were more beneficial when the contacts in job seekers’ social networks were of higher quality (see next section). This implies that informal job sources are more likely to produce better outcomes when higher-quality sources are used (e.g., contacts with high-level jobs rather than low-level jobs). This may explain why minority group members (whose network might contain fewer majority group and high-level contacts, Elliott, 2001) and students (with less developed professional networks, Saks, 2006) might benefit less from using informal sources in their job search.

**Specific Job Search Behaviors and Sources**

Given that overall job search intensity can be split up into preparatory and active job search behavior and that preparatory job search is further divided into using formal and informal job sources, the next logical step would be to investigate specific job search activities. However, contrary to recruitment research that has more extensively studied distinct recruitment sources such as job ads (e.g., Walker, Feild, Giles, & Bernerth, 2008), job sites (e.g., Dineen & Noe, 2009), and word-of-mouth (e.g., Van Hoye & Lievens, 2009), surprisingly little job search research has examined job seekers’ use of particular search behaviors and sources (see also Da Motta Veiga & Turban, this volume).
One of the few specific job search behaviors that has been examined to some extent is networking (Forret, this volume), which involves contacting relatives, friends, and other people for information and leads about job opportunities (Wanberg, Kanfer, & Banas, 2000). Job seekers’ intensity of networking has been found to relate positively to number of job offers (Van Hoye et al., 2009) as well as finding employment (Wanberg et al., 2000; Zikic & Klehe, 2006) and to explain incremental variance in job offers beyond other preparatory job search behaviors (Van Hoye et al., 2009). Moreover, the effectiveness of networking behaviors seems to depend on the quality of the contacts in job seekers’ social networks. Along these lines, Van Hoye et al. (2009) observed that job seekers who engaged in networking more frequently were more likely to find employment when the educational and occupational status of the other people in their network was higher. In addition, networking intensity was more positively related to job-organization fit when the ties making up job seekers’ social network were weaker (e.g., vague acquaintances) rather than stronger (e.g., close friends). This is consistent with Granovetter’s (1995) strength-of-weak ties hypothesis, which states that weak ties are more likely to move in different social circles and thus have access to unique and therefore more useful job information than strong ties.

In terms of antecedents, both individual differences and situational variables predict job seekers’ use of networking. Job seekers with higher levels of extraversion and networking comfort (i.e., positive attitude toward using networking as a job search method) more frequently engage in networking behaviors (Van Hoye et al., 2009; Wanberg et al., 2000). In addition, individuals with a larger social network and with stronger ties in their network spend more time on networking during job search (Van Hoye et al., 2009).
Future research on networking might benefit from applying recent developments in the recruitment literature that have resulted in an integrative conceptual model of word-of-mouth as a recruitment source (see Van Hoye, in press). Word-of-mouth is defined as an interpersonal communication, independent of the organization’s recruitment activities, about an organization as an employer or about specific jobs (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2009). While word-of-mouth in general can be initiated by the source (e.g., current employee) as well as by the recipient (i.e., job seeker) and can be driven by various motives (e.g., satisfaction of the source or coincidence), networking consists of word-of-mouth initiated by job seekers with the explicit motive to gather job-related information (Van Hoye et al., 2009). The theoretical model developed by Van Hoye (in press) integrates research findings from both literatures and highlights that word-of-mouth as a source of employment information affects both individual job search outcomes (e.g., job offers) and organizational pre-hire (e.g., application decisions) as well as post-hire recruitment outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction). Moreover, various process variables are proposed that might help to explain the impact of word-of-mouth such as accessibility, diagnosticity, credibility, media richness, and realism (cf. realistic information hypothesis). The integrative model further suggests that the use of word-of-mouth is determined by the characteristics of its recipient (cf. individual differences hypothesis), its source, and the organization involved, as well as by the interactions between these characteristics. Relevant recipient characteristics include personality, self-evaluations, motives, and social network; whereas personality, expertise, motives, and tie strength are key source attributes. With respect to the recruiting organization, the employer brand, organizational justice, referral bonuses, and other recruitment practices need to be considered. In addition to their role as determinants, these characteristics might also moderate the
effects of word-of-mouth on job search and recruitment outcomes. Finally, the characteristics of word-of-mouth, such as its valence, content, and medium, are also likely to affect its impact.

