

**The role of networking and social media  
tools during job search: an information  
behaviour perspective**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of Edinburgh Napier University, for the  
award of Doctor of Philosophy

April 2018

# Declaration

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification, and that it is the result of my own independent work.

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Date

# Abstract

This research reported in this thesis explores job search networking amongst 16-24 year olds living in Scotland, and the role of social media platforms (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn) during this process. Networking is treated as an information behaviour; reflecting this, the study is underpinned by a prominent model from the domain of information science. A sequential, mixed methods approach was applied to gather data. This included the use of interviews, focus groups, and a survey questionnaire. The interviews incorporated ego-centric network methods to develop a relational perspective of job search networking.

The findings show that young people accrue different types of information from network contacts which can be useful for all job search tasks. Indeed, frequent networking offline and on social media is associated with positive job search outcomes. This is especially true of engaging with family members and acquaintances, and frequent use of Facebook for job search purposes. However, demographic and other contextual factors have a substantial impact on the nature of networking behaviours, and the extent to which they can influence outcomes. Additionally, young jobseekers face a range of barriers to networking, do not always utilise their networks thoroughly, and are more likely to use social media platforms as supplementary tools for job search.

A key contribution of this work is that it provides a detailed insight into the process of networking that has been neglected in previous studies. Its focus on social media also reveals a new dimension to the concept which has received little attention in the job search literature. Given its focus on young jobseekers living in Scotland, the findings have also been used to create a detailed list of recommendations for practitioners.

## Publications associated with this research

Mowbray, J., Hall, H., Raeside, R., & Robertson, P. J. (in press). Job search information behaviours: an ego-net study of networking amongst young job-seekers. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, ISSN 0961-0006

Mowbray, J., Hall, H., Raeside, R., Robertson, P. (2017). The role of networking and social media tools during job search: an information behaviour perspective. *Information Research*. 22(1) ISSN 1368-1613

Mowbray, J., Raeside, R., Hall, H., Robertson, P. (2016). Social networking sites and employment status: an investigation based on Understanding Society data. In: *Proceedings of the 2nd International Data Information and Information Management Conference (IDIMC)*. (pp. 75-85). Loughborough: LISU.

## **Funding bodies for this research**

ESRC (grant no. ED/J500136/1) and Skills Development  
Scotland

# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors Professor Hazel Hall (Director of Studies), Professor Robert Raeside, and Dr Peter Robertson for all of the advice and assistance they provided me throughout the course of my PhD. I could not have asked for a better team in terms of the expertise and general support they have provided. It has all been greatly appreciated.

I would also like to thank my sponsors the Economic and Social Research Council and Skills Development Scotland for providing me with the opportunity to pursue a doctorate. I am grateful in particular for the assistance I received from Rosie McCready, Lynne Robson, Patrick Watt, and Keith Falconer at SDS.

In the School of Computing at Napier University I have many people to thank: my friends and fellow PhD students; my Centre for Social Informatics colleagues; and all of the support staff in the school office for always being approachable and very knowledgeable.

This study would also not have been possible without those who gave up their time to participate in the research, or to help me source participants. There are too many people to thank individually; however, please know that I am very appreciative of your contribution.

Finally, I would like to extend my warmest thanks and gratitude to my partner Sophie, my parents (Wullie and Fiona), and my other family members. I would be lost without you all.

# Table of Contents

<b>Declaration</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>Publications associated with this research</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Funding bodies for this research</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	<b>x</b>
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>xi</b>
<b>Abbreviations</b> .....	<b>xiii</b>
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>14</b>
1.1 Background and aims .....	14
1.2 Theory and method.....	15
1.3 Policy context and practical contribution of the study .....	16
1.4 Thesis structure.....	17
<b>Chapter 2 Literature review</b> .....	<b>19</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	19
2.2 Social networks, and informal channels of information during job search.....	20
2.2.1 Networks, tie strength, and the diffusion of job information .....	21
2.2.2 Empirical evidence: networks, tie strength, and the diffusion of job information .....	23
2.2.3 Discussion of the strength of network ties and the diffusion of job information .....	24
2.2.4 Social networks and the concept of social capital.....	26
2.2.5 Empirical evidence: the impact of social capital on employment outcomes.....	27
2.2.6 Discussion of the impact of social capital on employment outcomes.....	29
2.2.7 Measuring social capital resources: accessed and mobilised capital.....	31
2.3 Networking as an information seeking behaviour during job search .....	33
2.3.1 Definitions of networking as an operational concept.....	33
2.3.2 Networking behaviours .....	36
2.3.3 The predictors of engaging in networking behaviours .....	38
2.3.4 The outcomes of engaging in networking behaviours.....	41
2.3.5 Networking as a concept in information science research .....	42
2.3.6 Discussion of networking behaviours, antecedents and outcomes.....	44
2.4 The adoption of social media tools.....	46
2.4.1 Defining social media tools.....	47
2.4.2 Social media attributes and functions .....	48

2.4.3	Social media tools and personality traits.....	50
2.4.4	Social media tools, personality traits and information behaviour .....	53
2.4.5	Social media tools and demographics .....	54
2.4.6	Social media tools, demographics and information behaviour .....	55
2.4.7	Social media tools and technology acceptance .....	56
2.4.8	Social media tools and job search .....	57
2.4.9	Social media tools and careers guidance research.....	59
2.4.10	Outcomes of using social media tools.....	61
2.4.11	Discussion of social media adoption.....	61
2.5	Conclusion.....	63
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Theoretical framework .....</b>	<b>65</b>
3.1	Introduction .....	65
3.2	Models of information seeking behaviour.....	65
3.3	Wilson’s theory of information behaviour .....	66
3.3.1	Wilson’s model: context of information need.....	68
3.3.2	Wilson’s model: intervening variables.....	70
3.3.3	Wilson’s model: information seeking behaviour .....	70
3.4	Conclusion.....	71
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Methodology .....</b>	<b>72</b>
4.1	Introduction .....	72
4.2	Research philosophy and approach .....	73
4.2.1	Pragmatist philosophy.....	73
4.2.2	Ontological considerations of pragmatism.....	74
4.2.3	Epistemological considerations of pragmatism.....	75
4.2.4	Pragmatism and the mixed methods approach.....	75
4.3	Research design .....	77
4.3.1	Stage one: interviews and focus group.....	77
4.3.2	Stage two: survey questionnaire.....	83
4.3.3	Stage three: focus group with careers advisers .....	93
4.3.4	Data analysis .....	94
4.3.5	Validity and reliability .....	96
4.3.6	Pilot studies.....	97
4.3.7	Ethical considerations .....	98
4.3.8	Method limitations .....	100
4.3.9	Conclusion .....	102
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Interview and focus group results .....</b>	<b>103</b>
5.1	Introduction .....	103
5.2	Interview results .....	103



5.2.1	Job search information types.....	103
5.2.2	Network measures, contextual factors, and job search information networks .....	104
5.2.3	Ashley .....	106
5.2.4	Craig.....	109
5.2.5	Michael .....	111
5.2.6	Ross.....	114
5.2.7	Steve.....	116
5.2.8	Simon .....	118
5.2.9	Suzanne.....	120
5.2.10	Intervening variables.....	122
5.3	Focus group results.....	126
5.3.1	Context of job search .....	126
5.3.2	Job search networking.....	129
5.3.3	Intervening variables.....	132
5.4	Conclusion.....	134
5.4.1	Survey design: creating contextual questions .....	135
5.4.2	Survey design: creating job search networking questions.....	136
5.4.3	Survey design: creating social media questions .....	136
5.4.3.1	Survey design: creating intervening variables questions.....	137
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Survey results .....</b>	<b>138</b>
6.1	Introduction .....	138
6.2	Job search context .....	138
6.3	Job search networking behaviours.....	141
6.3.1	Networking with people.....	141
6.3.2	Networking with employers.....	147
6.4	The role of social media platforms.....	153
6.4.1	Facebook.....	154
6.4.2	Twitter.....	167
6.4.3	LinkedIn.....	175
6.5	Job search outcomes and logistic regression models .....	181
6.6	Conclusion.....	184
6.6.1	Job search networking.....	184
6.6.2	The role of social media platforms.....	186
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>Towards implementation: a focus group with careers advisers .....</b>	<b>188</b>
7.1	Introduction .....	188
7.2	Results of the focus group with careers advisers .....	188
7.2.1	Advising young people to use networks .....	188
7.2.2	Networking and confidence issues amongst young people.....	189
7.2.3	Building networking confidence in young people .....	191

7.2.4	Advising young people to use social media .....	192
7.2.5	Functionality, and understanding how young people use social media .....	193
7.2.6	Challenges to advising young people on social media.....	195
7.3	Conclusion.....	197
<b>Chapter 8</b>	<b>Discussion.....</b>	<b>199</b>
8.1	Introduction .....	199
8.2	Information sourced via networking offline and on social media.....	200
8.3	Job search networking behaviours.....	201
8.3.1	Modes of job search networking.....	201
8.3.2	The nature of offline contacts .....	203
8.3.3	Context of job search networking .....	206
8.3.4	Intervening variables.....	208
8.4	The role of social media tools during job search.....	210
8.4.1	General use of social media .....	210
8.4.2	Modes of search on social media .....	212
8.4.3	Nature of contacts .....	214
8.4.4	Context of networking on social media platforms .....	215
8.4.5	Key intervening variables .....	217
8.5	Informing the careers service and improving employability amongst young people.....	219
8.5.1	Training on networks and the role of social media as networking tools .....	219
8.5.2	Everyday exchanges and building new contacts .....	223
8.5.3	Steps to ameliorate networking barriers.....	224
8.6	Discussion of Wilson’s information needs and seeking model.....	225
8.7	Conclusion.....	228
<b>Chapter 9</b>	<b>Conclusions .....</b>	<b>229</b>
9.1	Introduction .....	229
9.2	Summary of the research findings.....	229
9.3	Contributions to existing knowledge and theory.....	233
9.4	Importance of the research findings .....	234
9.5	Recommendations for academia .....	235
9.6	Recommendations for practice and policy makers.....	236
<b>References</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>239</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>266</b>

# List of Figures

Figure 1 Preparatory and active job search (source: original) .....	21
Figure 2 Social media honeycomb of functions (Kietzmann et al., 2011).....	49
Figure 3 An adaptation of Wilson’s information needs and seeking model (1981, p.6)	67
Figure 4 Three-stage exploratory design process with mixed methods.....	76
Figure 5 Ashley’s job search information network.....	107
Figure 6 Craig’s job search information network .....	110
Figure 7 Michael’s job search information network .....	112
Figure 8 Ross's job search information network .....	115
Figure 9 Steve’s job search information network .....	117
Figure 10 Simon’s job search information network.....	119
Figure 11 Suzanne’s job search information network.....	121
Figure 12 Networking with employers per method of contact .....	148
Figure 13 Networking with employers via social media, per education level .....	149
Figure 14 Perceived usefulness of Facebook and education level.....	160
Figure 15 Level of occupation sought and actively using Facebook for job search .....	161
Figure 16 Level of occupation sought and following a Twitter account where job search information is posted.....	172
Figure 17 Level of occupation sought and actively using LinkedIn for job search.....	179
Figure 18 the relationship between context and mobilised contact types.....	208
Figure 19 The relationship between context and social media appropriation.....	217
Figure 20 Revised version of Wilson’s information needs and seeking model.....	226

## List of Tables

Table 2-1 Key search terms used in secondary stage of review .....	20
Table 2-2 Empirical evidence on networks, tie strength, and employment outcomes....	25
Table 2-3 Empirical evidence on social capital and employment outcomes .....	30
Table 2-4 Definitions of networking as a career development behaviour .....	35
Table 2-5 Synthesis of empirical studies relating to job search networking.....	45
Table 4-1 Interview sample description .....	78
Table 4-2 Focus group sample description .....	80
Table 4-3 Age and employment status of the sample by gender, in comparison with the general Scottish population of 16-24 year olds .....	87
Table 4-4 Urban/rural classification of the sample .....	89
Table 4-5 Focus group sample: careers advisers .....	93
Table 5-1 Job search information network measures.....	105
Table 5-2 JSIN symbols and what they represent.....	106
Table 5-3 Analysis of Ashley’s JSIN.....	109
Table 5-4 Analysis of Craig’s JSIN .....	111
Table 5-5 Analysis of Michael’s JSIN .....	113
Table 5-6 Analysis of Ross’s JSIN .....	116
Table 5-7 Analysis of Steve’s JSIN .....	118
Table 5-8 Analysis of Simon’s JSIN.....	120
Table 5-9 Analysis of Suzanne’s JSIN.....	122
Table 6-1 Nature of the respondents’ job search .....	140
Table 6-2 Networking with people during job search.....	142
Table 6-3 Networking with family and employment status.....	143
Table 6-4 Networking with people and job search characteristics .....	145
Table 6-5 Networking with people and mean number of face-to-face interviews.....	147
Table 6-6 Networking with employers and job search characteristics .....	151
Table 6-7 Networking with employers and face-to-face interviews.....	153
Table 6-8 Frequency of Facebook use and number of Facebook friends .....	154
Table 6-9 Frequency of Facebook use and number of Facebook friends, per education level.....	155
Table 6-10 Active use of Facebook for job search activities.....	157
Table 6-11 Active use of Facebook and education level .....	159

Table 6-12 Active use of Facebook for job search and job search job search characteristics .....	163
Table 6-13 Using Facebook functions for job search and being advised/shown by a professional .....	164
Table 6-14 Face-to-face interviews and active uses of Facebook for job search.....	166
Table 6-15 Frequency of Twitter use and number of Twitter connections.....	167
Table 6-16 Frequency of Twitter use per age group and ethnic background.....	168
Table 6-17 Active use of Twitter for job search activities.....	169
Table 6-18 Active job search on Twitter and job search characteristics.....	173
Table 6-19 Using Twitter functions for job search and being advised/shown by a professional .....	174
Table 6-20 Frequency of LinkedIn use and number of LinkedIn connections .....	175
Table 6-21 Active use of LinkedIn for job search activities.....	177
Table 6-22 Using LinkedIn functions for job search and being advised/shown by a professional .....	181
Table 6-23 Logistic regression model of the likelihood of getting more than one face-to-face or phone interview .....	182
Table 6-24 Logistic regression model of the likelihood of subjectively making job search process.....	184
Table 8-1 Modes of job search networking (offline) .....	203
Table 8-2 Contact types, frequency of exchange, and association with outcomes .....	206
Table 8-3 Social media platform, modes of search, and association with outcomes....	213

## **Abbreviations**

<b>CMS</b>	<b>Career Management Skills</b>
<b>ELGPN</b>	<b>European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network</b>
<b>EU</b>	<b>European Union</b>
<b>JSIN</b>	<b>Job Search Information Network</b>
<b>PE</b>	<b>Perceived Encouragement</b>
<b>PEU</b>	<b>Perceived Ease of Use</b>
<b>PU</b>	<b>Perceived Use</b>
<b>SDS</b>	<b>Skills Development Scotland</b>
<b>SNA</b>	<b>Social Network Analysis</b>
<b>SNS</b>	<b>Social Networking Site</b>
<b>SOC</b>	<b>Standard Occupational Classification</b>
<b>TAM</b>	<b>Technology Acceptance Model</b>
<b>UGC</b>	<b>User Generated Content</b>

# Chapter 1 Introduction

## ***1.1 Background and aims***

Sustained periods of unemployment at a young age can negatively impact psychological wellbeing and earning potential in later life (Mousteri, Daly, & Delaney, 2018; Strandh, Winefield, Nillson, & Hammarström, 2014). This is a significant issue, with youth unemployment in Scotland currently residing at double the rate of the general working age population (Scottish Government, 2018). One means of addressing the problem - although it cannot be considered sufficient in isolation (Crisp & Powell, 2017) - is to improve the personal agency of young people looking for jobs. Such an approach involves the development of a range of skills and competencies in jobseekers, which can be guided by the advice of careers professionals. Amongst these skills, and considered a key facet of employability in the modern labour market (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005; McGuire, 2017), is the ability to use networks effectively when seeking employment.

There exists a body of literature that addresses the topic of job search networking (see for example, Van Hoyer, van Hooft, & Lievens, 2009). These studies are exclusively quantitative in design, and set out to determine the various antecedents and outcomes of asking people for information during job search. However, they are notably limited in scope. For example, they do not provide any insight into the behavioural manifestation of networking. Also, due to their lack of focus on online technologies, they have quickly become dated against a constantly evolving digital landscape (Office for National Statistics, 2017). These limitations have been recognised in the job search literature, where prominent contributors have called for: (a) a better understanding of how social networks can assist jobseekers to find work; and (b) to extend research on the particular sources and behaviours that are used in this process (Van Hoyer, Klehe & van Hooft, 2013, p.15; Wanberg, 2012, p.389).

The purpose of the research outlined in this thesis is to develop new knowledge on job search networking as an operational concept, by focusing on the youth labour market (i.e. 16-24 year olds) in Scotland. The position taken in this thesis

is that in order to fully comprehend networking behaviours of young jobseekers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is necessary to consider the role of digital technologies in this process. Indeed, social media platforms facilitate membership of multiple networks which, coupled with widespread access to mobile and other “wearable” devices, provide access to “information gathering capacities that dwarf those of the past” (Rainie & Wellman, 2012, p.11). Therefore, the specific role of social media tools (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn) is also investigated, to determine the means by which they support the networking behaviours of young people looking for jobs.

### ***1.2 Theory and method***

The work is situated within the domain of information science, based on the premise that networking is a “fundamental information seeking activity” (Meho & Tibbo, 2003, p.581). To this end, the study is underpinned by Wilson’s (1981) model of information needs and seeking. Applying an information perspective to study job search networking has two main advantages. Firstly, it provides a theoretical grounding to the subject which is lacking in previous studies of job search networking. In doing so, it absorbs another field of study (i.e. job search) within the remit of information science, as a means to create fruitful pathways for new research in the discipline (Wilson, 1997, pp.569-570). Secondly, it elucidates the informational role of networks in relation to labour market outcomes. This adds to a body of literature on network structure, social capital, and employment outcomes, where the focus is primarily on information exchanges leading directly to jobs (see for example, Franzen & Hangartner, 2006), or where information is assumed to be an influential network resource (see for example, Furstenberg Jr & Hughes, 1995).

New knowledge has been established on job search networking by implementing a mixed methods research approach, in a three-stage exploratory design. To this end, interviews, focus groups, and a survey questionnaire have been used to gather data. The interviews also incorporated egocentric network methods, facilitating a holistic view of networking from a relational perspective. Therefore, in addition to identifying antecedents and outcomes, it has been possible to determine the types of contacts young jobseekers mobilise during job search,



and the nature and frequency of these exchanges. The specific role of social media tools has also been investigated using this method.

### ***1.3 Policy context and practical contribution of the study***

The importance of networking is reflected at policy level by Skills Development Scotland (SDS), which is the national careers information and guidance body. Indeed, the development of competencies relating to the use of networks is an integral feature of its 'Career Management Skills' (CMS) framework (SDS, 2012, p.7). Other key CMS competencies relate to: a) having a sense of self within society; b) being able to build on strengths by pursuing learning and work opportunities; and c) being able to visualise, plan, and achieve career goals. Notably, as of 2018, the CMS framework continues to underpin the delivery of careers guidance services in Scotland (SDS, 2018a).

Scotland's contemporary approach to careers guidance can be placed within an international context. As a concept, CMS is rooted in developments by the European Union (EU), which has gradually extended its influence on the education, training and employment policies of its member states (Watts, Sultana & McCarthy, 2010). In the years that followed the 2000 Lisbon Summit, a host of reviews were undertaken by a variety of EU entities and other organisations into the career guidance policies and practices of 50 different countries worldwide (Sultana, 2011, p.226). This period of activity led to the creation of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN), for which CMS has been a key theme since its inception in 2009. Under directive from the Scottish Government, SDS established its own CMS framework to reflect the work undertaken by the ELGPN (SDS, 2012, p.1).

Although the ability to use networks effectively is central to CMS, the scarcity of knowledge on networking and social media use has been identified as an issue by careers guidance researchers (Artess, Mellors-Bourne & Hooley, 2017). In recognition of this, the work undertaken as part of this thesis has been partly sponsored by SDS. To ensure the study's outputs can be used to inform the provision of careers services, the research design culminates in a small qualitative study with SDS careers advisers. Here, the key research findings were

presented to the advisers and discussed in relation to their own work at the front line of the service. This was done with a view to creating practical recommendations, based upon the testimonies of professionals who currently advise young people seeking access to the labour market.