Unfortunately, almost no research has investigated job seekers’ use of other specific search behaviors besides networking. On the basis of measures of job search intensity, which are composed of various search activities, Van Hoye and Saks (2008) distinguished six specific job search behaviors: looking at job ads in newspapers or journals, visiting job sites (or web-based job search, Tso & Guan, this volume), networking, contacting employment agencies (Coverdill & Finlay, this volume), contacting employers, and submitting applications. In a sample of employed job seekers, they found that job search objectives were differentially related to the use of these specific search activities. Whereas job seekers with the objective of finding a new job engaged more frequently in all these activities, passive job seekers who aimed to stay aware of alternative job opportunities made more use of passive search methods such as looking at job ads and visiting job sites. Job seekers with the objective of developing a network of professional relationships applied more search behaviors involving human contact such as networking and contacting employers, and job seekers wanting to obtain bargaining leverage against their employer contacted other employers more frequently. These findings suggest that different objectives for engaging in job search are likely to elicit the use of different search methods that are most suited to accomplish those objectives. However, more research is needed to determine whether the various search behaviors actually lead to the desired outcome. Such research is essential if we want to provide guidance to job seekers as to what specific search methods they should apply, given their particular objectives. Along these lines, Van Hoye et al. (2009) observed that looking at job ads in newspapers or journals was negatively related to
(re)employment quality, whereas relying on the *public employment service* was a positive predictor of job offers but a negative predictor of finding employment.

As already pointed out with respect to networking, it would be worthwhile for future research on specific job search behaviors and sources to apply insights from the recruitment literature (Uggerslev, Fassina, & Kraichy, 2012; see also Da Motta Veiga & Turban, this volume). First, job seekers are likely to vary in the extent to which they receive employment information from a particular source (Saks & Ashforth, 1997). This implies that a Likert-type scale measuring the intensity of using a specific source seems more appropriate than a simple yes/no response scale measuring whether or not any information was received from that source (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2009). Second, on the basis of their review of the recruitment source literature, Zottoli and Wanous (2000) suggested that differences between job sources need to be investigated at three levels of specificity: between theoretically relevant categories (e.g., formal versus informal sources), but also between individual sources across (e.g., employment agencies versus networking) and within (e.g., re-hires versus networking) categories, and even within sources. For instance, future research on job advertisements might differentiate between print and internet advertising. In turn, print advertising could be subdivided into job advertisements in national magazines, regional papers, and local freesheets whereas internet advertising might be split up into corporate websites, job boards, and sponsored banners (Van Hoye, 2012).

Furthermore, with respect to categorizations of job sources, Cable and Turban (2001) borrowed from the marketing literature to suggest two additional theoretically relevant dimensions, beyond the distinctions between preparatory and active search behaviors and between formal and informal job sources. Their model posits that job seekers are influenced by employment information from a wide variety of sources, not restricted to the ones organizations
intentionally incorporate in their recruitment activities. The first dimension therefore refers to the degree of control the organization has over the source. Company-dependent sources such as advertising are part of the organization’s recruitment activities and can be directly managed to communicate the intended message to job seekers. On the contrary, company-independent sources such as word-of-mouth cannot be directly controlled by the organization but can only be influenced indirectly through other recruitment activities. The second dimension of experiential versus informational sources represents the degree to which a source allows job seekers to acquire information through personal, vivid media (e.g., recruitment event) versus impersonal, pallid media (e.g., recruitment brochure). Both company-independent and experiential sources are proposed to have a larger impact due to their higher credibility (Van Hoye, 2012).