### **1.4 Thesis structure**

The remainder of the thesis is broken down into eight chapters. In Chapter 2 there is a critical evaluation of the literature that pertains to the topic of job search networking. Within this, the related concepts of network structure, social capital, networking, and social media adoption are presented and discussed. This process serves to isolate and explain the knowledge gaps addressed by the research, and provides detail on the methods that have been applied to the study of networking in previous work.

In Chapter 3, Wilson's model of information needs and seeking (Wilson, 1981) is introduced as the theoretical framework that underpins the thesis. Then, using the knowledge from Chapters 2 and 3 as a basis, the methodology used to conduct the research is outlined in Chapter 4. This includes a statement of the research questions, and a thorough outline of the research design and analysis techniques. Justification is also provided for the application of a sequential mixed methods approach, incorporating the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 contain the findings from the primary research undertaken as part of the thesis. In Chapter 5, the findings relate to interviews and a focus group with young jobseekers living in Scotland, which took place between January and March 2016. Chapter 6 details findings from a survey of young jobseekers also living in Scotland, for which the data was collected between May and November 2016. The findings in Chapter 7 are drawn from a focus group with careers advisers that took place in October 2017. The participants who took part in this focus group are employees of SDS, and work with (amongst other groups) young people aged between 16-24 years old.

Chapter 8 contains a discussion of the research findings from the preceding chapters, and the means by which they answer the research questions. Their significance is also considered in relation to the literature outlined in Chapter 2.

Following this, the theoretical framework used to underpin the study is revisited and updated in light of the new knowledge that has been developed in the study. Finally, in Chapter 9, the thesis ends by stating the main contributions of the work, its conclusions, and recommendations for academia, practitioners, and policy makers.

## Chapter 2 Literature review

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter contains an analysis of the three main themes identified from the literature of most relevance to the thesis. They have been broken down into the following sections: (1) social networks, and the use of informal channels of information during job search; (2) the role of networking behaviours in job search; and (3) the adoption and use of social media tools. Alongside theoretical and empirical evidence from the extant literature, a discussion of each theme is presented identifying the gaps in the current knowledge addressed by this thesis. Common methodological approaches are also highlighted to justify the design of the primary research in this study, which is explained in greater detail in Chapter 4.

The findings in the review were drawn mainly from peer-reviewed publications. Titles from the field of library and information science included: *Information Research*, *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, *Library and Information Science Research*, and *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*. Extending the search, a number of key terms were entered into a variety of online search engines and databases (See Table 2.1). These included: *ABI/Information Complete*, *Emerald Journals*, *Google Scholar*, *Sage Journals Online*, *Science Direct*, and *the Wiley Online Library*. Many of the papers sourced as a consequence have been published in computer science, psychology, and sociology titles such as: *American Sociological Review*, *Computers in Human Behavior*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*. To complement this process, each relevant article was also used for a backwards and forwards chaining of references, and citation analysis. This helped determine the authors and works that were most frequently cited by others in the same fields (Hart, 2002, p.39). Each author was then catalogued by research domain, and ranked by relevance to the topic of networking during job search.

Table 2-1 Key search terms used in secondary stage of review

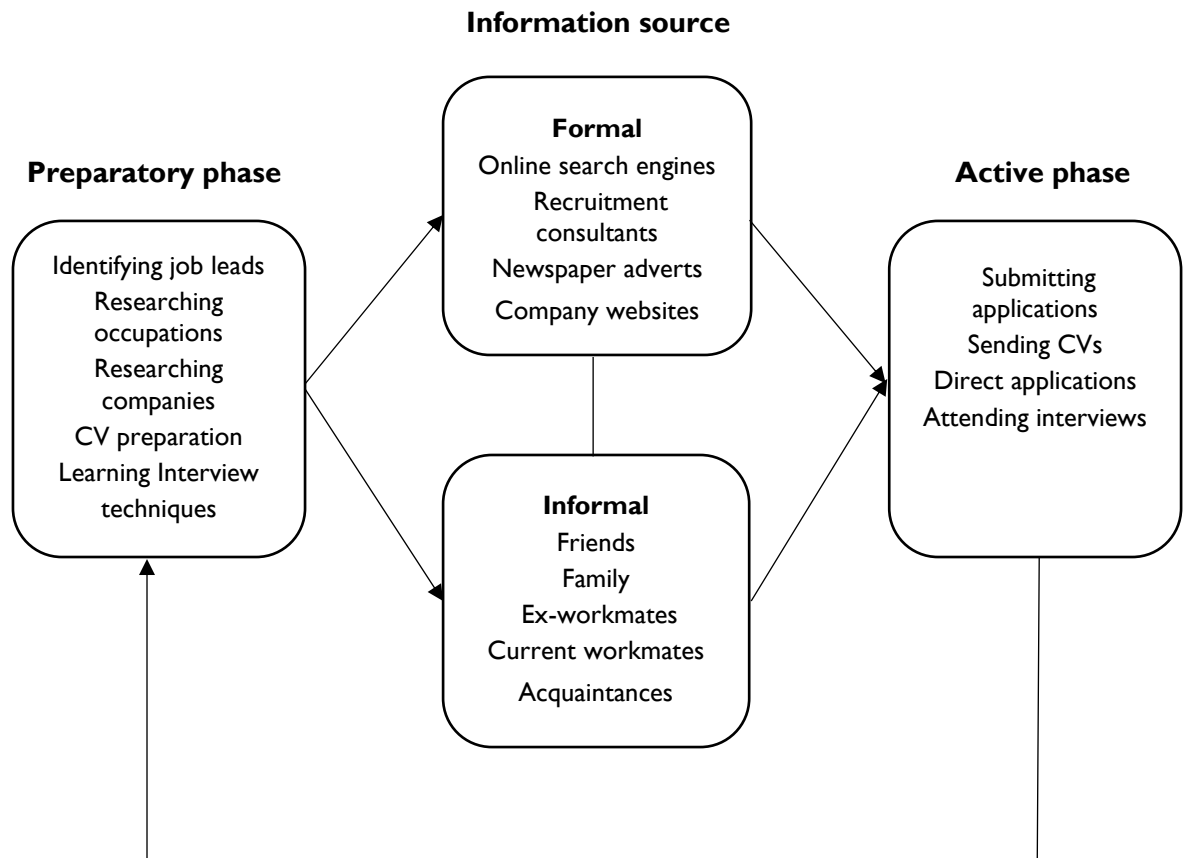
Term 1		Term 2
Social network	And	Employment
Social capital		Job information
Networking		Job search
Social media		User behaviour

## ***2.2 Social networks, and informal channels of information during job search***

The study of the information sources consulted by jobseekers has been an integral theme of job search research, and the general expansion of job search theory (Saks, 2005; Wanberg, 2012). Indeed, in measuring the intensity of job search behaviours, Blau (1993, 1994) conceptualised the process of looking for a job as the engagement in two distinct processes: preparatory job search and active job search. The former is about identifying job leads and researching occupations, whilst the latter involves individuals alerting potential employers to their availability (e.g. completing job applications, submitting CVs). In effect, the preparatory phase of job search is a self-regulated period of information seeking, where both informal and formal sources of information can be sought. This process both leads to, and alternates between, the active phases of job search (Barber, Daly, Giannantonio & Phillips, 1994; Wanberg, 2012). The preparatory and active phases of job search are illustrated in Figure 1.

Informal channels of job search information are the jobseeker's own network contacts (i.e. friends, family members, co-workers etc.), and are distinct from formal channels such as job search engines or employment agencies (Saks, 2005, p.159). The proficiency of such social contacts in relaying job opportunities that lead to employment has been demonstrated by studies of labour markets throughout the world. For example, Granovetter (1995, pp.140-141) compiled a list of surveys from countries such as Japan, the Netherlands, the USA, and the UK, which showed that a range of 25-75% of employed people in these respective

Figure 1 Preparatory and active job search (source: original)



labour markets had originally heard out about their job from a network contact i.e. someone told them about a vacancy. More recently, Franzen and Hangartner (2006, p.357) found a similar variation in a study of 27 different countries, with the figure for the UK being just under a third at 31.0%. The variations can be explained by a wide range of cultural, economic, social, and methodological factors. However, it is clear that social contacts do have a considerable role in the allocation of labour worldwide.

### 2.2.1 Networks, tie strength, and the diffusion of job information

Given the relationship between social networks and job search, it is useful to examine network literature in more detail. To this end, it is notable that social networks have been studied across various research contexts. The premise of this work is that at both micro and macro levels, networks have the capacity to beget important social resources for individuals, groups, or organisations (see for

example, Burt, 2009; DiMaggio & Garip, 2012; Flap & Boxman, 2001; Granovetter, 1973; Lin, 1999). From an ego-centric network perspective, social resources are considered to be manifestly different from personal resources (Garton, Haythornthwaite & Wellman, 1997). Personal resources are commodities which are already in the possession of the ego (i.e. the individual), such as human and economic capital (education, financial resources etc.), whereas social resources are in the possession of the ego's network contacts, and therefore must be borrowed (e.g. a friend's technical expertise) (Lin, 1999).

Much of the literature pertaining to network theory focuses on relational structure and how this impacts upon the diffusion of information throughout social systems. In his seminal work, Granovetter (1973) postulates that tie 'strength' is crucial to such information diffusion, and highlights the differing properties of strong and weak ties (or relations). Such ties are defined by the frequency of exchange between contacts in an existing relationship. Strong ties would therefore be largely made up of family members and close friends, whilst weak ties would be acquaintances such as ex-workmates, with whom the individual has less frequent contact.

The basic premise of Granovetter's theory (1973; 1983; 1995) is that individuals with fewer weak ties receive less 'novel' information from distant parts of the social system. This can be partly explained by the presence of homophily, or the propensity for individuals to create ties with other similar individuals (Kossinets & Watts, 2009). Whilst strong, homophilous ties are said to wield greater influence on behalf of individuals due to their heightened interest in providing assistance to the ego (Bian, 1997; Brown & Reingen, 1987), they lack the inherent diversity of weaker ties, which are more likely to extend into different social groupings. Moreover, given the considerable degree of overlap that exists amongst strong ties, information flows within these groups will soon become redundant without the presence of multiple weak ties (Granovetter, 1995). Therefore, having access to a wider pool of weak network ties will increase the likelihood of receiving new job information. It is also contended that jobs sourced through networks will lead to more suitable work in terms of reimbursement and general job satisfaction, as contacts known to jobseekers will be able to provide more detailed information about the job than would be available from formal sources.

### 2.2.2 Empirical evidence: networks, tie strength, and the diffusion of job information

Many studies have tested the efficacy of networks to employment outcomes and strength of ties theory empirically, with mixed findings. In his own thesis, “Getting a Job”, Granovetter (1995) found weak ties to be used in 28% of cases where people heard about their job through a network contact. Strong ties were used in 17% of cases, and the remainder found their job through ties of intermediate strength. In a study of workers in Russia, Yakubovich (2005) also found weak ties to be more prolific in the allocation of labour, due to having an advantageous position for distributing job information or the ability to influence hiring process (i.e. they were either the employer or were directly involved in recruitment). In the same study, Yakubovich also found that when contacts acted as intermediaries between the ego and employer, stronger ties were more influential.

Results from a recent study by Gee, Jones and Burke (2017) have complemented the above findings. Using large Facebook datasets of users in the USA, they found that whilst collectively weak ties were used more frequently to source jobs, individual strong ties were more effective than individual weak ties at the margin. This was also found to be the case in a similar study of 55 countries (Gee et al, 2017). These findings could potentially be explained by the obligation and trust that exists within strong-tie relationships, and the likelihood that single strong ties would provide more information to individuals than weak ties. Indeed, it has been shown in a study of MBA graduates in the USA, that individuals are more likely to transmit information to friends than acquaintances (Kim & Fernandez, 2017).

Other studies have found that weak ties are related to employment outcomes, but only in specific cases. For example, it has been shown that weak ties are useful, but only for individuals with higher education levels or who have previously been employed in high status jobs (Ericksen & Yancey, 1980; Wegener, 1991). In these studies, those with lower education levels were more likely to use strong contacts. Granovetter (1995, p.85) hypothesised that such effects could be explained by the self-generating nature of job mobility, where individuals benefit from a widening pool of weaker network ties as they move between jobs and employment levels. This is pertinent within the context of this thesis, given its



focus on young people who have not had sustained exposure to the labour market.

There has also been support for Granovetter's theory that networked jobs lead to better employment outcomes. For example, it has been found that jobs sourced through network contacts produce a closer fit between the jobseeker and the educational requirements of the role than jobs sourced through formal methods (Franzen & Hangartner, 2006). Reinforcing this notion, it has also been found that, despite offering lower salaries, MBA graduates are more likely to accept job offers from weak ties than those coming from strong ties or via formal methods, as they are considered to have more growth potential (Greenberg & Fernandez, 2016). Similarly, it has been found that for engineering students, jobs sourced through contacts are more likely to lead to an interview, a job offer, and an acceptance of the job offer, than those sourced through formal means or via university intermediaries (Obukhova & Lan, 2013).

Despite the above, not all Granovetter's (1973) hypotheses have been supported by empirical evidence. For example, in Franzen and Hangartner's (2006) study, strong ties were found to be more prolific in allocating labour in multiple different countries. Several studies have also found a negligible association between networked jobs and earnings (Flap & Boxman, 2001; Franzen & Hangartner, 2006; Greenberg & Fernandez, 2016), leading some scholars to question whether social networks have any real impact on labour market allocation (De Graaf & Flap, 1988; Lin, 1999; Marsden & Hurlbert, 1988; Mouw, 2003).

### **2.2.3 Discussion of the strength of network ties and the diffusion of job information**

Having considered the empirical evidence relating to the strength of ties theory, it is useful to provide a brief summary of these findings and their relationship with the current thesis. With regards to tie strength, it is not clear whether weak or strong ties are more prolific in the allocation of labour, with different studies providing contradictory findings. However, there is some evidence that the utility of weak network ties is most apparent within certain test conditions. For example, in instances where those with higher education levels or seeking higher status jobs have been shown to benefit from the use of weak ties (Ericksen & Yancey,

1980; Wegener, 1991), possibly because they have access to a wider pool of influential contacts. Despite this, it is clear that network ties – both weak and strong - play a central role in the distribution of jobs within multiple labour markets. There is also some evidence to suggest that they lead to jobs that are a better educational fit, and which have higher growth potential. However, there is no compelling evidence that they lead to better jobs in terms of earnings. These findings are summarised in Table 2.2.

Although the role of tie strength in employment outcomes is unclear, applying the weak ties theory to research design and analysis is a worthwhile approach. Ericksen and Yancey (1980) and Wegener’s (1991) studies show that conceptualising ties in this way reveals the divergent impact of network structure on different demographic groups. Also, within the field of information science,

**Table 2-2 Empirical evidence on networks, tie strength, and employment outcomes**

Concept	Finding	Source
Weak ties	The source of most networked jobs	Granovetter, 1974; Yakubovich, 2005; Gee, Jones & Burke, 2017.
	The source of most networked jobs for those with higher education levels	Ericksen & Yancey, 1980; Wegener, 1991.
Strong ties	The source of most networked jobs	Franzen & Hangartner’s, 2006.
	The source of most networked jobs for those with lower education levels	Ericksen & Yancey, 1980; Wegener, 1991.
	More influential at the margin than weak ties	Gee, Jones & Burke, 2017; Yakubovich, 2005.
Networked jobs	Linked with educational fit and perceived growth potential	Greenberg & Fernandez, 2016; Obukhova & Lan, 2013.
	Linked with lower earnings	Flap & Boxman, 2001; Franzen & Hangartner, 2006; Greenberg & Fernandez, 2016.

adopting the weak ties theory allowed Pettigrew (2000) to uncover the informational role that nurses play as bridging ties for elderly patients. Notably however, studies relating to the impact of networks on labour market outcomes focus on information exchanges which lead directly to employment (see for example, Franzen & Hangartner, 2006; Granovetter, 1974; Lin, 1999; Mouw, 2003). For the current study, considering the role of tie strength was an important method of determining how different contact types influence the flow of information throughout the job search process, including at the preparatory phase. The necessity of this approach has been underlined by Wanberg (2012), who called for a “deeper level of precision regarding how social networks help individuals find work and for whom they are the most helpful” (p.389).

### 2.2.4 Social networks and the concept of social capital

Equally important to structure is the presence of social capital, which is related to the *quality* of the resources contained within networks (Lin, 1999; 2002; 2008). Similar to human capital (e.g. education and skills) and cultural capital (e.g. knowledge of a sub-culture), social capital relates to social relations between network entities, and is ultimately reducible to economic capital (Bourdieu, 1985). As suggested by Putnam (2001), investment in social capital implies a return value, not only at an individual level, but also at a group or public level. For example, social capital has been cited by scholars in terms of its impact on group cohesion (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993) and participatory civil engagement (Putnam, 1995). However, for the purposes of this research, which focuses on the networking behaviours of young jobseekers, it is important to view social capital at the individual level of analysis, and primarily through the lens of its informational return.

From a micro-level perspective, there are three key elements of social capital exchanges which must be distinguished (Portes, 2000, p.6):

- 1) Those who are in the possession of social capital (i.e. the individuals who seek to use it)
- 2) Those who constitute the source of social capital (i.e. the individuals who are the target of such demands)

- 3) The actual resources available via social capital (e.g. information, emotional support, financial assistance).

These factors suggest that social capital is embedded within social networks in the form of an individual's interpersonal ties, and that the resources which can be accrued from them are connected, yet distinct. Adler and Kwon (2002, p.23) reinforce this idea of social capital by highlighting the role of "goodwill" (i.e. the resources) that is available within "the structure and content of an actor's social relations". In accordance with Lin (1999, p. 37), indicators of strong social capital could be the potential diversity and range of resources available to an individual via their network, or the occupational status, level of prestige, and influence of their specific network contacts. Social capital is often discussed in two key forms – bonding social capital, which reinforces existing relationships (such as, with strong network ties), and bridging social capital, which reaches into heterogeneous groups from elsewhere in the social system (such as with weak ties) (Burton, 2015, p. 22).

### **2.2.5 Empirical evidence: the impact of social capital on employment outcomes**

Previous empirical studies suggest that social capital has a significant impact on labour market outcomes. To this end, occupational prestige has been shown to be an influential variable. Using data from the Netherlands Family Survey of 1992-93, Moerbeek (2001, pp.139-150) found that higher occupational prestige among contacts was significantly associated with the likelihood of finding a new job. The survey provides details about when respondents became employed and their relationships with work colleagues. The analysis showed that of the respondents who spent time unemployed, reemployment rates were faster among those who had a positive and strong relationship with their previous line manager. Other studies have shown that for jobs sourced via network contacts, the contacts used are significantly more likely to be of higher occupational or social status than the jobseekers (Chen & Volker, 2016; Lin, 1981). Chen and Volker's (2016) findings also suggest that in free-market economies, social capital is more influential if jobseekers use contacts from within the same occupation.

Inequalities in social capital distribution also have an impact on labour market outcomes. For example, individuals are more likely to be unemployed if their networks contain fewer contacts of higher occupational prestige, or a higher proportion of unemployed contacts (Russell, 1999; Gayen, Raeside & McQuaid, 2010; Verhaeghe, Van der Bracht, & Van de Putte, 2015). Lower education levels have been linked with access to fewer social resources (Gesthuizen & Solga, 2013). A study by Caspi, Wright, Moffitt and Silva (1998) into the childhood predictors of unemployment also found that young people brought up in single-parent families, or who had become detached from the school system - factors associated with poorer socioeconomic background and lower levels of social capital (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002) - were more likely to face unemployment later in life.

For disadvantaged groups like those identified above, access to bridging social capital can be particularly advantageous. For example, research by Hook and Courtney (2011) into the labour market outcomes of former foster children in the US found that social capital was linked to successful school-to-work transitions. The research was based on a secondary analysis of four waves of longitudinal data gathered over a seven year period. Social capital was measured by the frequency and nature of historical foster placements, the situational characteristics of the care-receiver at the baseline survey (e.g. living in a foster home, a group home, with relatives, or independently), and the amount of time spent in care past the age of 18. The results of the study showed that by the age of 24 half of the former foster youth were unemployed - a much larger proportion than the general population within the same age group. However, those who were in group care at the time of the baseline survey were particularly susceptible to poor employment outcomes. In contrast, each year a former foster youth spent in care beyond the age of 18 was significantly associated with educational attainment, and positive employment outcomes.

In another longitudinal study involving secondary data, Furstenberg Jr and Hughes (1995) discovered that amongst a sample of young adults from predominantly African-American backgrounds who were brought up in poverty by teenage mothers, those with higher levels of social capital were likely to progress to economic stability and labour market inclusion. In this instance, social capital

was measured using various indicators, such as the mothers' inclusion in community activities/access to helpful contacts, aspiration levels for their children, and the quality of school attended by the young adults.

Whilst studies like those above indicate that poor employment outcomes can be symptomatic of social capital deficiencies – often resulting from instability during the formative years and/or poor socioeconomic circumstances - they also show how access to higher levels of social capital can potentially ameliorate these adverse conditions and assist individuals to positive outcomes. It is also notable that in a study of Swedish graduates, having superior social resources was associated with positive job outcomes, even amongst those with similar socio-economic and demographic characteristics (Behtoui, 2015). This demonstrates that social capital can also be advantageous amongst homogenous cohort groups.

#### **2.2.6 Discussion of the impact of social capital on employment outcomes**

Having considered the empirical evidence relating to social capital and employment outcomes, it is useful to provide a brief summary of these findings and their relationship with the current thesis. To this end, there is much evidence to suggest that social capital is an influential variable with regards to labour market allocation. Accessing contacts with better occupational prestige is beneficial in this regard. However, inequality of access to such contacts exists within network structures, particularly affecting those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. In such cases, bridging capital can mitigate for negative outcomes, and help individuals gain access to the labour market. These findings are summarised in Table 2.3.

Although it has been theorised that information is a key social capital resource (Coleman, 1990; Lin, 1999), it should be noted that the role of information in these studies is not explicit. For example, Furstenberg Jr and Hughes (1995) suggest that informational support will have assisted those young adults who emerged from impoverished backgrounds into situations of economic stability, having been raised by teenage mothers. Whilst this is a reasonable hypothesis, there is no

direct evidence that better information was received in these situations, or contributed to positive outcomes.

Despite the above, some labour market studies have highlighted the role of information. Fernández-Kelley (1995) found that black inner-city teens in the US lacked sufficient knowledge of job interview techniques whilst looking for work. In this case, they were unable to draw appropriate information from their social networks, given that their contacts were also mostly unemployed, and therefore not privy to such knowledge. Aguilera and Massey (2003) found that illegal migrants from Mexico into the US were significantly more likely to source a job if they had a higher proportion of distant relatives who had already made the

**Table 2-3 Empirical evidence on social capital and employment outcomes**

Concept/theme	Notes	Source
Higher levels of social capital	Associated with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to contacts with higher occupational prestige</li> <li>• Positive job search outcomes</li> </ul>	Chen & Volker, 2016; Lin, 1981, Moerbeek, 2001
Lower levels of social capital	Associated with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to a higher proportion of unemployed contacts</li> <li>• Living in single parent families</li> <li>• Being detached from the school system</li> <li>• Lower education</li> <li>• Lower socioeconomic status</li> <li>• Negative employment outcomes</li> </ul>	Gayen, Raeside & McQuaid, 2010; Russell, 1999; Verhaeghe, Van der Bracht, & Van de Putte, 2015
Bridging capital	Can be advantageous for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals from disadvantaged groups/backgrounds</li> <li>• Individuals within otherwise homogenous groups</li> </ul>	Behtoui, 2015; Caspi, Wright, Moffitt & Silva, 1998; Furstenberg Jr & Hughes, 1995; Gesthuizen & Solga, 2013; Hook & Courtney, 2011

transition into US society. By contacting these sources, they retrieved non-redundant job information regarding employers who were willing to circumvent federal law and supply work to undocumented migrants. Both of these examples serve to illustrate the multidimensionality of the job search process, particularly the function of social capital at the preparatory job search phase (i.e. interview techniques and job leads), and in the active phase where individuals seek job openings and make applications.

### **2.2.7 Measuring social capital resources: accessed and mobilised capital**

Different types of social capital resources have been identified by scholars – those which are ‘accessible’ and those which are ‘mobilised’ (Lin, 2008, p.5). The former refers to the potential pool of resources within an individual’s network, whether or not he or she attempts to activate them (Boisjoly, Duncan & Hofferth, 1995; Lin, 2005). Indeed, Obukhova and Lan (2013) found that having access to higher levels of social capital does not necessarily precipitate the use of contacts during job search. Name- and position-generating methods are common approaches to the measurement of accessible social capital (Lin, 2005). The name-generator involves asking respondents to list contacts to whom they turn for assistance within different contexts, and to provide further details about their relationships with such contacts. These follow-up questions are called ‘name interpreters’, and they can be used to determine such factors as the socioeconomic status or occupational prestige of the contacts (Lin, 2005; Marin & Hampton, 2007).

There are limitations associated with the name generator approach. For example, it often produces a limited number of contacts which are disproportionately strong ties, and it can be difficult for the researcher to gauge whether the names generated truly reflect the situation under investigation without prior intelligence about the respondents’ lives (Lin, 2005, p.7). Marin and Hampton (2007, p.167) also argue that the initial question could be inherently ambiguous, depending on how it is interpreted by the respondent. For example, Aguilera (2002, p.859) used an affective approach to determining the social capital contained within the networks of his study’s participants. This entailed the categorisation of those who



reported having more or fewer than six 'close friends'. This approach is heavily reliant on the individual respondents, and their own interpretation of what constitutes a close friend.

In contrast to the name-generator method, data collected from position-generator studies place more emphasis on the prestige of contacts in one's social network (van der Gaag, Snijders, & Flap, 2004). Respondents in such studies are often presented with a list of occupations which vary in terms of their place in the social hierarchy (e.g. manual job roles such as those based on factory production lines, or professional roles such as those carried out by medical practitioners), and are asked to highlight if they have contacts who are employed in each of the occupations. From this, it is possible to determine the scope and potential of the social capital embedded within that individual's social network (Lin, 2005; van der Gaag, Snijders & Flap, 2004). This approach can be useful to circumvent, or to mitigate for, the difficulties faced by name-generator methodologies, as it is likely to encourage respondents to think of contacts beyond those with whom they are in frequent contact (Lin, 2005).

The difference between mobilised and accessed social capital is that the former emphasises the need for individuals to galvanise their network contacts in order to 'borrow' their resources (Lin, 2008, p.5). As noted by Bourdieu (1985, p.89), a network of connections is by no means a natural or social given. Rather it is the outcome of an investment strategy which seeks to extend and reproduce useful social relations, be it consciously or otherwise. This is reflected in Smith's (2008, p.170) position that social capital must be *mobilised* in order to benefit from any possible forthcoming resources, as having mere *access* to capital cannot be considered an end in itself. The name-generator method can also be used to determine mobilised contacts, albeit these relate to the limited number of contacts used in a specific action (Lin, 2008, p.09). This is directly relevant to the current study, which sought to determine only those contacts mobilised by jobseekers during the job search process.

## **2.3 Networking as an information seeking behaviour during job search**

Thus far, the role of network structure and social capital in employment outcomes has been presented. Additionally, the need to develop knowledge about means of mobilising social contacts for information during job search has also been discussed. The following sections introduce the concept of networking, as investigated in psychology literature with references to both job search and organisational research. The presence of networking in information behaviour research is also highlighted, to determine its relevance to the study of job search networking. In all instances these papers address behaviours where individuals mobilise contacts to find jobs, develop careers, or to source information. By examining this literature, it is possible to ascertain the extent to which the concept of networking for job information has been developed, and how it can be furnished with new knowledge within the context of the Scottish youth labour market.

### **2.3.1 Definitions of networking as an operational concept**

In job search theory, networking is considered to be a specific job seeking behaviour undertaken by individuals in the search for employment (Van Hoye, 2013; Van Hoye & Saks, 2008). However, in an academic sense, it is still an underdeveloped concept. Indeed, prominent contributors to the field of job search theory have called for (a) a better understanding of how social networks can assist jobseekers to find work, and (b) to extend research on the particular sources and behaviours that are used in this process (Van Hoye, Klehe & van Hooft, 2013, p.15; Wanberg, 2012, p.389). In the existing literature, job search networking has been defined as “individual actions directed toward contacting friends, acquaintances, and other people to whom the job seeker has been referred for the main purpose of getting information, leads or advice on getting a job” (Wanberg, Kanfer & Banas, 2000, p.492). Notably, this definition is borrowed from a non-academic literature source. It suggests networking is an activity where already established contacts are *used* for the purposes of attaining relevant job information and advice. In this sense, networking during job search is viewed through the lens of mobilising existing sources of social capital. However, use of the term ‘leads’ also implies that approaching network contacts during job search can be a way of creating new, instrumental contacts.

Despite focusing on mobilising contacts for job search purposes, it is also useful to consider the treatment of networking in organisational research, where it has received greater attention. With the steady de-industrialisation of the labour market in the UK since the 1970s and the subsequent shift in organisational structures, scholars have suggested that society has traversed into the era of the so-called ‘boundaryless career’ (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996, p.4; Arthur, 2014). In this era, networking has been cited as a crucial skill individuals must develop in order to attain social capital and achieve career success (de Janasz & Forret, 2007; Forret, Turban & Dougherty, 1997). Reflecting this, various attempts have been made to develop and define the concept.

Definitions that have been applied to organisational (or career) networking are presented in Table 2.4. Wolff et al. (2008) and Gibson et al. (2014) provide the most developed of these, by seeking to establish networking as a behaviour-oriented practice, and recognising that it is a multifaceted concept with three operational phases. These relate to an individual’s interpersonal relationships: that of (1) creating; (2) maintaining; and, (3) using contacts. Gibson et al. (2014) also emphasise the strategic role of networking, claiming it to be “goal-directed”, whilst Wolff et al. (2008) assert that “resources” can be accessed and shared through networking.

Based on the above descriptions, it is important to recognise the seemingly multidimensional nature of the career networking, and how this might relate to job search networking. To this end, career networking is used not only to mobilise social capital resources, but also to build and maintain interpersonal relationships of potential strategic importance to individuals. In theory, the preparatory phase of job search could also include an element of network building, in addition to contacting existing friends, relatives and acquaintances. Indeed, a similar process is highlighted in the career guidance literature. The ‘happenstance learning theory’ touches upon the need for jobseekers to engage in activities, such as the building of social networks, which can present them with unplanned

Table 2-4 Definitions of networking as a career development behaviour

Definition	Source
“The practice of developing a system or ‘network’ of contacts inside and/or outside the organization, thereby providing relevant career information and support to the individual”.	Gould & Penley, 1984, p.246
“The processes through which professional knowledge is received and transmitted by means of personal relationships”.	Forret & Dougherty, 2001, p.284
“An individual’s attempts to develop and maintain relationships with others who have the potential to assist them in their work or career”.	Anderson-Gough, Grey & Robson, 2006, p.232
“Behaviours that are aimed at building, maintaining, and using informal relationships that possess the (potential) benefit to facilitate work related activities of individuals by voluntarily granting access to resources and maximizing common advantages”	Wolff, Moser & Grau, 2008, p.4
“Networking is a form of goal-directed behaviour, both inside and outside of an organisation, focused on creating, cultivating, and utilizing interpersonal relationships”	Gibson, Hardy III & Buckley (2014, p.150).

opportunities (Krumboltz, 2009). The premise behind the theory is that a significant percentage of people end up in careers which they have not necessarily planned. Bright, Pryor and Harpham’s (2005) study gives some precedence for this, with 69% of their sample of Australian graduates having found employment through what they perceived to be a ‘chance’ event. As such, it is proposed that careers practitioners recognise the role of happenstance in the job search process, by encouraging clients: (1) to involve themselves in activities which could provide them with opportunities; and, (2) to exploit these opportunities when they arise.

### 2.3.2 Networking behaviours

There is a broad consensus across the organisational and job search literature that the process of networking involves the individual engaging in a series of behaviours (Gibson et al., 2014; Forret & Dougherty, 2001; McCallum, Forret & Wolff, 2014; Spurk, Kauffeld, Barthauer & Heinemann, 2015; Treadway, Breland, Adams, Duke & Williams, 2010; Van Hoyer, van Hooft, Lievens, 2009; Wanberg et al., 2000; Wolff, Moser & Grau 2008). Three studies focus specifically on networking as a job search behaviour, whilst using composite job measures - such as searching employment vacancies in newspapers, using online job search engines, and contacting public employment agencies - for comparative purposes (Lambert, Eby & Reeves, 2006; Van Hoyer, 2009; Wanberg et al., 2000). However, as the study by Lambert et al. (2006) uses a replica of the scale developed by Wanberg et al. (2000), only two distinct scales for measuring networking behaviours during job search have been applied in existing studies. The scale developed by Wanberg et al. (2000) includes jobseekers making direct requests to family, friends and acquaintances for job leads, advice and information, and then following up these requests at a later date. To determine networking thoroughness, respondents were asked whether they made lists of people who could potentially help them with job search, and contacted them individually. The measures were wholly derived from non-academic literature sources, with a particular focus on Lowstuter and Robertson's (1995) textbook 'Network your way to your next job'.

The scale used to measure job search networking by Van Hoyer et al. (2009) was developed by reviewing composite measures (outlined above) of job search used in previous academic research. The validity of these job search methods in the context of the Flemish labour market was verified by researching Flemish job seeking manuals from non-academic literature, holding focus groups with consultants from the Flemish Public Employment Service, and interviewing local jobseekers. However, the purpose of this approach was primarily to determine the general job search methods used by the local population (e.g. was networking a key method of job search?), as opposed to providing a more detailed insight of the actual networking behaviours in which jobseekers might engage. With regard to networking, two questions were included in the final survey – one to ascertain

the extent to which individuals contacted their network ties during job search, and the other to gauge the extent to which they asked people “about possible job leads” (Van Hoye, 2009, p.682).

Notable from the networking behaviours cited in the scales used by Van Hoye et al. (2009) and Wanberg et al. (2000), is the lack of any significant depth of research into the actual networking processes of jobseekers. By consulting non-academic literature, the research by Wanberg et al. (2000) lacks theoretical grounding. Additionally, some of the key texts used to create the scale date back to the early 1980s, and are unlikely provide a truly representative image of the 21<sup>st</sup> century jobseeker. The behaviours cited by Van Hoye et al. (2009) are equally limited, and unlikely to capture the potential versatility of job search networking in the modern labour market. Indeed, Van Hoye (2013, p.15) recognises the lack of research in this area, and states that “surprisingly little job search research has examined job seekers’ use of particular search behaviours and sources”.

Again, it is helpful to consider literature in the field of career development and organisational studies, where networking behaviours have been examined in more detail. Perhaps the two most comprehensive networking behaviour scales have been developed by Forret and Dougherty (2001) and Wolff and Moser (2011), respectively. Forret and Dougherty (2001) developed a 33-item networking scale, with questions derived from a combination of semi-structured interviews with managers and professionals, open-ended questionnaires aimed at Masters of Business Administration students, and a review of practitioner and scholarly networking articles. The resulting items were grouped under five conceptual categories: maintaining contacts; socialising; engaging in professional activities; participating in church and community; and, increasing internal visibility. Wolff and Moser’s (2006) scale included 44-items based on the theoretically determined structural facet of internal/external networking, and the functional facet of creating, maintaining and using contacts. By overlapping these facets, six scales were in operation: creating internal contacts; maintaining internal contacts; using internal contacts; creating external contacts; maintaining external contacts; and, using external contacts. The validity of these scales has

been tested in three separate studies (Wolff & Moser, 2010, p.241), and then used again in subsequent research projects (for example, Wolff & Kim, 2012).

Although the two scales mentioned above (Forret & Dougherty, 2001; Wolff & Moser, 2006) were developed for the purpose of measuring the networking activities of those already in a career, there are elements which could be considered applicable in the context of job search. For example, formulating the engagement in networking behaviours through the paradigm of creating, maintaining and using contacts could be a useful approach to adopt. Also, categories such as socialising and participating in community activities (i.e. developing the social as opposed to the professional network) could be relevant. However, these scales are also limited, as they do not incorporate the use of social media technologies in any way, or any form of online social networking. Additionally, the cultural relevance and generalisability of the behaviours included in the scales could be questionable within the context of the Scottish youth labour market.

### 2.3.3 The predictors of engaging in networking behaviours

The scales that have been developed to measure job search networking have been used for different empirical tests. For example, they have been used to determine the antecedents of networking. Personality traits have been found to be significantly associated to networking, with both higher levels of conscientiousness and extraversion being related to networking intensity (Van Hoye et al., 2009; Wanberg et al., 2000). Beyond the effects of these personality traits, Van Hoye et al. (2009) found that having a larger social network and more strong ties was positively associated with the engagement in networking behaviours.

Wanberg et al. (2000) tested a concept called 'networking comfort', which was based on findings from both non-academic (Azrin & Besalel, 1982) and academic literature (Stevens, Tirnauer & Turban, 1997), indicating that attitudinal barriers might stymie the extent to which jobseekers asked people for help during their job search. They found that level of comfort with networking moderated the relationship between personality factors and the networking intensity levels of jobseekers. Indeed, networking comfort itself was found to be significantly

associated with networking during job search, more so than personality factors. This suggests that some individuals, despite having the personality characteristics that are most associated with engagement in networking behaviours, are inherently disinclined to ask others for assistance. Such a hypothesis is consistent with help-seeking research, where it has been established that people have a natural reluctance to ask for help when it is needed, due to fear of displaying incompetence or dependence. This is particularly the case when approaching an individual of higher status (Lee, 1997). Confidence and a disinclination to pester individuals have also been identified as barriers within information behaviour and use studies (Julien, 1999; McKenzie, 2002).

In other job search studies, Lambert et al. (2006) found that a proactive personality (i.e. willingness to act on opportunities and to persevere through difficult situations, whilst viewing problems as challenges to overcome), was significantly associated with networking intensity amongst white collar jobseekers. In turn, this was associated with attaining higher quality information. Additionally, they found that age had a curvilinear relationship with network diversity, in that middle-aged respondents had a broader network than older or younger respondents. This is understandable, given that young people will not have had the opportunity to develop their social networks to any great extent, and that older people are likely to have started a detachment process, as they advance towards retirement. The latter supposition is supported by evidence from a study into the networking behaviours of managers, as moderated by their future time perspective (Treadway, Breland, Adams, Duke, & Williams, 2010). Here, it was found that managers with a shallow future time perspective (i.e. near to retirement) engaged less frequently in networking and other social activities at work. In terms of other demographics tested, Lambert et al. (2006) found no effects of gender or race on networking intensity or network diversity.

It is notable that in organisational behaviour research, extraversion and conscientiousness have also been significantly associated with engagement in networking behaviours, alongside self-esteem (Forret & Dougherty, 2001). Forret and Dougherty (2001) also found attitudinal factors to be important. For example, professionals and managers with a positive attitude to workplace politics were



significantly more likely to increase their internal visibility within an organisation. However, this trait was not associated with the other networking components included in the scale. This suggests that attitude towards networking can vary between individuals, with some displaying a distinct ambivalence towards using interpersonal contacts for information or advice. In this sense, it parallels the finding from Wanberg et al.'s (2000) study, wherein jobseekers' reticence to approach their contacts for help is often related to levels of networking comfort.

In terms of professional networking, Forret and Dougherty (2001) discovered various other predictors which could potentially be relevant within the context of job search. Human capital factors such as possessing an advanced degree and working more hours were significant predictors of networking behaviours amongst a sample of professionals and managers. Coming from a higher socio-economic background was also significantly associated with networking behaviours. However, gender was not found to be a predictor of networking. This was reflected in the study by Lambert et al. (2006), who also found that gender had no relationship with networking. Although not related to job search or professional development, Lee & Chen (2017) found that amongst a cohort of college students, those with the biggest propensity to network with peers had developed cultural capital at an early age by socialising within heterogeneous groups.

Whilst certain predictors of networking have been noted here, it is important to remember that these are highly malleable depending on the context of the research, the research sample, and the scales used for networking. For example, in Forret and Dougherty's (2001) study, socio-economic background was found to be a strong predictor of an individual engaging in networking behaviours. However, this was only the case for the 'maintaining contacts' component of the scale. Differing job positions could also have a strong impact on the results. Forret and Dougherty (2001) found that having a role in sales was also a strong predictor of maintaining contacts, but not any of the other components. This could be explained by their focus on clients and other external contacts. In the context of job search it is plausible that the goals or aspirations of individuals, amongst other potential variables, could have a significant bearing on their subsequent behaviours (see, for example van Hooft & Noordzij, 2009). Reverse causality is

also a consideration e.g. it is possible that favourable attitudes to networking are causing people to network, but equally, their networking activities may be shaping their attitude towards networking. The studies outlined above cannot fully mitigate for such circumstances, given their cross-sectional design.