Finally, going on job interviews (McCarthy & Cheng, this volume) is sometimes considered to be a specific job search behavior. In fact, it is often included as an item in measures of overall job search intensity (Kopelman et al., 1992) and active job search behavior (Blau, 1994). However, it might be more appropriate to consider the number of job interviews attended as one of the criteria for evaluating job search success (Brasher & Chen, 1999). Theoretical models of job search (Brasher & Chen, 1999; Saks, 2005) have distinguished various types of outcomes of job search behaviors, including job search outcomes (e.g., job interviews, job offers), quantitative employment outcomes (e.g., employment status, exhaustion of unemployment benefits), qualitative employment outcomes (e.g., job-organization fit, job satisfaction; Virick & McKee-Ryan, this volume), and psychological well-being (e.g., stress, anxiety; Paul, Hassel, & Moser, this volume). As already noted, job search outcomes such as job interviews are the most proximal outcomes of job search behavior, whereas quantitative and qualitative employment outcomes represent more distal outcomes. While job search behavior is
most directly related to receiving invitations for job interviews, many other factors besides job search behavior are likely to determine whether or not an individual actually obtains employment (Saks, 2005). In fact, there is some support for an unfolding model of job search success in which job search behavior leads to job interviews, interviews result in job offers, and more job offers lead to employment (Saks, 2006). This attests to the importance of using job interviews as a criterion for evaluating the effectiveness of job search behaviors. In any case, researchers should avoid including job interviews in both measures of the predictor (job search behavior) and the criterion (job search success), as this is likely to lead to inflated and biased results.

**Quality of Job Search Behaviors**

According to Kanfer et al. (2001), the content-direction dimension of job search behavior not only refers to the specific activities that job seekers engage in, but also to the quality with which these activities are being performed. Spending much time on job search activities does not necessarily imply that job search is done effectively, which might explain the relatively small meta-analytic effects of job search effort and intensity on employment outcomes (Kanfer et al., 2001). In other words, the effectiveness of job search behavior is likely to not only depend on the specific search activities selected and the intensity of performing them, but also on how well job seekers carry out the chosen search activities (Wanberg et al., 2002).

Despite the intuitive appeal of these assumptions and their far-reaching implications, very little research has been conducted in this area. As discussed earlier, research on networking as a job search behavior suggests that its effects depend on the quality of the contacts in job seekers’ social networks (Van Hoye et al., 2009). Similar reasoning might apply to other preparatory and active job search behaviors. For instance, web-based job search is likely to be more effective when multiple job sites as well as employer recruitment sites are consulted or when more relevant
keywords are used. The effects of reading job ads might depend on the quality and the diversity of the screened newspapers and journals. The quality of contacting employment agencies and employers seems highly dependent on job seekers’ self-presentation skills whereas submitting carefully crafted job applications tailored to the specific vacancy is likely to be more successful than sending out numerous one-size-fits-all applications or resumes with a poor layout and spelling errors. Research on job search quality is crucial if we are to advise and train job seekers on how they should best carry out the specific job search behaviors that are most likely to help them accomplish their particular job search and employment objectives.