#### 2.3.4 The outcomes of engaging in networking behaviours

The effort and intensity applied to job search are key variables which have frequently been associated with job search outcomes (Saks, 2005; Wanberg, 2012). Effort has been operationalised as the general level of time and energy expended on specific job search activities, whilst intensity is related to the frequency with which jobseekers engage in these behaviours. Likert scales have been used to measure these behaviours, such as that incorporated into the questionnaire used by Wanberg et al. (2000). These effort-intensity components are included in Kanfer, Wanberg and Kantrowitz's (2001) meta-analytic review of job search research. The results of this indicate that both factors are significantly and positively associated with beneficial labour market outcomes such as securing employment.

There are a few studies that document the outcomes of job search networking. Wanberg et al. (2000) found that, taken in isolation, increased levels of networking intensity were associated with lower levels of unemployment insurance benefit exhaustion and a higher likelihood of being reemployed. The importance of this finding was tempered when generalised job search methods were included in the regression, with the evidence showing that whilst networking could be an effective supplementary method of job-search, it is not necessarily superior to the other more traditional methods. Van Hove et al. (2009) found that networking was associated with an increased number of job offers, irrespective of engagement in other job search behaviours, although the effects were incremental. Conversely, networking was negatively related to employment outcomes such as organisational fit and employment status. It was speculated that this seemingly contradictory finding could be due to the fact that those who engage in networking effectively receive more job offers, whereas others may network intensely, yet inefficiently, and have poorer outcomes.

Research by Forret and Dougherty (2004) published in the organisational behaviour literature studied the relationship between engagement in networking behaviours and both objective and subjective measures of career success. The results showed the importance of distinguishing between different networking pursuits when measuring their potential impact. For example, increasing internal visibility within the organisation was positively associated with number of promotions, level of compensation and how individuals perceived their career success. Additionally, engaging in professional activities was found to be significantly associated with level of compensation and perceived career success. However, other networking components such as maintaining contacts and community networking were not significantly related to successful career outcomes, whilst socialising was only marginally related.

Whilst the results above provide some insight, they are limited in that they do not provide evidence of the direction of causality. It is entirely plausible that those in more advanced positions, and who earn a higher salary, are obliged to network as part of their job. To overcome this, Wolff and Moser (2010) sought to differentiate between concurrent and developing career success by applying a linear growth model to their study. Results from this longitudinal approach showed that similarly to Forret and Dougherty's (2004) findings, concurrent salary rates were associated with engagement in networking behaviours. However, they also showed that networking can contribute to salary growth over time. Whilst Wolff and Moser (2010) found that networking was also related to concurrent levels of perceived career satisfaction, their results provided no evidence that job satisfaction levels increased over time as a result of engaging in networking.

### 2.3.5 **Networking as a concept in information science research**

The distinction in job search theory between formal and informal sources of information is also recognised in information seeking behaviour and use literature. Case (2002, pp.12-13) showed that in studies of information seeking informal sources tended to be "friends, family and colleagues". Despite this, few of these studies deal with networking explicitly. Indeed, Zimmer and Henry (2017) have recently addressed this issue in a study of interpersonal information sources, in which they found that the perceived quality of an information source was more important to information seekers than accessibility of the source. This

suggests that individuals are disinclined to forsake quality in order to utilise accessible contacts who may have less valuable information. They also found that those seeking explicit content - as opposed to tacit content - were more likely to have a positive perception of the usefulness of their interpersonal contacts.

Other studies have identified networking as a key information behaviour. For example, in a study which sought to extend Ellis's (1989) model of information seeking behaviour, Meho and Tibbo (2003) found that social scientists engage in a number of practices whilst gathering information. One of the practices identified is networking, and is cited as a "fundamental information seeking activity" within that research context (Meho & Tibbo, 2003, p.581). The participants in Meho and Tibbo's study built and maintained close relationships with friends, colleagues, government representatives, and a broad range of other stakeholders, in order to gather and share information within these networks. The participants also cited the Internet as crucial to encouraging these efforts, due to the ease with which it allowed them to foster such contacts online, and share information quickly.

In another study that modelled the information seeking processes of academics across disciplines, Foster (2003) found that networking played a crucial role in the sharing and gathering of information in an interdisciplinary setting. Networking was present in a number of channels, such as conferences and social gatherings, and like Meho and Tibbo's (2003) findings, was also bolstered significantly by the Internet. It was found to be closely associated with serendipitous events, in that the engagement in networking behaviours encouraged unplanned outcomes that served to increase the breadth of information available to the academics. This finding links closely with the 'happenstance learning theory' (Krumboltz, 2009), outlined above. According to the happenstance theory, clients of careers services should be encouraged to engage in activities which could lead to unplanned events, and to capitalise on these opportunities when they present themselves e.g. "taking the initiative to meet new people" (Krumboltz, 2009, p.144). Foster's (2003, p.234) participants provided real-life evidence of the benefits of such an approach to sourcing information, with many of the academics citing networking and its serendipitous outcomes as being a valued part of their information seeking behaviours.

These studies are linked in their use of qualitative methods, with semi-structured interviews and email interviews being employed to gather data. As a result of this, the findings convey a descriptive understanding of networking behaviours. This contrasts with the job search studies, where the goal has been determining the predictors and outcomes of networking using arbitrary measures. It is therefore possible that by integrating these two approaches a descriptive understanding of job search networking can be developed, and outcomes of such behaviours can also be identified. Indeed, Case and O'Connor (2016) highlighted the need for studies of information behaviour to include the outcomes of information pursuits, having found that only 8% of recent research in this area had done so.

It is notable that the qualitative approach used in studies of information behaviour has also unearthed specific barriers to - and enablers of - networking. For example, Foster (2003) found that a more encouraging and collaborative organisational climate was conducive to networking behaviours, whereas attempts at networking were less likely in restrictive environments. In a study of Nigerian women, Uhegbu (1999) found that face-to-face networking could be restricted by constraints, such as the feeling of being intimidated by women of different social standing. Other barriers were noted, such as distance and a lack of sufficient communication technologies.

### 2.3.6 **Discussion of networking behaviours, antecedents and outcomes**

Despite the limitations of research on job search networking, the findings of the literature review show that engaging frequently with contacts is largely the reserve of individuals who display strong associations with certain personality traits, such as extraversion, conscientiousness and high levels of self-esteem. The studies also indicate that having strong contacts and a diverse network are related to increased levels of networking intensity during job search. In terms of outcomes, networking is shown to be an important supplementary job search method, and is related to less time spent unemployed. However, more evidence is necessary to confirm the benefits of networking during job search. A synthesis of these findings is presented in Table 2.5.

The extant job search networking literature could benefit from a descriptive level understanding of the processes jobseekers actually engage in, and how information is solicited from network ties. Whilst the scales used in job search studies do refer to specific behaviours, the mechanisms through which these behaviours grant access to informational resources, and contribute to outcomes, are not clear. Despite a lack of studies in the information behaviour literature which focus on networking behaviours in isolation, the evidence presented in the above sections indicates that using a qualitative approach could help to uncover

**Table 2-5 Synthesis of empirical studies relating to job search networking**

<b>Element</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Source</b>
Measures of networking applied	Asking network ties for advice Asking network ties for leads and referrals	Lambert et al., 2006; Van Hoyer, 2009; Wanberg et al., 2000
	Following up on job leads and referrals Making lists of people who may be able to help with job search Alerting social network to unemployment status, and ongoing job search	Lambert et al., 2006; Wanberg et al., 2000
Antecedents of networking found	Pro-active personality No relationship between gender/race and differing levels of networking intensity	Lambert et al., 2006
	Larger social network and more strong ties	Van Hoyer, 2009
	Higher levels of extraversion Higher levels of conscientiousness	Van Hoyer, 2009; Wanberg et al., 2000
	Networking “comfort”	Wanberg et al., 2000
Outcomes of networking found	More job offers received Negative association with other employment outcomes (e.g. earnings)	Van Hoyer, 2009
	Networking intensity associated with reemployment, but not independent of other job search methods	Wanberg et al., 2000

specific examples of networking during job search, including barriers and enablers. In particular, more could be understood about the *quality* of job search networking, which has yet to be addressed (Van Hoye et al., 2009, p.675). Lastly, the role of social media is notable by its absence in existing networking literature. Indeed, many of the studies mentioned above were undertaken before social media existed, or became so prevalent in everyday life.

## **2.4 The adoption of social media tools**

As stated above, extant studies of job search (or career) networking do not consider the potential impact of digital technologies. However, studies of information behaviour in other contexts reveal that Internet technologies provide valuable platforms for fostering contacts and information sharing amongst peers. This, in part, could be explained by the loosely-knit social circles that such technologies can help to generate across geographical boundaries, and which facilitate membership of multiple networks and a more diverse set of relationships than would have been feasible in the past (Rainie & Wellman, 2012). The purpose of this section is to review literature relating to the adoption and use of social media platforms, and to consider how such tools could impact job search networking.

Social media platforms have played a prominent role in shaping the new Internet-based networking environment (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), and, due to their increasing influence, have been the focus of considerable academic research into their adoption by users at both individual and organisational levels (Ngai, Tao & Moon, 2015). Accordingly, scholars have applied a variety of theories, constructs and frameworks in bids to explain the behaviours of those who use social media, with an extensive body of work developed across disciplines and research fields (for reviews, see Ngai et al, 2015; Ouiridi, Ouiridi, Segers & Henderickx, 2014). Many of the findings from these empirical studies are relevant to this thesis, and are presented and discussed in the following sections. Firstly though, in order to provide a contextual understanding of the impact of social media platforms, it is important to clarify exactly what they are, and their various attributes and functions.

### 2.4.1 Defining social media tools

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p.61) define social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (UGC)”. Web 2.0 itself was an evolution from Web 1.0 technologies, wherein the majority of content contained on the Web was largely one-directional, in that users could view webpages without being able to directly interact with them (Goodchild, 2007). With the term first being used in 2004, Web 2.0 referred to the means by which software developers and users of the Web could actively collaborate to continuously update content in a bi-directional sense, with assistance from a variety of applications such as Adobe Flash (to add animation, video and audio etc.) and RSS (Really Simple Syndication - web feeds used to publish frequently updated content such as blogs and news headlines in a standardised format) (Goodchild, 2007; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Although these concepts are still relevant, the label Web 2.0 has since dropped out of academic discourse.

Social media platforms are operationalised by UGC (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011). Whilst not a new concept, UGC has grown exponentially in recent years due to:

- (1) **Technological drivers** such as increased broadband availability and speed, and hardware capacity;
- (2) **Economic drivers** such as the ease of access and availability of the social media tools which allow them to be generated;
- (3) **Social drivers** such as the “Google Generation” born after 1993, who have little recollection of life pre-Web, are highly engaged online, and have substantial technological knowledge

(Kaplan & Hanlein 2010, p.61; Rowlands et al. 2008, p.290).

There are many types of social media tools, and new websites and applications related to social media appear online continuously (Kaplan & Hanlein, 2010). However, within this rapidly changing context it is possible to broadly categorise social media as variations of the following applications: wikis, forums, multimedia



platforms (e.g. Youtube, Flickr), blogs (e.g. WordPress), microblogs (e.g. Twitter), social games, professional networking sites (e.g. Academia, LinkedIn), and social networking sites (SNSs) (e.g. Facebook) (Ouiridi et al., 2014, p.119).

#### 2.4.2 Social media attributes and functions

It can be discerned from the above that ‘social media’ is a catch all term for a wide variety of Web-based tools, each of which have different operational purposes (Ngai et al, 2010, p.37). However, there is also a significant degree of overlap amongst the various social media platforms in terms of their functionality. As highlighted by Boyd and Ellison (2007), SNSs are primarily used for (1) the creation of a public profile, (2) articulating the individual’s network of contacts in the form of a list, and (3) viewing and traversing these connections. However, creating a profile and articulating connections is a feature of many social media platforms in the different categories outlined above, with LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube, for example, each necessitating the creation of a public profile in order to generate and share content (Gerard, 2011).

Given the degree of overlap, scholars have attempted to further classify social media tools. Kietzmann et al. (2011) developed a framework (see Figure 2) to define social media tools, which incorporated seven functional blocks pertaining to the behaviours and functions of the users. They argue that social media tools can be defined by the extent to which they focus on one or more of the functional blocks which comprise the ‘honeycomb’.

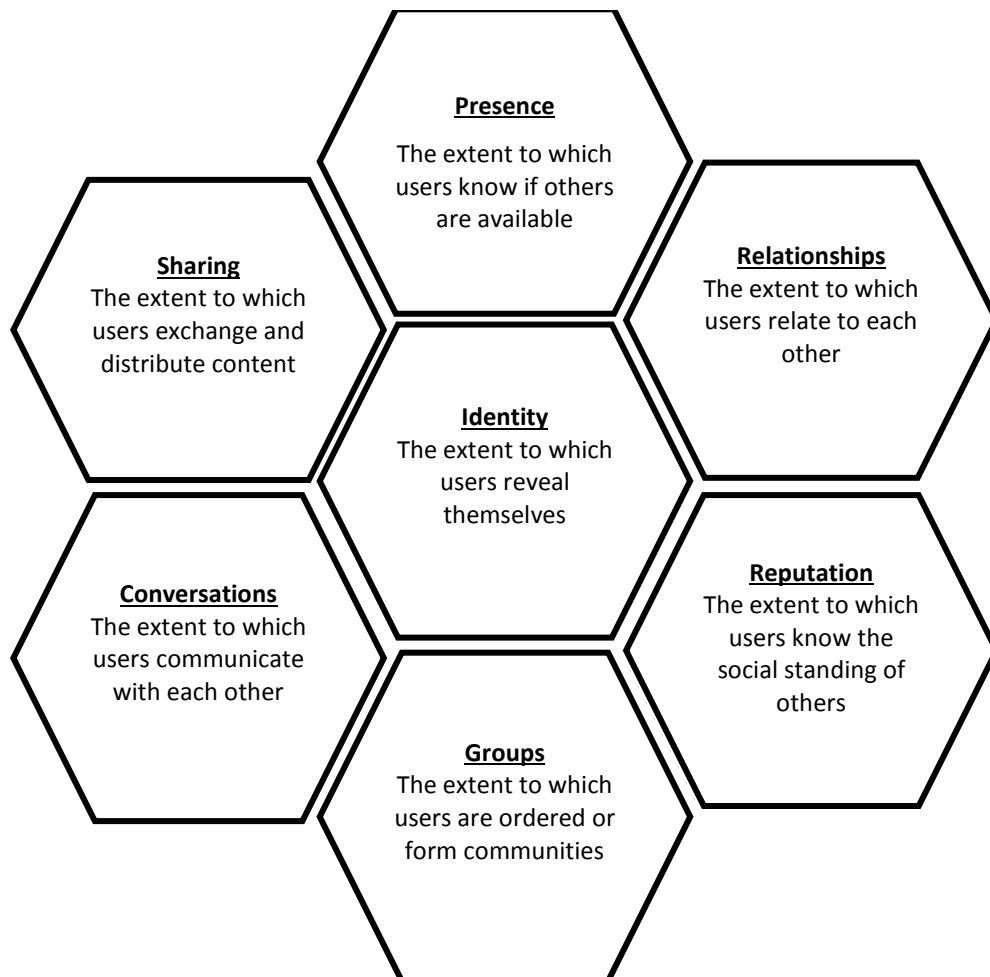
Ouiridi et al. (2014) proposed the use of a Lasswellian taxonomy for social media, based on the following three dimensions:

- (1) **Users**, who can be at micro- (e.g. individual), meso- (e.g. community, organisational) or macro- level (e.g. national government).
- (2) **Content**, which can be any number of formats such as audio, images, text, video etc.
- (3) **Function**, such as sharing, collaborating, networking etc.

Both of the social media classifications presented here (Kietzmann et al. 2011; Ouiridi et al., 2014) contain concepts which are pertinent to this thesis. Kietzmann

et al's (2011, p.243) honeycomb is particularly relevant in this regard. For example, the *sharing* function is described as “the extent to which users exchange, distribute and receive content”. These practices are fundamental to

Figure 2 Social media honeycomb of functions (Kietzmann et al., 2011)



information behaviour, which relates to “how people need, seek, give and use information in different contexts” (Pettigrew, Fidel, & Bruce, 2001, p.44). To this end, ascertaining the means by which specific social media tools are used by jobseekers to engage in information behaviours is key to understanding networking behaviours in online environments, during the job search process. Equally, the *content format* as highlighted in Ouiridi et al.'s (2014, p.121) taxonomy is also a fundamental concern of information behaviour, with data such as “numbers, characters, symbols, images, sounds” constituting “the building blocks from which information and knowledge are created” (Kitchin, 2014, p.1).

In an online environment, social media are platforms from which a diverse array of content can be shared and used. To this end, it is also important to create an understanding of the type of content being generated and used by jobseekers at both the preparatory and active phases of the job search process.

There are many other examples of how Kietzmann et al.'s (2011, p.243) honeycomb informs the current thesis. The 'relationships' function, or "the extent to which users relate to each other", links directly to the concept of tie strength (Granovetter, 1973). Thus far, research on the tie strength of information providers online shows positive results for using both strong network ties (Panovich, Miller, & Karger, 2012) and weak ties (Constant, Sproull & Kiesler, 1996) to seek answers. *Reputation*, or "the extent to which users know the social standing of others", is also important. As shown previously, Uhegbu (1999) found that information sharing amongst Nigerian women was limited due to differing social statuses. As posited above, it is possible that social media provide level playing fields for jobseekers, by facilitating ties with users with higher occupational prestige. Also, determining the extent to which certain social media tools facilitate access to bridging social capital to young jobseekers will convey the impact of digital technologies on the overall networking process.

The above examples of how the functions and attributes of social media tools relate to themes discussed earlier in the chapter provides justification for exploring the role of social media in job search. The remainder of the chapter will present key aspects of the extant literature pertaining to the adoption of social media tools, and will discuss how they relate to the study of job search networking. Research on the adoption of social media platforms in information behaviour literature is also presented, to determine where the current study fits within this context.

### 2.4.3 Social media tools and personality traits

The big five personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience) (Digman, 1990) have been widely used by scholars in an attempt to explain the human behaviour of social media users. As with offline networking during job search and career development (Forret & Dougherty, 2001; Wanberg et al., 2000), extraversion has been

significantly linked with various aspects of social media adoption. In terms of Facebook use, highly extraverted users have more contacts on their friends list (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Ross et al, 2009). Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky (2010) organised participants into three categories depending on their levels of extraversion, and found that those who were the most extraverted had a mean score of 150.96 Facebook friends, compared with 103.18 in the least extraverted group. If, as posited by previous researchers (Ahmad, Mustafa, & Ullah, 2016; Ellison et al, 2007; Schrock, 2016; Valenzuela, Park & Kee, 2009), social capital is embedded in a user's online social networks, such access to social information sources could be crucial for jobseekers in terms of receiving advice and support.

Frequency of social media use and attitude towards Facebook have also been associated with extraversion and openness to experience (Chua & Chua, 2017; Correa, Hinsley & de Zuniga, 2010). Ross et al. (2009) also found a link between extraversion and membership of Facebook groups, although this finding was contradicted by Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky (2010), who found no associations. This could possibly be explained by the methods employed in the respective studies, with the former using objective measures and the latter relying on self-report. It is plausible that social desirability would have been a factor for the respondents i.e. they may have been inclined to present an idealised version of their situation in order to project a socially desirable self-image (Fisher, 1993). Beyond the use of Facebook and other SNSs, Hughes, Rowe, Batey and Lee (2012) also found marginal evidence that extraversion is linked with use of micro-blogging site Twitter.

Even though social media adoption is in some circumstances related to extraversion, the literature indicates that its association with personality traits can be complex. For example, introverted and lonely individuals place more personal information on their social media profiles (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Blachnio, Przepiorka, Balakier & Boruch, 2016). Zaywicka and Danowski (2008) have also found that a higher percentage of introverted users and those with lower self-esteem strive to increase their popularity on Facebook to compensate for their lack of popularity offline. This included posting more personal information, expressing their personal characteristics, exaggerating information,

and generally sharing information in a way that they would not have felt comfortable doing offline. These findings confirm those from other studies which indicate that introverted individuals are more comfortable revealing themselves in online environments (McKenna, Green & Gleason, 2002; Bargh, McKenna & Fitzsimons, 2002).