Taking a broader (i.e., not limited to job search behaviors) perspective toward conceptualizing job search quality, Van Hooft et al. (2013) propose a *four-phased cyclical self-regulatory model*. This model posits that a high-quality job search consists of a highly self-regulated process, starting with goal establishment and followed by planning, goal striving, and reflection. In each of these phases, key components of job search quality are delineated that contribute to a successful job search. In the goal establishment phase, job seekers should select a clear goal for their search (e.g., find a better paying job), commit to it, and translate it into lower-level goals (e.g., be invited for an interview at company X offering above market salaries). In the next phase of planning, job seekers need to select a behavioral strategy that should be followed to realize their goals and decide on which sources of job information they will rely. As already noted, an exploratory or focused job search strategy is preferred over a haphazard strategy and multiple job sources should be used, with an emphasis on (but not limited to) informal sources. In addition, job seekers should form concrete intentions, set priorities and deadlines, and thoroughly prepare for the planned activities. The third phase of goal striving involves the sustained performance of the planned search behaviors as job seekers move towards their goals. As there
are likely to be many obstacles and setbacks during job search, job seekers need to apply self-regulatory techniques that help to initiate and maintain the planned search activities, such as self-control, self-monitoring, goal shielding, and task-related feedback-seeking. In the final phase of reflection, job seekers have to evaluate whether their search has been effective and whether revisions to their goals, planning, or behavior are necessary. At this stage, evaluating errors and failures in a learning-oriented way and attributing them to internal but changeable causes should be beneficial. In addition, the model poses that job seekers should administer self-rewards contingent on their performance, which is likely to motivate their continued effort and persistence. To realize a high-quality job search, job seekers should cycle through these four phases in the proposed sequence (often multiple times) and follow the recommendations made in each phase. Further research is needed to validate this self-regulatory model of job search quality and test all its propositions, so that it might serve as a framework for future job search research as well as practice.

**Job Search Dynamics and Persistence**

So far, we have discussed various job search activities, as well as the intensity and quality with which they are performed as key components of job search behavior. However, hardly anyone finds a job in just one day, and more often than not, the entire job search process takes up several months or even longer. This implies that temporal aspects of job search should also be considered (Sun, Li, & Song, this volume). Over time, job search behavior may change in intensity or direction as self-reactions or feedback from the environment influence self-regulatory mechanisms which in turn affect behavior (Kanfer et al., 2001). For instance, after several unsuccessful applications, job seekers might decide to lower their goals, to change their search strategy, or to rely on other sources for collecting information on job opportunities. Moreover,
job seekers are also likely to vary in the persistence with which they sustain their job search behavior, especially when confronted with difficulties, discouragements, and uncertainty (Wanberg, Glomb, Song, & Sorenson, 2005). To grasp these dynamic aspects of the job search process, it is obviously not sufficient to assess job search behavior at merely one point in time (either in research or in practice), longitudinal measurement with multiple time waves is required.

Only a few studies have examined the dynamics of job search behavior. Barber et al. (1994) propose three alternative models that might explain changes in job search behavior that occur over time. First, the sequential model is based on various conceptualizations of job search as a phased process, in which job search activities follow a logical and systematic sequence (Blau, 1994; Soelberg, 1967). This model suggests that job seekers first search broadly to identify as many job opportunities as possible (cf. preparatory job search behavior), and then acquire more in-depth information about selected opportunities and actually apply for them (cf. active job search behavior). When this does not result in desired job offers, job seekers might need to return to earlier stages. Second, the learning model posits that job search behavior changes over time because job seekers learn more effective and more efficient search techniques as their search progresses (Barber et al., 1994). This learning can be the result of personal experience, observing the success of others, feedback from recruiters, advice from job search counselors, job search training, or reading popular job search books. Third, whereas both the sequential and the learning model emphasize cognitive processes, the emotional response model focuses on emotional reactions to job search (Barber et al., 1994). Job search can be very stressful and the longer the search lasts, the more job seekers are confronted with rejections and uncertainty, resulting in accumulated levels of stress and frustration. This might cause them to withdraw from job search in general or from specific job search behaviors that are experienced as more stressful.
To test the implications of these three models, Barber et al. (1994) examined the job search behaviors of graduating students early in their search, at graduation, and three months after graduation for those who remained unemployed. First of all, their findings confirm that job seekers do change their search behavior over the course of time. Furthermore, the observed changes were most in line with the sequential model. As students moved from initial search to late search, their job search effort and use of formal sources decreased and they were less likely to look for information related to obtaining jobs. Moreover, students who remained unemployed and needed to extend their search, seemed to return to earlier stages as their job search effort and reliance on formal sources increased again. Saks and Ashforth (2000) provide further support for the latter findings, as they observed that students who were still unemployed at graduation increased their job search effort, use of formal sources, and active job search behavior in the months following graduation. In addition, increases in job search effort and active job search behavior seemed to be effective, as they resulted in a higher number of job interviews. It should be noted that the job search process of graduating students is likely to be more sequential than for other groups of job seekers, such as job losers and employed job seekers (Boswell, Zimmerman, & Swider, 2012). Unique to the job search process of new entrants is that it coincides with the natural cycle of students’ progression through their educational programs, with the end date of graduation known months or even years in advance. In addition, employers’ campus recruitment activities (e.g., placing job postings, scheduling interviews) are also in tune with this educational cycle, creating even more sequential effects on students’ job search.