Another trait that has been positively linked with SNS and instant messenger use is neuroticism (i.e. being anxious and moody) (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky 2010; Ehrenberg, Jukes, White & Walsh, 2008; Green, Wilhelmsen, Wilmots, Dodd, & Quinn, 2016; Lundy & Drouin, 2016; Ross et al., 2009; Zywica & Danowski, 2008). Ehrenberg et al. (2008) and Ross et al. (2009) speculated that this could be due to the period of contemplation social media affords its users in which they can consider their responses, thereby circumventing the anxiety of synchronous offline conversations. Among a sample of female undergraduates, low levels of agreeableness was also found to be associated with an increased use of the instant messaging functions on Facebook and Myspace (Muscanell & Guadagno, 2012).

The studies outlined in this section show that personality traits are a key factor in social media adoption and use. Extraversion has been positively linked with having more Facebook friends, and more frequent use of SNSs and instant messenger applications, particularly amongst younger users. However, introversion is related to sharing personal information and characteristics, and generally trying to compensate for a lack of popularity in offline environments. The positive association between neuroticism and use of messaging services adds another layer of complexity to this picture. In sum, the studies show that using online platforms appeals to various personality types, albeit there are key differences in how they are used amongst these groups.

Whilst these findings are relevant to this thesis, it is notable that they relate only to the social activities of the users. Frequent use of social media tools could be largely inconsequential in terms of job search if the user is not engaging in online social networking for utilitarian purposes. Ali-Hassan, Nevo and Wade (2015) recognised this in their study of employees in an organisational context. To understand the different uses, they differentiated between social, hedonic and cognitive uses of social media tools, and found that high levels of hedonic (i.e.

use for entertainment) use of social media tools have a direct negative impact upon the user's work-output. As such, it is important to differentiate between different types of social media use, and how they impact outcomes.

#### **2.4.4 Social media tools, personality traits and information behaviour**

Personality traits are also closely associated with how people seek information (Ford, 2015, pp.109-111). This translates to information seeking on social media platforms, with different personality types being more likely to use either Facebook or Twitter, or to use them for predominantly social or informational purposes (Hughes, Rowe, Batey & Lee, 2012). Hughes et al. (2010) also analysed the impact of personality traits on the informational use of both Facebook and Twitter, and extended the scale of personality traits to include sociability and a need for cognition. Here it was found that extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience and sociability were all significantly associated to the informational use of Facebook, whereas for Twitter conscientiousness and need for cognition were important. As argued by Hughes et al. (2010), this suggests that Facebook users could be more inclined to socialise in their search for information, forsaking cognitively difficult approaches such as report reading. Conversely, it implies that Twitter users tend to seek more cognitive stimulation in their information search. Indeed, informational affordances, as opposed to social networking, have been shown to be closely associated with user satisfaction of micro-blogging sites like Twitter (Liu, Cheung, & Lee, 2016).

Further research of social media use from an information behaviour perspective has been undertaken by Sin and Tsai (2014), who found that amongst a sample of college students, openness to experience and low levels of agreeableness were related to the use of multiple social media tools (i.e. blogs, media-sharing sites, user reviews, and wikis) as an information resource. Both of these traits have been associated with the concept of 'broad scanners', or individuals with a tendency to seek information from a wide range of resources (Heinström, 2005). More generally, Kim et al. (2014) found personality factors to have a bigger impact on social media use for information seeking than academic discipline or class-level.

These studies demonstrate the impact of personality types on the adoption and use of social media for information seeking. They also indicate that the differing platform characteristics appeal to different user types, giving credence to Kietzmann et al.'s (2011) honeycomb model. For example, the model asserts that platforms require different levels of disclosure in terms of personal details, which could influence how or whether they are appropriated for informational purposes. The functionality of the platforms is also important, as Facebook lends itself more to reciprocal social exchange, whilst Twitter is used more frequently for sharing information and opinions (Huberman, Romero & Wu, 2009; Kwak, Changhyun, Park & Moon, 2010; Mo & Leung, 2014).

### 2.4.5 Social media tools and demographics

Scholars have also focused on the association between demographics and user behaviour on social media. In this respect, age is closely related to how SNSs are used. Cicevic, Samcovic and Nestic (2016) found that older students were more likely to have a higher number of Facebook friends than younger students, and were also more likely to be in Facebook groups. Across a wider age-range of 16 to 56 year olds, it has also been shown that age has an inverse relationship with frequency of Facebook use (Ozimek & Bierhoff, 2016). Gender has also proved to be an influential variable. For example, females have been shown to use SNSs more than males (Zywica and Danowski, 2008; Nadkarni & Hoffman, 2012). However, other variables moderate this usage, which can also be dependent on the particular social media functions being used. This is underlined by Muscanell and Guadagno's (2012) findings. These show that female undergraduates with low levels of agreeableness used private messaging features of Facebook and Myspace more than those with high levels of agreeableness (Muscanell & Guadagno, 2012).

It has also been found that male undergraduates are more likely than females to form new relationships on Facebook, whilst females are more likely to maintain existing relationships. This could have an important bearing on accessible social capital, as creating new contacts online provides access to socially dissimilar ties from different network communities (Burt, 2009; Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007; Wellman, Haase, Witte, & Hampton, 2001). As such, it is possible that male users of SNSs are more likely to benefit from the informational resources which

are diffused throughout networks with greater numbers of weak ties (Granovetter, 1973). Conversely, Hurlbert, Haines, and Beggs (2000) found that those in higher-density networks were more likely to activate their interpersonal ties, which may indicate that female users of SNS would be more likely to seek information from their online networks.

#### **2.4.6 Social media tools, demographics and information behaviour**

Whilst no significant gender differences have been found in relation to how individual social media platforms are used for information seeking, it has been found that male college students generally use a broader range of social media tools to perform information tasks than their female counterparts (Sin & Kim, 2013; Kim et al, 2014). Males also tend to engage with a broader range of topics and activities online, and use Internet more frequently in general (Li & Kirkup, 2007; Fallows, 2005; Jones Johnson-Yale, Millermaier & Perez, 2009). Additionally, whilst females are more inclined to use SNSs for social purposes, research shows that males are more likely to use them for task-oriented reasons (Lin & Lu, 2011). This is reflected in studies which indicate that a higher percentage of males and older jobseekers use LinkedIn during the recruitment process (Adecco Group, 2014; Nikolaou, 2014).

The means by which social media platforms are used for information seeking is also impacted by age. For example, young undergraduate students are more likely than their older counterparts to seek everyday information from SNSs, and also to favour social question and answer sites over Wikis in the information search process (Kim et al, 2014; Sin & Kim, 2013). In terms of information preferences, younger students also prefer personal experience anecdotes from strangers on social media, whereas older students preferred answers which contained links to documented sources (Salmeron, Macedo-Rouet, & Rouet, 2016). It has also been found that younger employees and jobseekers tend to favour Facebook over LinkedIn in their search for information relating to employment (Nikolaou, 2014). This could be explained by their relative inexperience in the job market and subsequent lack of professional contacts. The association between LinkedIn use and higher levels of educational attainment (Adecco Group, 2014; Nikolaou, 2014) could also be due to the high representation of LinkedIn users in the 30-49 age category (Duggan & Smith,



2013). The impact of age on the selection of social media tools for information seeking during job search will be a key consideration within the context of the current study. Here, it will be important to determine which tools young Scottish jobseekers prefer to gather job information, and their reasons for using these tools.

#### 2.4.7 Social media tools and technology acceptance

Another means that has been used to explore social media user behaviours is the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Davis (1989). For example, the constructs 'perceived ease of use' (PEU) and 'perceived usefulness' (PU) have been appropriated to determine people's likelihood to adopt different platforms. Carlos Martins Rodrigues Pinho, and Soares (2011) found that students' attitude towards SNSs was positively impacted by their PEU and PU of the applications. In turn, this influenced their behavioural intention to use them. Kwon and Wen (2010) extended the TAM to include 'perceived encouragement' (PE), and also included the concepts of social identity (i.e. the pride in belonging to a group and level of conformity to group norms), altruism (i.e. helping others to one's own detriment or in expectation of returned gratitude), and telepresence (i.e. the feeling of being present in a virtual environment) to further explain why individuals may hold such perceptions towards SNSs. They found that individuals with high levels of social identity, altruism and telepresence were all susceptible to the effects of encouragement from online network ties, and their PE on SNSs increased their PU of the service, thus determining their actual use levels. Rauniar, Rawski, Yang and Johnson (2014) also adapted the TAM to include 'critical mass' (i.e. number of friends/workmates using the SNS), 'perceived playfulness', 'capability' (of the SNS to complete tasks effectively) and 'trustworthiness' (of SNS tools in terms of security) to measure the intention to use and actual use of Facebook by a sample of American university students, and found that all of the elements in the developed model were significantly related to usage behaviours and intentions.

Studies of social media adopting the TAM highlight the relationship between PEU, PU, and actual usage levels. The extension of the TAM to include factors such as PE and critical mass also show how crucial social factors can be in determining the PU of social media tools. Indeed, social influence has also been shown to be

a significant predictor of users adopting social media tools, with social identity, subjective norms and group norms all being positively related to usage levels (Cheung & Lee, 2010). However, it is notable that technology acceptance is affected by temporal dimensions, in that specific user experiences can lead to acceptance over time (de Graaf, Allouch, & van Dijk, 2017). Indeed, it has also been found that attitudes towards technology are just as important as socio-economic factors in relation to the extent to which the Internet and digital platforms are appropriated by users (Reisdorf & Groselj, 2017).

The findings outlined above are very significant in relation to job search, as they suggest that individuals are more likely to utilise social media if they feel that: (1) they have an encouraging support network available to them online; and, (2) the applications will be useful in their search for relevant job search information. It also highlights the importance of temporal factors in relation to technology adoption, and how attitudes towards use can change over time. However, to support such a hypothesis, the TAM would have to be applied within the context of labour market research, and from an information-seeking perspective. Thus far, the studies which have adopted the TAM have focused primarily on general use of social media tools, or their use within different contexts.

### 2.4.8 Social media tools and job search

It has been found that 61% of jobseekers in the UK use social media tools during job search, of whom 43% use social media to seek employment on a daily basis (Adecco Group, 2014)<sup>1</sup>. Other significant findings in the same study found that males engaged in online social networking during job search more than females (68% to 61%), and that the use of social media tools during job search is associated with higher levels of education (high school 59%, college 66%, masters/doctoral degree 68%), and a perceived self-efficacy with regards to IT skills. Particularly notable was the dominance of LinkedIn as a tool for engaging in job search – 54% of all respondents used it for job search, with only 11.4% having used Twitter, followed by 9.3% having used Facebook. These figures are broadly similar to those reported by Ofcom (2014) which show that whilst 57% of

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<sup>1</sup> Please note, these are the latest figures that could be attained in relation to jobseekers' use of social media in the UK context.

adults in the UK reported having used the internet for finding information about employment, comparatively few people (i.e. 13% and 25% respectively for Twitter and closed Facebook groups) used social media tools outside of LinkedIn. However, the questions used are largely framed in terms of active job searching habits, and as such are unlikely to provide a comprehensive representation of online social networking during job search.

Despite the wealth of extant social media-related academic research, including various empirical studies which relate to the use of social media in the recruitment process (for example Baert, *in press*; Gibbs, MacDonald & MacKay, 2015; Khatri et al., 2015; Suvankulov, 2013), the use of social media tools by those in the supply side of the recruitment process (i.e. by jobseekers) is an area which has been largely under-investigated. The findings of earlier work suggests that whilst using the Internet as part of the job-search process helped to reduce workers' unemployment durations by up to 20%, such use was disproportionately formal in terms of the channels used (Kuhn & Mansour, 2011). These findings are echoed in a qualitative study by Manroop and Richardson (2012), where it was found that Generation Y job seekers (i.e. those people born in the 1980s and the early 1990s) are inclined to forsake the potential affordances of social media tools as information channels, instead opting for more traditional methods of job and search. However, given the continuous upward trend in social media adoption amongst all age groups over the past decade (ONS, 2017), these figures are not necessarily contemporarily representative. Additionally, the studies by Kuhn and Mansour (2011), and Manroop and Richardson (2012) lack a systematic methodological approach, with clearly defined boundaries on the nature of social media adoption during job search. Also, in the case of the latter, the findings cannot be considered generalisable due to the low and targeted sample size.

Although only indirectly related to job search, it has been shown that use of Facebook use increases college students' career development self-efficacy (Argyris & Xu, 2016). This is because SNSs allow users the opportunity to engage in observational learning – i.e. vicarious learning from other users -which increases their ability to present themselves in an edifying manner. Nistor and Stanciu (2017) also found a positive relationship between self-objectifying on SNSs and job-related self-efficacy. Combined, these findings suggest that SNSs

provide a platform for users who are engaged in job search or career development activities to consider their self-image, and to promote a positive version of themselves to potential employers. However, tempering these potential affordances, it has also been shown that whilst high-socialisation online is related to increased levels of self-concept – i.e. the ability to understand one's own abilities and uniqueness – this is especially the case for those who also engage in high socialisation in offline environments (Khan, Gagne, Yang, & Shapka, 2016). Conversely, those who only engaged in high socialising online had the lowest self-concept levels.

### 2.4.9 Social media tools and careers guidance research

Prominent contributors within the field of careers guidance research have emphasised the importance of developing 'digital career literacy' skills, which include the appropriation of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to build and use networks (Hooley, Hutchison, & Watts, 2010; Longridge, Hooley, & Staunton, 2013). Hooley (2017) has outlined a '7 C's' framework for managing a digital career profile, of which the following are particularly relevant to the study of job search networking using social media tools:

- Collecting – the ability to source, manage, and retrieve career information and resources
- Critiquing – the ability to understand the nature of online career information and to consider its usefulness for a career
- Connecting – the ability to build relationships and networks online that can support career development
- Communicating – the ability to interact effectively across a range of different platforms, and to use them in the context of a career.

Longridge, Hooley, and Staunton (2013, p.3) also report on a six-week career development intervention with interns at the University of Derby, which was based around the development of "digital literacy and careers through the use of social media". They found that the enthusiastic participants managed to create opportunities for themselves by appropriating platforms such as LinkedIn, and

learned to think of social media as useful career tools instead of something that they “just did”. However, they also found that participants who claimed to use social media intensively prior to the course were surprised at how challenging it was to develop their digital literacy skills, and by their lack of knowledge about how social media could be used for functional purposes. Despite these useful insights, Artess, Hooley, and Mellors-Bourne (2017, p.25) have recognised that there exists “comparatively little literature that tests the efficacy or impact of networking as a skill in relation to other aspects of the development of employability”.

It has also been recognised by those employed in careers guidance roles that services need to be modernised to reflect the growing use of digital platforms for careers-related activities (Kettunen, Vuorinen, & Sampson Jr., 2013). Kettunen et al. (2013) found amongst a sample of fifteen Finnish career practitioners, that attitudes towards social media tools in the practice of delivering careers services varied extensively, and could be categorised as thus: (1) unnecessary, (2) dispensable, (3) a possibility, (4) desirable, and (5) indispensable. In terms of the competencies actually required to use social media tools effectively, Kettunen, Sampson Jr. and Vuorinen (2015) found that careers practitioners in Denmark and Finland conceptualised such needs into four categories. These are as follows:

- (1) **The ability to use social media platforms to deliver information:** Being able to use the social media and their functions at a basic level, and to have an understanding of media/information literacy, in order to provide clients with relevant and trustworthy information. Motivation to actually use the platforms is also key.
- (2) **The ability to use social media platforms to deliver careers services:** Being able to communicate effectively via social media, being aware of the risks, and having patience with the software.
- (3) **The ability to use social media platforms for collaborative career exploration:** Being able to enhance participation amongst clients, and being able to generate effective and inclusive discourses in online environments.

- (4) **The ability to use social media platforms for co-careering:** Being flexible enough to change careers services so that it caters to social media, instead of the other way around, and having a strong online presence.

#### 2.4.10 Outcomes of using social media tools

Other social media studies have been identified which also inform the current thesis, with regards to the potential outcomes of engaging with digital platforms. For example, it has been shown that the use of different social media platforms often leads to incidental information acquisition online, particularly with regards to political or current affairs content (Boczkowski, 2017; Valeriana & Vaccari, 2016). This is especially the case for young people, who are constantly connected to social media via their mobile phones (Boczkowski, 2017). It is possible that young jobseekers will also acquire job information incidentally whilst using social media. As shown previously, studies of information behaviour have indicated that the Internet has greatly enhanced serendipitous information acquisition amongst academics (Foster, 2003; Meho & Tibbo, 2003).

In addition to the above, it has been shown that use of SNSs is associated with having a more dynamic strong ties network, and increased interaction with social ties (Vriens & van Ingen, 2017). It has also been associated with relational reconnection, particularly amongst frequent users (Ramirez, Sumner, & Spinda, 2017), a stronger awareness and knowledge of network contacts and their activities (including weak and distant ties) (Levordashka & Utz, 2016), and receiving more information from professional contacts (Utz & Breuer, 2016). A study of information-seeking adolescents by Gauducheau (2015) showed that young people can source specialized information on discussion forums, and that pooling knowledge on these platforms helps them to circumvent common search problems such as making precise enquiries and evaluating results. These findings give further credence to those which suggest that users can access social capital on digital platforms (Ahmad, Mustafa, & Ullah, 2016; Ellison et al., 2007; Schrock, 2016; Valenzuela, Park & Kee, 2009).

#### 2.4.11 Discussion of social media adoption

Literature pertaining to the adoption and use of social media platforms is extensive, and relates to many academic disciplines and fields. This research has

often been focused in psychology literature, and in particular how personality traits relate to user behaviours. Indeed, studies of information behaviour have also underlined the association between personality and how different users seek information on digital platforms. The aggregate of findings from these studies indicate that social media tools are used by people with a variety of dispositions, albeit the nature of this use can often be distinguished by types (e.g. social or informational use). That both extroverted and introverted individuals utilise these platforms is particularly of interest, given the close association between offline networking and extroverted personality types. It is possible, therefore, that social media would provide useful networking platforms for different types of users, including those who may be less likely to initiate contact face-to-face. It is also notable that many of these studies about social media adoption are piecemeal, and could benefit from a holistic, mixed-methods approach in order to highlight *why* certain users do what they do, as opposed to just indicating *what* they are doing.

The studies outlined above also provide evidence that age and gender have a key bearing on how social media platforms are appropriated. The former of these two demographic variables is of particularly of interest to the current thesis, given its focus on the youth labour market. Research findings also indicate that users of different ages are likely to appropriate different platforms to find information, which could mean that jobseekers of different ages will do the same for job search. Technology acceptance is also an important concept, to understand whether young people perceive social media platforms to be credible sources of job information, and whether this is impacted by factors such as social identity and the effects of critical mass.

Finally, the review shows that careers practitioners have ranging opinions about the efficacy and necessity of social media platforms within the service. However, these include insightful perceptions on the skillsets and motivations required to make effective use of such technologies. Therefore, in order to fully understand how the networking behaviours of young jobseekers - both offline and online - can be used to improve the provision of careers services, the opinions and practices of professionals will have to be carefully considered.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

As demonstrated by this review, there is a broad consensus in the extant literature that network contacts, social capital, job search networking, and social media platforms, each have a considerable – and often interlinked – impact on the job search process. However, beyond the intersection where information about a job opening is passed and which leads to eventual employment (see for example, Franzen & Hangartner, 2006; Granovetter, 1974), little is known about how networks relay information throughout job search. Indeed, for the most part, the role of information in achieving employment outcomes is assumed. Another notable feature of the literature is that studies dealing directly with job search networking rely on arbitrary measures of the behaviour, which are not based on solid theoretical grounding or evidence from prior research. Whilst these studies do provide some insight into the antecedents and outcomes of networking, the findings do not account for the role of social media platforms in facilitating them. Despite this, the findings relating to social media adoption and use indicate that digital tools could provide valuable platforms for young jobseekers to develop networks and access informational capital. It is arguable, therefore, that any contemporary study of job search networking would be incomplete without due consideration of their impact on that process.