If we really want to understand the fluctuations in job search as well as the reasons for them on a day-to-day or week-to-week basis, it is imperative to measure job search behavior at considerably more points in time. To this end, Wanberg et al. (2005) investigated changes in
unemployed individuals’ job search intensity in a ten-wave longitudinal study. Consistent with previous research findings in student samples (Barber et al., 1994; Saks & Ashforth, 2000), job seekers somewhat decreased their search intensity over time, but then increased their search intensity again when they remained unemployed, providing some support for a sequential model of the dynamics of unemployed job seekers’ search behavior. This slight convex trend was observed for most of the specific job search behaviors as well, including looking for job opportunities in newspapers or on the internet, networking, contacting employers, and submitting applications. An opposite, concave trend was observed for contacting private or public employment agencies. Moreover, in line with the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), subjective norms and job search self-efficacy beliefs at any given time predicted job search intensity in the following two weeks and these effects were mediated by job search intentions. In addition, job seekers with higher core self-evaluations showed higher job search persistence, as evidenced by higher average levels of search intensity over time. Finally, a dynamic assessment of job search behavior did not improve the prediction of reemployment beyond a static assessment, as time 1 and cumulative job search intensity were equally positively related to reemployment.

In another multiple time wave study, Wanberg, Zhu, and Van Hooft (2010) applied self-regulation theory to examine daily changes in unemployed persons’ job search effort over a three-week period. On average, people spent 3.56 hours a day on job search activities (ranging from 0.4 to 8.6 hours), but job search effort showed strong vacillations over time. Reasons provided for putting in less effort on a given day included family obligations, not feeling well, wanting to do other things, needing a break, and discouragements. Furthermore, job seekers who exerted less search effort and perceived lower job search progress on one day reported higher
levels of search effort the following day, and vice versa. In addition, lower positive affect on a
given day was related to lower search effort the next day for more state-oriented job seekers (i.e.,
with a lower ability to detach from negative thoughts), but to higher effort for more action-
oriented individuals (i.e., with a higher disengagement ability). These findings provide some
support for an emotional response model of job search changes and suggest that job seekers need
self-regulation to manage negative emotions over time and sustain their job search efforts. This
might be especially true for unemployed job seekers, as compared to students or employed job
seekers (Boswell et al., 2012).

In further support of a self-regulatory perspective on the dynamics of job search,
Wanberg, Zhu, Kanfer, and Zhang (2012) found that unemployed job seekers with higher
approach-oriented trait motivation (i.e., tendency to engage in goal striving for the purpose of
personal growth and developing competencies) showed higher levels of job search intensity and
mental health, both at the start of and over the course of their unemployment. These effects were
mediated by weekly changes in the self-regulatory state variable of motivation control (i.e.,
intentional cognitive redirection of attention, use of goal setting, and/or use of environmental
management strategies to stay on course and sustain effort). In addition, some support was found
for the sequential model, as job seekers reported a decline in the weekly hours spent on job
search ($M = 14.5$ hours, range = 11.2-17.8) over time, with a slight increase in later months.

Finally, the findings demonstrate the importance of job search persistence, as unemployed
individuals who maintained high levels of job search intensity over the duration of their job
search had more interviews and found jobs more quickly.
Relationships Within and Between Dimensions of Job Search Behavior

This chapter has relied on the three dimensions of job search behavior proposed by Kanfer et al. (2001), namely effort-intensity, content-direction, and temporal-persistence, to organize and review the different kinds of job search behaviors and sources that have been studied in prior research. In fact, the main strength of this multidimensional approach is that it enables to encompass and highlight all the relevant aspects of job search behavior that should be taken into account when designing job search studies and interventions. However, from the preceding review, it is clear that these three dimensions of job search behavior are not independent from each other, as significant relationships exist both within and between dimensions of job search behavior. Some of these connections become apparent when looking at the overview of job search behaviors shown in Table 1. For instance, if a study were to measure specific job search behaviors with an intensity-based scale at multiple points in time, all three dimensions would be taken into account, and the same measures would also allow to examine overall job search intensity, preparatory and active job search behavior, formal and informal job sources, and changes in job search behavior. Depending on the research questions and context, researchers can then decide whether they need to include additional aspects of job search behavior that require another measure, such as job search strategies or job search quality. In conclusion, this multidimensional review of job search behavior does not necessarily imply that all dimensions and behaviors should be measured in any given situation nor that separate measures should be used for each individual construct. Instead, it offers a framework that both researchers and practitioners can rely on to identify all possibly relevant aspects of job search behavior, allowing them to make an informed decision on which behaviors to focus on in their particular context and how these might be measured.
Implications for Job Seekers and Employment Counselors

The above discussion of job search behavior as a multidimensional construct and the review of the different job search behaviors and sources studied to date strongly imply that we need to take all the dimensions of job search behavior into account if we want to understand and improve job search success. Therefore, this chapter has a number of key implications for job seekers and employment counselors.

Implications for Job Seekers

- Consider job search to be your full-time job. Make and follow a planning and devote a minimum amount of hours to job search every day. The more time and effort you invest in job search and the more intensely you engage in a greater number of search activities, the higher your chances of receiving job interviews and offers, and of finding employment.

- Think about what you are trying to achieve through job search and what kind of job you are looking for. Formulate clear job search and employment goals and select the job search behaviors that are most likely to help you realize your goals. Adopting such a focused search strategy increases the likelihood of finding high-quality employment.

- Realize that job search is a sequential process in which both preparatory and active job search behaviors are necessary. However, active search behaviors such as contacting employers and submitting applications are key for job search success. Even though active search might seem more stressful, it is essential to act upon the information gathered on job opportunities and to progress from preparatory to active search.

- Do not rely on just a single job search behavior or source, but engage in multiple and diverse search activities. It seems especially important to include informal job sources in
your search and to spend sufficient time on networking and developing your social network. Focus on contacting people with a higher educational and occupational status and people that you are less acquainted with to ask for information and advice on jobs, as this increases the effectiveness of networking behaviors.

- Engaging in appropriate job search behaviors with a high intensity is not sufficient, you should also carry out these behaviors in a high-quality manner. If you are less confident about your job search skills, seek advice and feedback from others, refer to job search handbooks, or follow job search training.

- Be aware that job search can be a long and stressful process and that you will be confronted with difficulties, rejections, and uncertainty. Seek support from your social environment and persist in your job search activities. Regularly reflect on your job search and revise your goals, strategy, or job search behavior if necessary.

Implications for Employment Counselors

- Realize that even though job search effort and intensity are important determinants of job search success, they represent merely one dimension of job search behavior. To provide the best possible guidance to job seekers, first try to obtain a complete picture of their current job search and also consider the specific job search behaviors and sources that they rely on as well as the quality of their search activities.

- Make job seekers aware of the importance of clear and specific goals for their job search. Help them to clarify, formulate, and periodically revise their job search and employment objectives and to translate these objectives into job search strategies and behaviors that are most suited to accomplish them. Pay particular attention to job seekers using a haphazard search strategy.
• Encourage job seekers to include informal sources in their search for information on job opportunities and to follow up with active and assertive search behaviors. Strengthening job seekers’ self-efficacy beliefs (e.g., through training) is likely to increase their use of these specific sources and behaviors. Assist job seekers in developing their social network and in achieving higher levels of networking comfort.