To address the deficiencies identified in this review – and to provide new knowledge for careers practitioners - it is imperative that more is learned about job search networking as an information behaviour. Any new knowledge must demonstrate, in descriptive terms, the means by which young people mobilise contacts to source job search information, and provide insight into the nature of these exchanges and associated behaviours. Additionally, to make the study worthwhile in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it must also investigate the role of social media platforms as tools for networking. These factors characterise the research reported in this thesis. Indeed, they are explicitly addressed in the following research questions:

**RQ1.** What are the key job search networking behaviours employed by young jobseekers based in Scotland?



**RQ2.** What role do social media platforms have in the job search networking behaviours of young jobseekers based in Scotland?

**RQ3.** How can knowledge gained from (**RQ1**) and (**RQ2**) inform the work of careers services in order to assist young people achieve better job search outcomes?

## Chapter 3 Theoretical framework

### 3.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter 2, existing studies of job search networking lack sufficient theoretical grounding. As such, a key contribution of this thesis is to position networking within the domain of information science, by treating it as an information behaviour. A suitable theoretical framework - Wilson's (1981) information needs and seeking model - has been selected to achieve this. The purpose of this chapter is to present some of the theory which elucidates the workings of Wilson's model, and to highlight its relevance to the study of job search networking. Given the existence of subsequent iterations of the information needs and seeking model (Wilson, 1994; 1997; 1999) the reasoning behind its selection is explained. Firstly though, a commentary is provided about other information seeking models which could potentially have been used, and why they were ultimately removed from consideration as a theoretical framework for the study.

### 3.2 Models of information seeking behaviour

As noted by Case (2012, p.75), information seeking behaviour has largely been operationalised in previous studies as the *purposive* activities individuals engage in during searches. For example, Ellis (1989) and Kuhlthau's (1991) information seeking behaviour models - both based on extensive qualitative research - implicitly focus on the active search behaviours of users. Such an approach is limiting within the context of job search networking. Meho & Tibbo's (2003) research into the information behaviours of social scientists highlighted these limitations. Whilst it confirmed Ellis's (1989) model, it also identified some additional features of the search process, such as networking behaviour. The participants stressed the importance of creating and maintaining an 'invisible' college network between institutions, with whom they could exchange information over time. These exchanges often stemmed from incidental happenings, where information was discovered in passing and then relayed to colleagues. Such passive search could be an important dynamic for jobseekers given how

information about jobs is diffused through social structures (Franzen & Hangartner, 2006; Granovetter, 1973).

In light of this, Case (2002, p.76) stipulated the importance of holistic methods of studying “information-related phenomena”. Krikelas’ (1983) model of information seeking behaviour could be interpreted as facilitating such a holistic approach. It contains thirteen stages of information seeking in a flow chart style, with a focus on both information sharing and information gathering. Regarding information sources, it cites human memory, personal files, observation, formal, and informal channels of information. However, whilst it was considered as a potential framework for the current study, it was not used due to its lack of emphasis on the contextual factors relating to information seekers (e.g. demographics, socioeconomic status). As noted throughout Chapter 2, such factors can have a keen impact on labour market outcomes, and are often associated with the way individuals behave both offline and online.

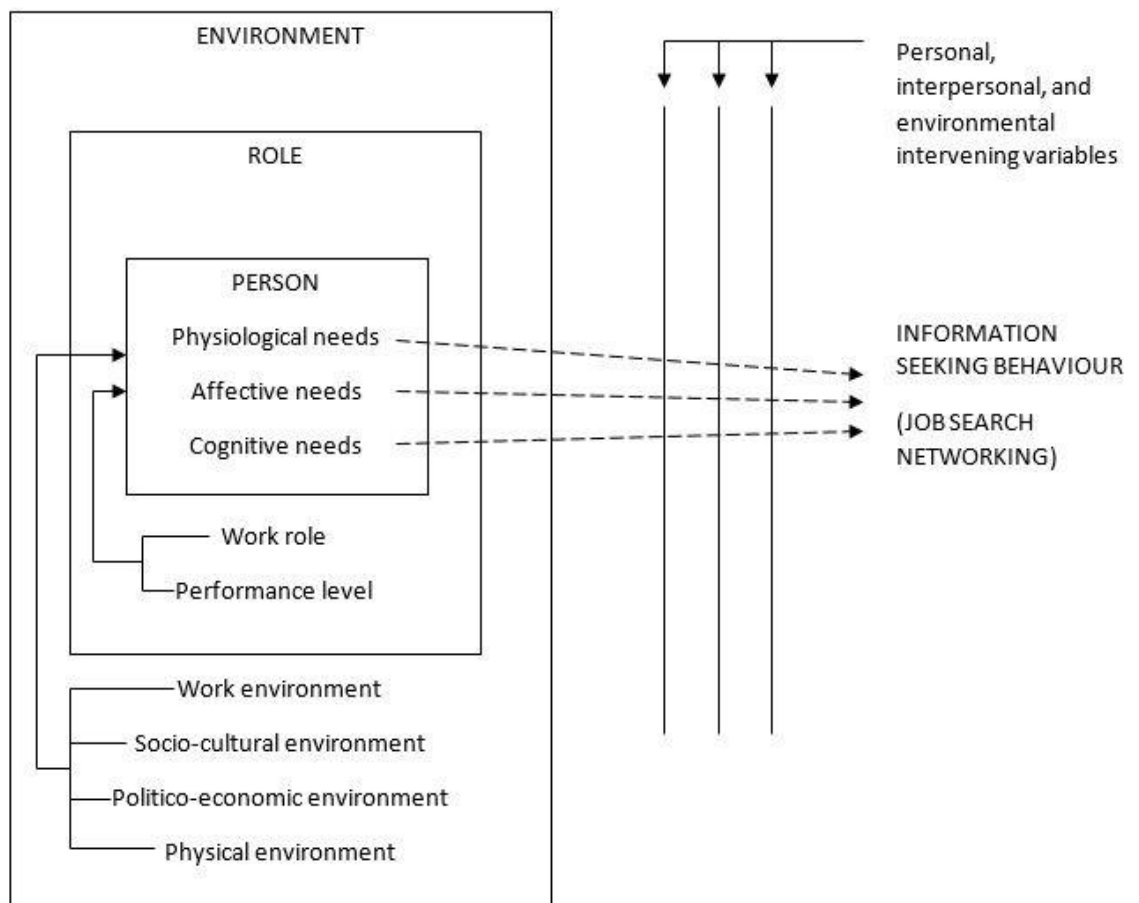
Johnson’s (1997) model of information seeking was also taken into consideration as a possible framework for the empirical research. Unlike Krikelas’ (1983) model, it does focus on the environmental factors which information seekers, with attention also having been paid to background factors (e.g. demographics), and personal factors (e.g. beliefs). These components are contained within the first of three overall stages of the model, ‘antecedents’, which then lead to ‘information carrier factors’ (i.e. the channels of information used), and ‘information seeking actions’ (i.e. use of these channels). Johnson’s model has been used in a wide range of empirical studies (Bawden & Robinson, 2012, p.198; Case, 2002, p.126), and was closely considered for use in the current study, particularly for its focus on the context of information seeking. However, by articulating the presence of a cognitive element that emerges alongside these influential environmental factors – i.e. the recognition of information need – it was felt that Wilson’s model, whilst very similar to Johnson’s, was more developed for purpose.

### **3.3 Wilson’s theory of information behaviour**

Wilson’s (1981) model (Figure 3), and those which have succeeded it (Wilson 1994; 1997; 1999), are derived from extensive research within the field of

information science, and are amongst the most prominent in the field (Bawden & Robinson, 2012; Case, 2002; Ford, 2015). It has a keen focus on the factors which influence the information seeking process, and also the environmental factors which act as moderators between information need and actual engagement in information seeking (Ford, 2015, p.101). The model is explicit in its focus on user behaviour, as opposed to a focus on the systems with which people engage in order to solicit information. This reflects a general shift within the information science-related field from the 1970s onwards, from the focus on how information sources (books, journals etc.) are used by people during information search, towards an emphasis on the individuals themselves and their various behaviours and needs (Case, 2002; Wilson, 2000). As highlighted by Case (2002, p.6), the difficulty with the former approach lay within the propensity for surveys of individuals to make “such strong assumptions about their needs,

Figure 3 An adaptation of Wilson’s information needs and seeking model (1981, p.6)



motivations, habits and behaviours”. In contrast, such factors act as a focal point in this study, to understand both the offline and online networking behaviours of job seekers in the Scottish youth labour market.

An early iteration of Wilson’s model was selected because it is not prescriptive in its description of the information seeking taking place. Instead it focuses on contextual factors and intervening variables that directly impact these behaviours. Indeed, in his 1994 version of the model (Wilson, 1994) Wilson updated the model to include Ellis’s (1989) work on information seeking, to highlight its versatility. As shown in Figure 3, the information seeking behaviour element of the model – which has been adapted for the purposes of this thesis – emphasises that the nature of this behaviour is job search networking. Given the lack of theoretical basis for previous studies of job search networking, it provides sufficient scope to develop knowledge about the concept as an information behaviour, which has not previously been attempted. It is Wilson’s contention that the model could be used to stimulate thinking about how a more complete model might look, or to generate hypotheses about information seeking (Wilson, 1999, p.253). He has also expounded the value of research from other disciplines in creating fruitful research ideas for information scientists, and cites the need for relevant concepts, theories and models from other areas to be subsumed within the field of information science as “a matter of urgency” Wilson (1997, p.570). The following sections of this chapter will discuss the three main components of Wilson’s model - ‘context of information need’, ‘intervening variables’, and ‘information seeking behaviour’ – and highlight their relevance to this thesis.

### 3.3.1 Wilson’s model: context of information need

At a theoretical level, the concept of information need is inherently ambiguous. Wilson (1981) states that identifying the information need of an individual requires understanding why that person feels he/she needs to search for information, in terms of the purpose it will serve. Identifying this can be difficult because a human need in itself is the subjective experience of the individual, rendering it unobservable by the researcher (Wilson, 1997). Taylor (1968) highlighted similar issues within the context of library use, positing that information seekers are driven by a visceral need for information, often inexpressible by words. Despite these problems, Wilson (1997) suggests two ways of determining information

needs as observing the behaviours or analysing self-reports of information seekers.

There are other theoretical debates surrounding the concept of information need. For example, Wilson (1981) questions whether it can correctly be considered as a primary human need. In support of this contention, Case (2002, p.66) points to the field of psychology, where the closely related concept “need for cognition” has been treated as a primary requirement for humans. However, irrespective of its hierarchical position, Wilson (1981, 2006) acknowledges that specific information needs can be subsumed within basic human needs. For example, physiological needs – or the need for basic sustenance – could necessitate the search for information. Within the context of job search, this could manifest itself as young people in need of income to pay for basic amenities searching for job vacancies. Wilson (1981) also cites affective (e.g. the need for attainment) and cognitive needs (e.g. the need to learn a skill) as being potential drivers of information seeking. These factors align closely with the psychological needs that drive human motivation, in accordance with the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008). They differ from physiological needs, as they are not undertaken to achieve a state of quiescence. Instead, they are driven by curiosity, personal interests, and other factors.

Understanding how human needs interface with job search networking as an information behaviour is integral to the research undertaken as part of this thesis. Also important, as illustrated by Figure 3, is the impact of other role-related (e.g. job search length) or environmental (e.g. social networks) factors on job search networking, and their relationship with basic human needs. However, it is notable that information needs themselves are not represented in Wilson’s model. This makes it difficult to determine how contextual factors relate to networking as a means of information seeking. Another limitation of the model is its lack of feedback loops. Indeed, job search theory indicates that the process of looking for a job is a sequential one which can change over time (Barber et al., 1994; Saks & Ashforth, 2000). As contended by Blau (1993, 1994) individuals often shift the focus of their search from an extensive review of opportunities available and the process of how to attain those opportunities, to a more intensive ‘active’ search which involves sending out resumes and interviewing for jobs. Reflecting

this, the temporal nature of networking behaviours is another consideration of the current thesis.

### 3.3.2 Wilson's model: intervening variables

Wilson's (1981) model illustrates how individuals who have identified an information need can face a number of intervening variables which can be barriers to, or enablers of, information seeking. Whilst these can relate to the contextual factors shown in Figure 3 (i.e. personal, environmental, or role-related), interpersonal and source characteristics (e.g. nature of social media platform) factors have subsequently been identified as potential intervening variables (Wilson, 1997, p.569). As shown in Chapter 2 of this thesis, job search networking can be influenced by a number of variables, such as personality types, and the composition of social networks. The general adoption and use of social media tools has also been strongly linked to variables such as personality traits, gender, age and social influence (Cheung et al., 2011). In information behaviour theory, internal and external factors have also been increasingly recognised as crucial influences on how individuals engage in the information seeking process (Ford, 2015, pp.101-119). In order to derive a realistic interpretation of the offline and online networking behaviours of young jobseekers in Scotland, and to understand how these can be addressed by the careers service and other professionals, it is important to identify the intervening variables they face.

### 3.3.3 Wilson's model: information seeking behaviour

As mentioned in Section 3.2, many of the information seeking models that have been incorporated into empirical research centre on purposive search behaviours. Wilson's (1981) model of information needs and seeking does not presuppose the nature of the search, but instead focuses on the conditions which may influence or impede it. It has been designed to stimulate thinking and to facilitate the incorporation of other models, and therefore could be used as a platform to comprehend and potentially model job search networking as an information behaviour. Despite this, it is notable that other theoretical work by Wilson has recognised modes of information seeking beyond those which are purposive. For example, he cites 'passive attention', 'passive search', 'active search' and 'ongoing search' as distinct phases of information seeking (Wilson,

1997, p.562). Passive attention is described using examples such as watching the television and listening to the radio, or other such times where information could be unintentionally gathered. Passive search is described as when the individual is engaged in another behaviour or search, and comes across information which happens to be relevant to them in the process. Whilst active and ongoing search are intuitively related to job search networking, passive acquisition is also considered, given the potential for happenstance and serendipity to impact the job search process (Krumboltz, 2009). Additionally, social media have broad functions and uses Kietzmann et al. (2011), and can be important sources of passive information acquisition (Boczkowski, 2017; Levordashka & Utz, 2016).

### **3.4 Conclusion**

Wilson's (1981) model of information needs and seeking has been presented in this chapter, and its suitability as a framework for the study of job search networking has been discussed. Despite its limitations – for example, that it does not currently reflect the temporal aspects of job search, or fully illustrate the relationship between basic human needs, information needs, and information behaviours – it is shown to have merit for developing knowledge in this area. To this end, it focuses primarily on needs which precipitate information seeking, the context from which they are borne, and the various intervening variables which can inhibit or support these behaviours. Examining these factors within the context of the current study is crucial to developing a holistic understanding of networking as an information behaviour, and the role of social media as tools for networking. Another advantage of Wilson's model is that it is not prescriptive about the nature of information seeking, and instead can be used as a basis to generate hypotheses or stimulate thinking about behaviours. This adaptability makes it suitable for the study of job search networking, which has not previously been considered within the domain of information science. However, Wilson's subsequent writings on different modes of information search (Wilson, 1997) can also provide a basis for studying networking as an operational concept.



## Chapter 4 Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to document the methodology used to conduct the research undertaken as part of this thesis. It contains an outline of the philosophy which underpins the study, and an explanation of why mixed methods were used to investigate the research questions. Following this, the research design and analysis phases are described. At both of these stages, the incorporation of Wilson's theory (1981; 1997) as a theoretical framework (see Chapter 3) is reviewed. Finally, the validity, reliability, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study are presented and discussed.

The methodology was guided by the study's research questions. As argued in Chapter 2, the concept of job search networking is nebulous in existing academic literature. To this end, previous studies lack theoretical grounding, and do not provide a descriptive insight into the phenomena that aggregate to form the concept of networking. To address these issues, the following (two of three) questions were devised:

**RQ1.** What are the key job search networking behaviours employed by young jobseekers based in Scotland?

**RQ2.** What role do social media platforms have in the job search networking behaviours of young jobseekers based in Scotland?

The questions were deliberately designed to be broad in nature, and provided ample scope to determine the basic characteristics of job search networking. However, the methodological approach - as presented in the remainder of the chapter - also allowed data to be gathered which could be used to explore its various antecedents and outcomes. In this regard, the findings build upon those in previous studies of networking in the field of psychology (Lambert, Eby & Reeves, 2006; Van Hove, van Hooft & Lievens, 2009; Wanberg, Kanfer & Banas, 2000), and develop further insight into networking as an information behaviour.

The final research question was designed with the practical application of the study's findings in mind. As stated in Chapter 1, the national skills agency in Scotland recognises the integral role of social networks in the development of

career management skills (SDS, 2012). Indeed, being able to effectively use networks has been identified as an integral facet of employability from an individual-level perspective (Gayen, McQuaid, & Raeside, 2010). Therefore, to operationalise findings relating to the first two research questions, the following was devised:

**RQ3.** How can knowledge gained from (**RQ1**) and (**RQ2**) inform the work of careers services in order to assist young people achieve better job search outcomes?

## **4.2 Research philosophy and approach**

To clarify the selection and appropriation of research methods, it is important to outline the perceived worldview from which the study is approached (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p.108). The following sections contain an overview of the philosophy that has been applied to this research, and the means by which it informed the creation of an appropriate research design.

### **4.2.1 Pragmatist philosophy**

The study adheres to the pragmatist philosophy. According to Webb (2004, p.484), a key feature of classical pragmatism is ‘naturalism’, where knowledge is obtained through natural means, and is pan-critical in the sense that neither scientific nor common sense knowledge is recognised as holding a privileged position. In essence, naturalism entails an approach where all knowledge that is potentially relevant to the inquiry can be used. The functional characteristic of pragmatism manifests itself in contemporary human projects via disciplined attempts to answer rigidly defined research questions (Kivinen & Piironen, 2004). This is contingent on the belief that the questions which form the basis of research should ultimately direct the approach taken to the study, as opposed to overbearing paradigmatic concerns. Therefore, utilising pragmatist principles helps the researcher to circumvent potential difficulties which could arise by adhering to polarising research philosophies, by approaching each research question from a practical vantage point (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p.86).

### 4.2.2 Ontological considerations of pragmatism

Most pragmatist philosophers embrace a pluralistic worldview, containing both an objective world which is independent of human thought, and the multiple constructed worlds commonly accredited to the human cognitive process (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2013). From the objective vantage point, there exists a universal truth (or an objective reality) that can ultimately be comprehended through scientific enquiry. As noted by Lazar (1998, pp.14-15), such a naturalist approach to the social sciences is preoccupied by the observation and collection of social 'facts'. Harré (1997, pp.173-184) contends that within the world there exists an itinerary of processes which are accepted as integral in the pattern of intentional activity. To this end, the fundamental networking behaviours of human beings could be interpreted as the culmination of both causal and habitual activities (i.e. the need for food which compels interaction with humans, or learned responses such as communication which stem from the ontological prerequisite of human existence) which combine to create a social reality, distinct of individual meaning or influence. Within these parameters the act of networking is reducible to a 'social fact' (Durkeim, 1994), where individuals are compelled to engage in such behaviours in spite of their own free will.

Deeper insight can be gained from the subjective vantage point, where it is postulated that there exists multiple, constructed realities (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p.88). In this intersubjective reality, the social world is interpreted as being constructed by the purposive actions of individuals, who engage in meaningful interactions with others based around ideas, interests and values (Lazar, 1998). According to Bryman (2012, p.33), these phenomena are not only the manifestation of social facts, but they are also constantly under revision by the social actors themselves. Based upon their perceptions and thoughts, individuals create and enact their own social realities (Ritzer & Goodman, 2003, p.517). These situations invoke "a complex hierarchy of choices" and processes relating to how they perceive the rules within each particular contextual reality (Harré, 1997, p.185).

In this research, a pluralistic worldview has been applied to the study of job search networking. To this end, the process whereby young people engage with network

entities to gain job search information is treated as a social fact. However, it is accepted that these social facts can only be understood probabilistically and imperfectly (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p.88). Therefore, the subjective worldview of young jobseekers has also been sought, to provide an understanding of how they construct and perceive the reality of networking during job search.

### 4.2.3 Epistemological considerations of pragmatism

Pragmatists believe that the epistemological relationship between the researcher and the research participant should not be constrained by adherence to purely objective or subjective viewpoints (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p.88). Indeed, as noted by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009, p.90), researchers may need to interact heavily with participants at some stages of the research process in order to derive relevant answers (e.g. at the interview stage), whilst being largely removed at others (e.g. when testing concepts in a survey questionnaire). The invocation of both subjectivity and objectivity is characteristic of the field work carried out in this study. Here, the relationship between the researcher and the researched traverses the continuum between the distinct epistemic stances of constructivism and positivism. The use of mixed methods to conduct research is inherent within this approach.

### 4.2.4 Pragmatism and the mixed methods approach

Pragmatists utilise both quantitative and qualitative methods, which are most closely associated with positivism and constructivism, respectively (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007). This is known as mixed methods, which is essentially a combination of methodologies to answer the same overarching research questions (Pickard, 2007, p.18). As cited by Bryman (2012, pp.633-634), there can be a number of benefits to using such a mixed methods approach to research, and many of these are relevant to this thesis. Those which are most crucial are outlined below:

- (1) **Completeness.** The researcher can achieve a more detailed insight into the area of enquiry by adopting mixed methods. Ultimately, by using multiple approaches, it is possible to gain a more holistic view of the phenomenon.

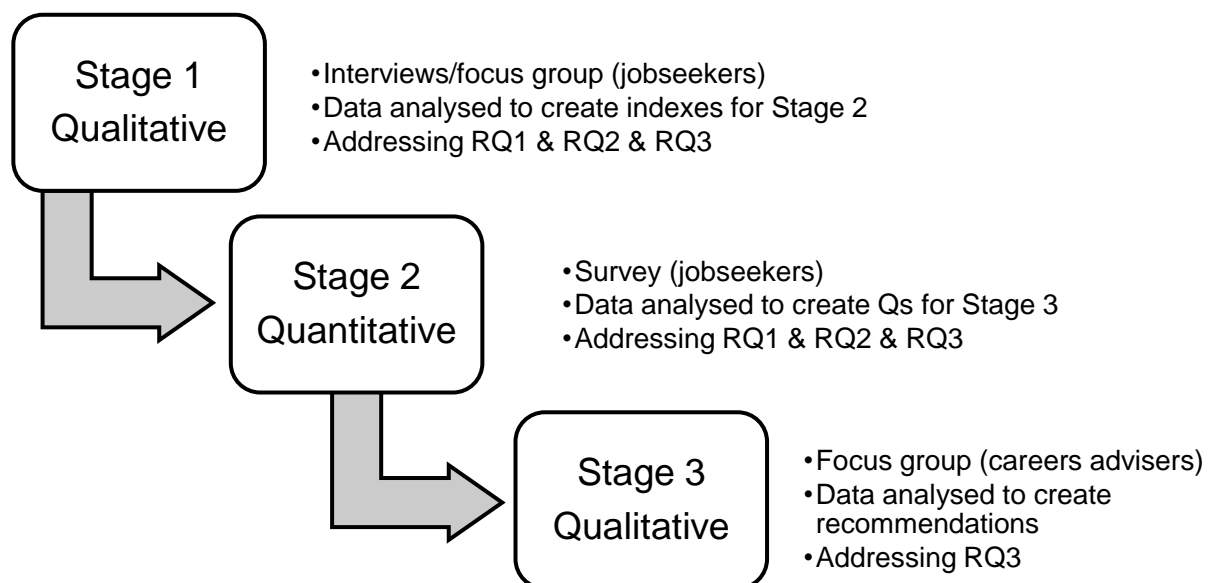
(2) **Process.** Whilst using quantitatively deduced data is useful to gain an understanding of the phenomenon at a structural level, qualitative data can provide real-world examples of its processes.

(3) **Instrument development.** Real world examples drawn from qualitative studies can be used to develop indexes for other research instruments, such as quantitative surveys.

Based on the above, the application of a mixed methods approach circumvents the potentially constraining qualities of mono-method research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.17) apparent in previous studies of job search networking (see Lambert, Eby & Reeves, 2006; Van Hoyer, van Hooft & Lievens, 2009; Wanberg, Kanfer & Banas, 2000).

A three-stage exploratory design was applied to answer the research questions (see Figure 4). This included the sequential collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, where each stage of data collection was used to develop the research instrument used in the next. Such an exploratory approach has been identified as one of the four major types of mixed methods designs to be applied in scientific research (Creswell & Clark, 2006, p.59).

Figure 4 Three-stage exploratory design process with mixed methods



At the first stage of data collection, qualitative responses were gathered via both semi-structured interviews and a focus group with young jobseekers based in Scotland. Having been analysed, the findings from this stage – which contained real examples of the phenomena being studied - were used to create indexes and scales relating to job search networking. These were integrated into a quantitative survey of jobseekers, in the second stage. Once the data from the survey were analysed, the findings from the first two stages of data collection were then used to create questions for a focus group with careers advisers.

### **4.3 Research design**

#### **4.3.1 Stage one: interviews and focus group**

##### **4.3.1.1 Aims**

As outlined above, the key aim of the initial interviews and focus group was to explore actual cases of job search networking from the perspective of young jobseekers based in Scotland. This data could then be used to “identify important variables to study quantitatively (...) and measure its prevalence” (Creswell & Clark, 2006, p.75). The following sections detail how, informed by information behaviour theory developed by Wilson (1981; 1997), this aim was met through a qualitative study of young jobseekers based in Scotland. It also explains how an egocentric network approach was used to gather data specifically relating to job search networking as an information behaviour.

##### **4.3.1.2 Sample choice**

The aim of qualitative methods is often to reflect the diversity in a population. This can be achieved by recruiting participants using purposive sampling (Barbour, 2001, p.1115). A specific type of purposive sampling called ‘maximum variation sampling’ (Palys, 2008, p.697) was used to source the participants for the interviews. People were sought who would cover the spectrum of the Scottish youth labour market (16-24 year olds), in terms of job search experiences. In doing so, candidates were sought who were:

- Actively job searching, or recently employed following a sustained period of job search

- Spanning the 16-24 age range with both females and males included
- Living in different Local Authority Areas (Scottish Government, 2017a)
- Possessing a range of educational qualifications
- Of different employment statuses as guided by the “destinations of school leavers” framework (Scottish Government, 2017b).

Seven participants were recruited to satisfy the above criteria, and a breakdown of their demographics is displayed in Table 4.1.

**Table 4-1 Interview sample description**

Age	Sex	Local authority area	Education	Job search status	Employment status	Interview details
17	Female	East Lothian	No qual	Actively searching	Activity agreement	Feb 2016, East Lothian.
17	Male	Edinburgh	No qual	Actively searching	Activity agreement	Feb 2016, East Lothian
17	Male	Moray	Scottish NQs	Actively searching	Unemployed	Mar 2016, SDS Moray
19	Male	Fife	HND	Actively searching	Full-time student	Feb 2016, Fife College
20	Male	Fife	HND	Actively searching	Full-time student	Feb 2016, Fife College
23	Male	Renfrew	MSc	Recently employed	Employed	Feb 2016, Skype
24	Female	Glasgow	MSc	Actively searching	Employed	Feb 2016, Skype

The employed interviewees responded to a call for participants placed on various social media channels (e.g. University of Strathclyde alumni Facebook page). The HND students were sourced through a lecturer at a college in Fife. Although a gender balance was sought in this instance, only male students respondents volunteered to take part. The participants on activity agreements<sup>2</sup> were sourced via a support worker who ran a third sector employability group for young people. Her details were found on Edinburgh's 'Joined up for Jobs' partnership (Joined up for Jobs, 2016). Finally, the unemployed participant was sourced by contacting the careers centre in Moray<sup>3</sup>.

The focus group was conducted after the interviews to gather additional qualitative data about job search networking. The sample was attained using a non-probability method known as snowball sampling. In essence, this method involves participant referrals, whereby people pass along the details of others they know who are within the population of interest to the study (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). The criteria for selecting the focus group sample was less prescriptive than it was for the interviews due to a number of practical considerations (e.g. accessibility, cost, and time) of bringing together a group of young jobseekers with a variety of demographic attributes. As such, candidates were sought who were:

- Actively job searching, or recently employed following a sustained period of job search
- Spanning the 16-24 age range with both females and males included
- Living in Scotland

Six focus group participants were recruited based upon the above criteria, and a breakdown of their demographics is displayed in Table 4.2. One of the participants replied to a call for focus group participants placed on social media,

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<sup>2</sup> Activity agreements are for young people vulnerable to disengagement who are given intensive advice and guidance, and are connected with local opportunities which meet their specific needs. They are also given a maintenance allowance (i.e. a financial incentive to participate) (Scottish Government, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> The SDS centre is located in Elgin, Moray. The interviews were arranged with the help of careers advisers working in the centre.



and offered to contact other people she knew who were also engaged in a job search. The focus group took place in a public building at a location in South Lanarkshire in February 2016.

**Table 4-2 Focus group sample description**

Age	Sex	Local authority area	Education	Job search status	Employment status
22	Female	South Lanarkshire	HND	Actively searching	Employed
22	Female	South Lanarkshire	MSc	Recently employed	Full-time student
22	Male	South Lanarkshire	Scottish NQs	Actively searching	Employed
22	Male	South Lanarkshire	BA (Hons)	Actively searching	Employed
22	Male	South Lanarkshire	MSc	Actively searching	Full-time student
24	Female	South Lanarkshire	BA (Hons)	Recently employed	Employed

**4.3.1.3 Data gathering at the interviews and focus group**

Two of the interviews were conducted on Skype, whilst the rest were conducted in person at a location convenient to the participants (i.e. FE college campus, careers guidance centre, and at an employability group meeting in a public building), and ranged in length from 25 minutes to 50 minutes. They were semi-structured to encourage the participants to expand upon their answers where necessary (Barriball & While, 1994, p.330). See Appendix A for a copy of the schedule and abbreviated schedule which were used as guides during the interviews. The focus group was conducted face-to-face at a public venue in South Lanarkshire, in the same town where each of the participants lived. The session lasted for 70 minutes. The conversation that developed in the focus group

was guided by the researcher with a number of open-ended questions. See Appendix B for a copy of the questions used to guide the focus group session.

### 4.3.1.4 *Developing the questions*

The questions for the interviews and focus group were informed by Wilson's information needs and seeking model, which can be distinguished from other models of information seeking by its individual-level focus (1981, p.6). As Wilson (1999, p.253) indicates, the model is not comprehensive, but can be used to stimulate thinking "about the kinds of elements that a more complete model ought to include". Its adaptability is reflective of how the model was developed, having been informed by research which was undertaken within multiple research contexts. Given its flexibility, it was deemed an appropriate framework to develop knowledge about job search networking as an information behaviour. As shown in Figure 3 (Chapter 3), the model has three key components: 1) context of information need; 2) intervening variables; and, 3) information-seeking behaviour (i.e. job search networking).

Wilson (1981) emphasised the importance of studying the information needs of individuals to develop an understanding of why they behave the way they do. This involves establishing the basic need (e.g. physiological need) which motivates them to seek information, and the various contexts (i.e. social role, environmental) within which these needs develop. For the interviews, these factors were adapted and incorporated into a series of semi-structured questions about job search. For example, the participants were asked to explain their motivations for seeking a job (i.e. personal), their employment status and the nature of their job search (i.e. social role), and how they used social media platforms (i.e. environmental). Wilson (1997, p.556) also asserts that the perception of an information need does not always provide sufficient impetus for information seeking behaviour, and that needs can be tempered by various intervening variables. Probing questions were used throughout the interviews to uncover any potential barriers to information seeking the participants faced, where they were not implicit within the responses given.

An egocentric network approach called the name-generator was used to gather data specifically about job search networking (Robins, 2014, pp.103-107).

Egocentric networks are part of Social Network Analysis (SNA) research, and focus on the ties individuals have with their personal network of contacts (Robins, 2015, p.20). The conceptualisation of ties as flows of non-material goods such as information is a common feature of SNA research (Wasserman and Faust, 1994, p.51), and has been applied to a number of studies within the domain of Information Science (for a review, see Schultz-Jones, 2009). The approach was used in the current study to gain a micro-level understanding of how young jobseekers interact with network entities to acquire job search information. Therefore, only mobilised social capital was considered, as opposed to potentially accessible capital (Lin, 1999).

In practice, the egocentric approach involved asking the ego in the network (i.e. the participant/jobseeker) to relate any alters (i.e. people and organisations) who had provided him/her with information relating to job search, since they had undertaken to look for employment. The participants were prompted with a number of potential types of information, such as job opportunities, assistance with applications, or general careers advice. Where necessary, they were probed for details about these informational exchanges, to determine the nature of the contact, and the type of information acquired, and how it was transmitted. Whilst this approach generated details of online networking, additional questions were asked with an express focus on the use of social media platforms during job search. This helped to reduce the risk that any functional appropriation of social media for job search was missed.

The focus group questions covered the same topics addressed at the interviews, also based upon Wilson's model. However, the egocentric method was not applied to garner data relating to job search networking. Instead, the questions were primarily used as tools to generate interaction amongst the participants based upon their own job search experiences, to "elicit a multiplicity of views and emotional processes within a group context" (Gibbs, 1997, p.3). Ultimately, the focus group questions were used to develop supplementary evidence about job search networking within a dynamic group setting, as opposed to thorough case studies of each individual.

## 4.3.2 Stage two: survey questionnaire

### 4.3.2.1 Aims

As indicated above, the purpose of the survey questionnaire was to measure the prevalence of job search networking behaviours amongst 16-24 year old jobseekers living in Scotland. It was also to understand which factors precipitated job search networking (i.e. antecedents), and the potential outcomes of these behaviours. Within this, there was a specific focus on the role of prominent social media platforms (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn) as tools for networking. Below details are provided about how the population group surveyed, the survey design, and how it was distributed. Please note that a copy of the survey template can be found in Appendix C.

### 4.3.2.2 Sample choice and recruitment

The population of 16-24 year old jobseekers in Scotland is diverse and fluid. For example, jobseekers could potentially be drawn from any of seven leaver destinations (Scottish Government, 2017b). These are higher education (HE) (i.e. university student), further education (FE) (i.e. college student)<sup>4</sup>, activity agreement, training, voluntary work, unemployment (seeking work or training), and employment. Additionally, it is estimated that adults in the UK spend an average of 10 weeks looking for a job (Peacock, 2013). These conditions render the population ‘invisible’, with no accessible database of active jobseekers from which to draw a representative sample.

To limit the constraints of attaining a representative sample of young jobseekers, the sampling strategy focused on maximising independent variable variance (Punch, 2003, pp.37-39). To achieve this, two groups from the population of jobseekers were initially targeted which, it was believed, would ensure the “relationships between the variables would have the maximum chance to show up” (Punch, 2003, p.38). To develop a credible insight into job search networking and its various antecedents and outcomes, samples were drawn from groups which were perceived to have substantive differences, and therefore would reveal

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<sup>4</sup> In Scotland FE is a step below HE.

the behaviours of those at opposite ends of the labour market spectrum. The groups selected to meet these conditions were business management students in their final year of university (BA or MSc courses), and active users of the SDS careers centres. Final year Business Management students were selected because:

- 1) Three quarters (76.1%) of graduates in the UK enter employment after university (Longan et al., 2016). As such, it was assumed that a significant proportion of final year students would be engaged in a job search, and therefore eligible for participation.
- 2) Those in Higher Education would be representative of jobseekers with some of the highest levels of educational attainment amongst young people in Scotland.
- 3) Those in Higher Education would be seeking jobs of higher occupational prestige, with higher entry level requirements.
- 4) Around 40% of school leavers in Scotland enter Higher Education, making it the most popular leavers' destination (Scottish Government, 2017b). Also, courses within business disciplines are the second most popular degree subjects in Scotland (McCall, 2015). Combined, these factors increased the likelihood of reaching a larger sample of students, whilst also being representative of a substantial portion of the job seeking population in Scotland.
- 5) Business degrees are flexible in that they can lead to careers in a large variation of roles across all sectors (Prospects, 2017). Therefore, the potential for viewing the behaviours of those with niche interests would be mitigated.

Users of careers service centres were selected because:

- 1) Thousands of unemployed young people use the SDS centres each year (SDS, 2017, p.15). Therefore, it was assumed that a large proportion of these centre users would be engaged in job search, and eligible for participation.
- 2) Those who use SDS centres require a “greater level of support” to reach a positive post-school destination (SDS, 2017, p.15). Therefore it was assumed that they would be representative of jobseekers with some of the lowest levels of educational attainment amongst young people in Scotland.

Between August and November 2016, 180 respondents were recruited to the study using the above criteria. The business management students, who accounted for three quarters of these respondents, were sourced from the Business Schools at Edinburgh Napier University, the University of Aberdeen, the University of the Highlands and Islands, and Robert Gordon University<sup>5</sup>. This was done by contacting senior academic within these institutions by letter (Appendix D), to ask for permission to email their final year undergraduate and postgraduate students with the a link to the survey<sup>6</sup>. The nature and geographical location of the participating universities meant that students from traditional and modern universities would be included in the survey, from multiple areas of the country.

The SDS service users who responded to the survey were sourced by visiting careers centres in Dumfries, Dundee, Edinburgh, Galashiels, Glasgow, Greenock and Paisley. To this end, users from both urban and rural areas were recruited to the sample. Permissions for the visits were granted by the Operations team at SDS, in addition to the Area Managers from each of the corresponding regions where the centres were based. The Research and Evaluation team at SDS also helped to facilitate the visits, by providing a list of relevant contacts (i.e. Team Leaders) within the respective centres.

In an attempt to boost the number of respondents, the survey was distributed using the following methods in November and December 2016:

1. **Social media channels.** The My World of Work Facebook page and the MyJobScotland Twitter account posted public statuses containing links to the survey.
2. **Events marketing.** A leaflet containing a link to the survey was distributed widely at careers events and lecture halls at Edinburgh Napier University.

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<sup>5</sup> The Business Schools at Glasgow Caledonian University, The University of Edinburgh, and The University of Strathclyde were also approached, but declined to take part.

<sup>6</sup> These letters were followed up with multiple phone calls and emails with various academic and administrative staff at these institutions, some of which were ultimately successful, some of which were not (see footnote 5).

3. **College careers service.** The Edinburgh (FE) College careers service disseminated the survey link on their monthly vacancy newsletter to service users.

A total of 70 survey responses were gathered through these channels, bringing the total to 250. Recognising that this was not a large enough sample for the research, and that time was becoming a concern, Youth Sight (2017) – the UK's largest youth research panel - was used to send the survey to a large pool of young jobseekers living in Scotland<sup>7</sup>. An additional 650 responses were gathered through Youth Sight in November and December 2016.

The response from the panel service changed the nature of the sample. Instead of having an even number of management graduates and SDS users as initially intended, it became significantly more heterogeneous. Indeed, the vast majority of respondents were students targeting jobs in a range industries and sectors. Also, as shown in the following section, only 13% of the sample were not educated to university level. In an attempt to mitigate for these shortcomings, talks were initiated with SDS to gain access to a large database of young customers' email addresses. A request was also submitted to the Princes Trust in Edinburgh to disseminate the survey amongst 16-24 year olds who used their services. Despite agreement from both parties, and ongoing talks which lasted into 2017, these activities did not come to fruition. The implications of this for the research aims are discussed in the study limitations section later in the chapter:

#### **4.3.2.3 Sample demographics**

The final survey sample consists of 909 respondents, and description of its characteristics is provided in this section. A breakdown of age, gender, and employment status has been shown in Table 4.3, alongside comparative figures from the general population of 16-24 year olds in Scotland. What these figures indicate is that females are significantly overrepresented in the sample, at 64.5% (n=586) compared to 50.0% of the general population, despite a markedly even

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<sup>7</sup> The money for this was sourced from the funding body (ESRC), who offer a small yearly sum of money to recipients of studentships in order to cover expenses for research activities such as field work costs.

gender distribution between the three age-groups. The figures also show how the 19-21 age-group is overrepresented, whilst the 22-24 age-group is distinctly underrepresented.

For employment status, the responses were analysed and broken down into three broad categories. As mentioned above, students (83.4%, n=758) make up the vast majority of the sample, with only small quantities of unemployed (7.5%, n=68) and employed respondents (9.1%, n=83). These figures diverge significantly from the general population in Scotland, particularly with regards to students and the employed. It is notable that employment status is closely associated with the age of the respondents. For example, 51.6% (n=391) of students were aged 19-21, whilst 73.5% (n=61) of the employed respondents were 22-24, and 50.0% (n=34) of unemployed respondents 16-18. The association between age and employment status was found to be statistically significant using the Chi-square test ( $p < .001$ ).