• Try to enhance the quality with which job seekers perform various job search activities through advice and training. Point out the value of high-quality contacts (i.e., high-status and weak ties) for networking and offer opportunities for developing and practicing self-presentation and job search skills.

• To capture the dynamics of job search, meet with job seekers and assess their job search behaviors at multiple moments in time. Help them to deal with discouragements and uncertainty and to persist in their job search. Highlight the importance of resuming their search activities and disengaging from negative thoughts and emotions after an “off-day”.

**Future Research Directions**

Reviewing the literature on job search behaviors and sources from a multidimensional perspective reveals numerous gaps in our current knowledge and highlights the urgent need for future research in this area. With respect to the three main dimensions that were used to categorize the different aspects of job search behavior, we can conclude that the effort-intensity dimension has been the main focus of previous research, including a meta-analysis (Kanfer et al., 2001). Therefore, the most pressing and valuable directions for future research involve the other two dimensions and include the study of specific job search behaviors, the quality of job search behaviors, the dynamics of job search behavior, and the (inter)relationships between different job search behaviors, goals, and outcomes.
First, most job search research has used general measures of job search behavior that combine a variety of job search activities to derive an overall intensity measure with little attention to the specific behaviors performed (Kanfer et al., 2001). As a result, we know virtually nothing about the use and effectiveness of specific job search behaviors, with the exception of networking (Wanberg et al., 2000). Research that focuses on and measures specific search behaviors is important because there is some evidence that job seekers differ in their use of specific methods (Wanberg et al., 2005) and that the predictors and consequences of job search depend on the applied search behaviors (Van Hoye et al., 2009). This is a key topic for future research if we are to provide guidance to job seekers as to what search behaviors they should be engaging in to a greater or lesser extent. We need to know what job search activities should be applied by particular job seekers, when they should apply them, what activities are most effective for specific job search and employment goals, and what activities are most effective for certain types of jobs and occupations. For instance, with respect to networking, some evidence suggests that it is particularly suited for job seekers with the objectives of finding a (new) job and of developing a professional network (Van Hoye & Saks, 2008; Van Hoye et al., 2009). However, networking seems less effective in terms of employment outcomes for job seekers whose social network mostly contains strong and low-status ties (Van Hoye et al., 2009). In addition, there might be cultural differences with respect to the prevalence, appropriateness, and effectiveness of networking that need to be further explored (Van Hoye et al., 2009; Wanberg et al., 2000).

Moreover, not much is known about the type of jobs for which networking as a job search behavior is most effective, it seems plausible though that networking might be especially suited for finding higher-level jobs and jobs involving more interpersonal contacts, particularly with people outside the organization.
Second, the effectiveness of job search behavior is not only determined by the specific search activities selected and their intensity, but also by the quality with which these activities are performed (Wanberg et al., 2002). Job search quality represents a crucial area for future research that previous studies have hardly touched upon. We need to know what constitutes high-quality job search behavior, how it can be stimulated or trained, and how it contributes to various indicators of job search success including employment quality. Prior research on networking quality might be extended by investigating how other particular aspects of networking such as the manner in which social ties are contacted (e.g., too timid versus too pushy) or the level of rapport building impact its effectiveness. Similar issues should be examined for all other specific search behaviors as well. For instance, what constitutes a high-quality web-based job search? Should job seekers use national or regional sites, general or job-specific sites, job sites or employer recruitment sites? How many different sites should be consulted and what keywords generate a higher probability of success? Answers to these and many other questions would be highly useful, as they would allow us to advise and train job seekers on how they should best carry out the specific job search activities that are most suited for accomplishing their job search and employment goals.

Third, when investigating specific job search behaviors and their quality, the dynamics of job search should also be taken into account. There is already some evidence suggesting that job seekers’ use of specific search activities fluctuates over time (Wanberg et al., 2005). It would be interesting to examine whether the same is true for job search quality and how these changes can be explained. Whereas the sequential model has been most often applied for describing changes in the use of job search behaviors (Barber et al., 1994), the learning and emotional response models may hold more promise for explaining fluctuations in the quality of those behaviors. On
the basis of the learning model, one would predict that the quality of job search behaviors increases over time as job seekers learn from their own experiences and advice from others. The emotional response model might lead to an opposite prediction of decreasing job search quality over time, as job seekers are faced with rejections and uncertainty evoking negative emotions and stress that may impair their job search performance. Future research should examine the validity of these predictions for different job search behaviors and determine whether the learning and emotional effects on the quality of job search behavior are affected by other individual and situational variables, such as job search self-efficacy and action-state orientation (Wanberg et al., 2010).

Fourth, research on different job search behaviors is fragmented and scarce, and has typically focused on only one or a few behaviors at a time. As a result, we know very little of how the different (sub)dimensions of job search behavior relate to each other as well as to antecedent variables and outcomes. Therefore, a particularly promising avenue for future research would be to include multiple operationalizations of job search behavior in a single study. This would allow determining their mutual relationships as well as their relative effects on job search success. A worthwhile effort in this direction was conducted by Saks (2006) who examined the combined and differential effects of five job search behaviors (job search effort, preparatory search behavior, active search behavior, informal sources, formal sources) on various employment outcomes, with active job search behavior emerging as the key predictor of search success. Further research should also include antecedent variables, specific job search behaviors, and job search quality. Ideally, such research should also produce a validated questionnaire encompassing all dimensions and relevant aspects of job search behavior, which would be a
highly valuable instrument for job seekers and employment counselors (self-)assessing the totality of one’s search activities.

Finally, several theoretical models of job search (Kanfer et al., 2001; Stevens & Beach, 1996) imply that different job search and employment goals are likely to elicit the use of different job search behaviors that are (thought to be) most suited to accomplish those objectives. Even though hardly any research has been conducted in this area, some evidence suggests that distinct objectives for engaging in job search are differentially related to the use of specific job search behaviors (Van Hoye & Saks, 2008) and to job search outcomes (Boswell, Boudreau, & Dunford, 2004). Future research should extend these findings to various employment goals and should investigate the relationships between goals, job search strategies, job search behaviors, and outcomes. This type of research would greatly improve our knowledge of what job search strategies and behaviors are most effective for obtaining the outcomes associated with particular objectives. For instance, although employees engaging in job search with the objective of obtaining bargaining leverage against their current employer seem more likely to engage in active search behaviors such as contacting other employers (Van Hoye & Saks, 2008) and to actually use leverage later on (Boswell et al., 2004), we do not yet know whether search behaviors mediate the effect of this objective on search outcomes. In addition, much less is known about the outcomes of other objectives such as staying aware of alternative job opportunities and developing a network of professional relationships or about the (other) objectives of unemployed job seekers (e.g., searching to comply with unemployment benefits regulations) and how they relate to job search behavior as well as outcomes.
Conclusion

This chapter has strongly argued for conceptualizing and measuring job search behavior as a multidimensional construct. As such, the effectiveness of job search behavior is determined by the specific search activities engaged in, the intensity and quality with which these activities are performed, as well as changes in these activities over time. All these dimensions of job search behavior need to be taken into account for understanding and improving job search success. Whereas previous research has mainly focused on the intensity dimension, future research on the content and dynamic dimensions would greatly enhance our knowledge of the multidimensionality of job search behavior.
References


Different Job Search Behaviors and Sources


Table 1

*Multidimensional Overview of Job Search Behaviors and Sources*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Effort-intensity</th>
<th>Content-direction</th>
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<th>Job search intensity</th>
<th>Job search strategies</th>
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