**Table 4-3 Age and employment status of the sample by gender, in comparison with the general Scottish population<sup>1 & 2</sup> of 16-24 year olds**

		Survey			Scottish Population		
		Males	Females	All	Males	Females	All
Age	16-18	28.2%	29.2%	28.8%	29.6%	28.6%	29.1%
	19-21	45.8%	46.8%	46.4%	33.8%	33.7%	33.8%
	22-24	26.0%	24.1%	24.8%	36.5%	37.7%	37.1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>35.5%</b>	<b>64.5%</b>	<b>908</b>	<b>50.0%</b>	<b>50.0%</b>	<b>607,188</b>
Employment status	Student	79.3%	85.7%	83.4%	41.8%	47.5%	44.6%
	Unemployed	11.1%	5.5%	7.5%	13.7%	17.3%	15.5%
	Employed	9.6%	8.9%	9.1%	44.5%	35.2%	39.9%

1 Age/gender figures of the Scottish population are sourced from National Records of Scotland (2016), mid-2016 estimates

2 Employment status/gender figures of the Scottish population are sourced from Scottish household survey (SHS) (2016)

Data on education levels were coded using the Scottish Credits and Qualifications Framework (SCQF, 2017), and organised into four categories. The final sample contained 6.3% (n=57) with Postgraduate level qualifications, 80.4% (n=730) with BA and BA (Hons) level qualifications, 7.6% (n=69) FE and Higher



level qualifications, and 5.7% (n=52) with National level or no qualifications. This indicates that the vast majority of the survey sample (86.7%; n=787) had attained or were working towards university-level qualifications. For comparison, 43.0% of 25-34 year olds in Scotland were educated to university level in 2016 (Scottish Household Survey, 2016)<sup>8</sup>. Using a Pearson product moment correlation test, a positive correlation was found between the level of education and age-group of the respondents ( $p < .001$ ) i.e. as the respondents' age increased, so did they likelihood that they would have higher qualifications.

The location of the respondents was determined by asking them to indicate the name of the city, town or village that they lived in. An analysis of the place names provided shows that the sample was drawn from 29 of Scotland's 32 local authority regions (Scottish Government, 2017b). The majority (68.3%; n=621) of these respondents lived in one of Scotland's largest cities (i.e. Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and Dundee), compared with 27.8% of Scotland's general population (National Records of Scotland, 2017, p.15). These figures indicate that city-dwellers were overrepresented in the sample. Table 4.4 also shows how, based upon the Scottish Government's urban-rural classification system (Scottish Government, 2014), those living in rural areas were particularly underrepresented. This is not surprising due to the number of students who participated in the survey. Indeed, due to the predominantly urban nature of the respondents, the rurality variable was not used in the analysis of the results.

For ethnicity, the responses given were broken down into four main categories. At 57.3% (n=517), the majority of the sample identified as being Scottish, although this figure was substantially below the national average of 78.9% (Scottish Household Survey, 2016). The sample also included 13.7% (n=124) who identified as 'Other British and Irish', 17.5% (n=158) who were from 'any

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<sup>8</sup> The 25-34 age group provides a more realistic – although not direct - comparison, because the SHS findings reflect qualifications *held* as opposed to *working towards*. Therefore, university students in the SHS report are coded as being in possession of school or FE qualifications, whilst in the current study are coded as having degrees.

Table 4-4 Urban/rural classification of the sample

Urban/rural classification	<i>n</i> (within survey)	% (within survey)	% (per 2013-14 U/R classification)
Large urban areas	621	68.3%	34.5%
Other urban areas	220	24.2%	35.1%
Accessible small towns	38	4.2%	9.3%
Remote small towns	11	1.2%	3.4%
Accessible rural	12	1.3%	11.7%
Remote rural	7	0.8%	6.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>909</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

other White background', and 11.7% (n=106) from 'any other background'. In terms of the general Scottish population, the figure for these groups were 12.8%, 4.6%, and 3.8%, respectively. This can be largely explained by the high proportions of students in the sample who are likely to have moved to Scotland to study. Notably, 93.6% (n=486) of those born in Scotland identified as Scottish, whilst 5.2% (n=27) of those born in Scotland identified as one of the ethnic groups categorised as 'any other background'.

#### 4.3.2.4 *Distributing the survey questionnaire*

The survey questionnaire was created online using Survey Monkey (Survey Monkey, 2017), and responses were gathered between September and December 2016. A link to the survey was sent to the Business Management students via email, and in each instance this action was completed by a school administrator at the relevant institution. A copy of the email can be seen in Appendix E. The SDS service users completed the survey on the desktop computers which were made available at the centres. The researcher was present to offer help to the participants to answer the questions, where necessary. The respondents accessed via the research panel were sent a link to the survey by administrators at Youth Sight. However, all responses were automatically filtered back to the researcher. The questionnaire took an average of eight minutes to complete, per respondent.

#### 4.3.2.5 *Developing the survey questions*

Having been validated in the first stage of field work, Wilson's model was used as a basis for structuring the survey questionnaire. Other factors also contributed to the design of the questions, and these are discussed in the sections below. Please note that the decision process whereby questions for the survey were selected from the results of the first stage of field work is discussed in greater detail at the end of Chapter 5.

#### **Context of information need**

A variety of questions were asked to identify the antecedents of job search networking behaviours, including the use of social media platforms. Many of these focused upon the characteristics of the job search itself. For example, respondents were asked using a five-point Likert-scale (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*) whether they put a lot of effort into job search, or if they were looking for a job that was a career option. Questions were also asked to determine the length of job search, and the overall job search goal (i.e. the job being sought) of the respondents. Most of these factors were addressed in the survey because of key findings from the interviews and focus group. However, it is notable that many of the concepts covered, such as perceived effort and goal clarity, have featured prominently as measures in previous job search studies (for a review see Van Hove, 2013). Job search length was also considered to be an important measure due to the effect of temporality on changing information behaviours, which has been recognised by prominent models of information-seeking (Bates, 1989; Leckie, 1996; Wilson, 1997).

Questions were included to ascertain the relevance of network structure and resources to job search networking. For example, a position generator was included to assess the impact of social capital as a potential antecedent. A version of the tool which was used in a large scale survey of the Dutch population (van der Gaag, Snijders, & Flap, 2004, p.26) was adapted to include the occupations listed within the UK Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) (Office for National Statistics, 2010). The respondents were asked to select occupations (e.g. Managers, Directors, and Senior Officials) held by people they knew, whom they would be happy to approach for a character reference. To this

end, potential differences in behaviour relating to social capital inequalities (Lin, 1999) could be tested. Regarding network structure, respondents were also asked to relay how many online contacts (e.g. Facebook friends) they had on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. This was deemed pertinent due to the role of SNS in providing users with access to, and ways to maintain, a larger pool of weak ties (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Valenzuela, Park & Kee, 2009).

Basic demographic data were also gathered, such as age, sex, education, ethnicity, employment status, and country of birth. The findings from the interviews and focus group, combined with those from previous studies of information seeking on social media (Kim, Sin, & Tsai, 2014; Sin & Kim, 2013), suggested that these could be key antecedents of job search networking. With regards to education, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework was used to create a hierarchy of answers which could subsequently be coded for analysis (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, 2017). The remaining demographic questions were adapted from those used in the *Understanding Society: The UK household longitudinal study* questionnaire.

### **Intervening variables**

The intervening variables which were included in the questionnaire derived primarily from the results of the first stage of field work. For example, the respondents were asked if they felt comfortable asking different types of network contacts (e.g. family, friends, people they did not know very well) for job search information. These questions were adapted from very similar measures used by Wanberg, Kanfer, and Banas (2000, p.503), also in relation to job search networking. With regards to social media, respondents were asked if they had been advised by a professional to use social media as part of a job search (i.e. awareness as a potential enabler or barrier), and whether they had access to phones, desktop computers, or other devices with internet access (i.e. access as a potential enabler or barrier). Additionally, using a Likert scale (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*) they were asked if they knew how to use Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn (separately) to find job search information, and whether they found these platforms to be useful sources of job search information. These are adaptations of variables which have been used to determine the role of technology acceptance in social media use, based upon the perceived

usefulness of the platforms and levels of self-efficacy in operating them (Rauniar, Rawski, Yang, & Johnson, 2014; Tsai, Chuang, Liang, & Tsai, 2011).

### **Information seeking behaviour (i.e. job search networking)**

The questions on specific behaviours related to either 'active' or 'passive' information search (Wilson, 1997, p.562). These are common modes of search, where individuals actively seek or passively acquire information, respectively. The items included in the scales are based upon examples given by participants in the interviews and focus group, with answers being recorded using a five-point Likert scale (*Never (0 times) to Very frequently (at least 10 times)*). With regards to offline behaviours, care was taken to include a variety of contact types to determine the utility/role of tie strength during job search (Granovetter, 1973). For example, respondents were asked how often they had spoken to family members, friends, and people they did not know very well about job search activities. For online behaviours, respondents were asked questions about their use of Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn using the same scale. For example, they were asked how often they had contacted someone on each platform about a job. This approach allowed comparisons to be drawn between the different social media as tools for job search networking.

To quantify the 'passive' acquisition of information, respondents were asked how often they had been contacted by someone they knew with job search information. For the social media platforms, they were asked whether they used functionality which facilitated passive acquisition, such as Facebook groups or pages. To understand the potential impact of digital technologies in the dissemination of job information through informal networks, they were also asked whether someone they knew had given them information which had been sourced on social media.

### **Outcomes of job search networking**

A section containing measures of objective and subjective job search outcomes was included in the questionnaire. Objective outcomes were measured by the number of interviews (both phone and face-to-face) the respondents had received. This is a common approach in studies of job search (Blau & Robins, 1990; Côté, Saks, & Zikic, 2006; Mau & Kopischke, 2001). Subjective outcomes

were measured using a Likert scale (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*), where respondents were asked whether they felt confident about their job search progress, the quality of their CVs, and the quality of their interview skills. The main function of these items was to determine whether networking, either offline or online, had a positive association with job search success. To this end, they were included as dependent variables for subsequent analysis.

### 4.3.3 Stage three: focus group with careers advisers

The findings from stage one and two of the research were incorporated into a focus group with careers advisers. The purpose of this was to determine the means by which the research findings could be of practical use to the careers service, and inform future policy. The funding body for this research (i.e. SDS) operates careers centres in over 70 locations throughout Scotland and has a dedicated careers adviser in every state school (SDS, 2018b). To ensure that the focus group findings would be relevant to careers services in Scotland, the

Table 4-5 Focus group sample: careers advisers

Job role	Age-group	Gender	Local authority area	Length of time in role
Work coach	55-64	Male	Fife	>10 years
Schools adviser	25-34	Female	Fife	3-5 years
Personal adviser	45-54	Female	Fife	>10 years
Careers adviser	25-34	Female	Fife	3-5 years
Schools adviser	25-34	Female	Fife	3-5 years
Work coach	35-44	Female	Fife	>10 years

participants were recruited directly from SDS. With the assistance of an SDS Team Leader based in the Fife region, six careers advisers were asked and agreed to take part in the research. As shown in Table 4.5, these advisers have varying job titles. This indicates that they work with different client groups. The focus group took place in October 2017, at a careers centre in Fife, Scotland. Its design was semi-structured, and included a series of questions to prompt discussion about the research findings. The discussion lasted for one hour. Pseudonyms were allocated to the participants to ensure their anonymity.

### 4.3.4 Data analysis

#### 4.3.4.1 *Qualitative analysis*

The data gathered at the first and third stage of the research were subjected to a directed content analysis, which can be used to “validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework” (Hsieh & Shannon, p.1281). NVivo software was used for the analysis. To develop the theoretical framework within the context of job search networking, the transcripts from the initial interviews and the focus group were coded and organised into a hierarchy of themes. The top layer of the hierarchy was based upon the three main components of Wilson’s model: ‘context of information need’, ‘intervening variables’, and ‘information seeking behaviour (i.e. job search networking)’. Sub-themes were created by analysing the transcripts on a line-by-line basis, and highlighting each section of data which related could be categorised into three main themes. During this process the statements given by the different participants were compared, and statements of a similar nature grouped together. These sub-themes were allocated codes and filtered into a layered hierarchy.

Data pertaining to the participants’ ego-nets were also quantified and inputted manually to Ucinet6, and the visual representations of the networks were created in the package Netdraw (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002). These visual outputs are referred to in Chapter 5 as ‘job search information networks’ (JSINs) to emphasise their focus on informational exchange during the job search process. The nodes contained within the JSINs were allocated different colours and shapes depending on the medium for information exchange and the nature

of the contacts, respectively. More details about the JSINs are provided in Chapter 5.

### 4.3.4.2 *Quantitative analysis*

Data gathered in the survey questionnaire were analysed using the SPSS v23 software package. The first stage of this process involved a data cleaning process, whereby the data were reduced to create useable variables for analysis. For example, typed age responses were organised into appropriate categories i.e. 16-18, 19-21, and 22-24. A similar process was undertaken for typed responses relating to the occupations sought by the participants during job search, which were grouped in accordance with the SOC (ONS, 2010). All unusable responses (e.g. those that were incomplete or incompatible with the target demographic) were removed from the database.

Next, the data were analysed using descriptive statistics. Frequencies of each individual variable were generated to gain a basic insight into the demographics of the sample, and proportional responses to behavioural and attitudinal questions. Following this, a cross-tabulation analysis was undertaken to determine the relationship between all measured variables (e.g. the relationship between demographics or contextual factors and the use of Facebook for job search purposes). This stage facilitated a general understanding of the prevalence of job search networking behaviours and attitudes, and which variables - having been repeatedly associated with these behaviours and attitudes - were potential antecedents.

Inferential statistics were then used to gain an in-depth knowledge of the results, particularly to understand which associations between variables were of statistical significance. The Chi-square test was used to test relationships between categorical variables, whilst the independent t-test and one-way ANOVA were applied to test the effects of various categorical variables on the mean scores of different interval data (e.g. how differing education levels impact on frequency of Facebook use for actively seeking jobs). Finally, two multiple regression models were fitted to the data to test associations between a selection of influential independent variables (as determined by previous statistical tests) and two target variables: (1) the number of jobs interviews received; and, (2)



making progress with job search. The purpose of the regressions was to identify which variables were the biggest predictors of objective and subjective job search outcomes, respectively.

#### 4.3.5 Validity and reliability

If the research instruments measure what they are supposed to measure, then a study can be considered valid (Field, 2009, p.11). The validity of the data in this study was enhanced by the use of the three-stage exploratory design, with a mixed methods approach. To this end, the data from each stage could be triangulated, and the consistency of the results across methods corroborated (Denscombe, 2000, p.85). It was also possible to attain a higher degree of content validity by gathering qualitative data at the first stage. As argued by Drost (2011, p.118), content validity is a qualitative method of defining the domain of a concept. To this end, the interviews and focus group were effective ways to define job search networking as a concept, and to create indicators which would cover its dimensions in a quantitative survey. Subsequently, the external validity of the results were tested by comparing them with those from similar studies. This facilitated a discussion about the potential generalisability of the results “across different measures, persons, settings, and times” (Calder, Phillips, & Tybout, 1982, p.240). Additionally, the representativeness of the survey sample was tested by comparing it with the general population of 16-24 year olds in Scotland, as presented in Section 4.3.2.3.

A study’s reliability is largely based upon its replicability or repeatability over time (Golafshani, 2003). For the qualitative elements of the study, reliability was sought by ensuring that each aspect of the field work process could be traceable. Crucially, care was taken to present a cogent narrative - with supporting documentation (e.g. the interview guides contained in Appendix A) - as to why decisions were taken in relation to its design, application and analysis (Denscombe, 2000, p.213). Specifically with regards to the survey questionnaire, reliability could have been achieved by applying the test-retest method. This method helps to determine “the ability of a measure to produce consistent results when the same entities are tested at two different points in time” (Field, 2009, p.795). However, the test-retest approach was not viable due to the evolutionary nature of the job search process. For example, if respondents took the survey

twice, it is very likely that their second set of answers would be different if they had undertaken job search in the intervening period. To mitigate for this, great care was taken to ensure that a clear and understandable writing style was used when creating items for a survey (Drost, p.113). This was also informed by feedback from pilot study respondents, as outlined above. Additionally, frequencies were specified on a number of scales which measured definitive behaviours. For example, scales which included 'Never', 'Rarely', 'Occasionally', 'Frequently', and 'Very frequently' as options, were presented alongside '0 times', '1 or 2 times', '3 to 5 times', '6 to 9 times', and 'at least 10 times', respectively. This was done to limit skewed results based upon varied subjective interpretations of the respondents.

### 4.3.6 Pilot studies

In May 2016 the draft survey questionnaire was piloted with a convenience sample of young jobseekers. The link to the survey was distributed on the author's private Facebook page, and also disseminated to young family members of the author's work colleagues who were in the process of seeking employment. The test version of the survey contained an open-ended response box at the end, asking the respondents to leave feedback about: (1) the ease of survey completion; (2) the understandability of the questions; (3) the relevance of the questions; (4) any questions that they would have expected to see on the subject, but which were missing from the survey; and, (5) any other issues they experienced or general comments.

In total, the piloted version of the survey received 10 responses, and the feedback led to only minor typing corrections in two of the questions. Six of the written responses particularly highlighted the ease with which they completed the survey. This was reflected in the average time of completion, which was between 5-10 minutes. To ensure that the questions had been completed properly, and that the length of time taken to complete the surveys accurately reflected the nature and volume of the questionnaire's content, the responses were analysed for consistency. Although this required a degree of subjectivity on the part of the researcher, it was determined that the questions had not been answered in a random fashion, as clear and logical patterns could be drawn from the range of responses.

Although the interviews at stage one of the research process were not piloted per se, the nature of the questions were informed by two unstructured interviews with careers advisers. These interviews were conducted in December 2015 – one with a former employee of the English careers service who had changed professions in the same year, and one with a university careers adviser. The purpose of the interviews was to determine whether the key themes identified in the literature review, and which formed the basis of the draft interview questions, were relevant to the experiences of young jobseekers. They were also used to ascertain whether any important themes had been missed from the preparation. The insights generated from these conversations revealed that networking and social media use were relevant issues for young jobseekers and professionals giving advice, and were spoken about frequently during careers interviews. They also reinforced the necessity of completing the study, to generate more understanding of young people's behaviours in relation to these activities.

### 4.3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for the study was sought and obtained from both the School of Computing and the Business School Research Integrity Committees at Edinburgh Napier University. The former was to gain consent to include participants in the study from outside of the university (e.g. students from other institutions and SDS centre users). The latter related specifically to the inclusion of students from the Business School at Edinburgh Napier who participated in the survey questionnaire. Although all of the study's subjects were aged 16 or over and therefore legally classified as adults (UK Data Service, 2017), steps were taken to protect the rights of the participants throughout the process of recruitment, data collection, and analysis. These steps are detailed below.

#### 4.3.7.1 *Informed consent*

Participation in social research "should be voluntary and as fully informed as possible" (Social Research Association, 2003, p.14). Several measures were taken to ensure that this was the case for all who took part throughout the field work process. In terms of recruitment, the interviewees and focus group participants agreed to become involved in advance of the actual date itself, and were self-selecting. For those who were recruited via a gatekeeper (e.g. a careers

adviser, lecturer or support worker), details of the project and the nature of participation were fully disclosed from the outset. In each instance, the intermediaries had access to a large pool of potential candidates, to whom they promoted participation in the project as an entirely voluntary exercise.

Each participant also gave informed consent to participate in the study. For the interviews and focus groups, they were advised to read and sign a consent form. This outlined the purpose of the project and the nature of the questions they would be asked. It also emphasised that their participation in the project and answers were voluntary, and that they could decline to answer any question or exit the interview at any time during the proceedings. These points were reiterated verbally to the participants, who were then asked to confirm that they understood their rights both orally and via written signature. Oral compliance was sought as a method to determine, via the subjective opinion of the researcher, whether the participants' involvement was genuinely voluntary (Varnhagen et al, 2005, p.38). Particular care was taken to ensure that this was the case for those interviewees who were aged 17. This was done by making it clear to them - using plain English - that they were not obliged to proceed with the interview if they did not wish to do so. It is notable that none of the young people chose not to participate at this stage, nor did any request to have their interviews or focus group terminated early.

For the survey questionnaire, informed consent was gathered electronically. This entailed the respondents reading an informed consent notice, and ticking a box to indicate that they understood the terms of their participation and that they agreed to take part. To make the notice as easily understandable as possible, it was presented using a Q&A format using simple language.

### **4.3.7.2 Anonymity and confidentiality**

To ensure the anonymity of the participants, the data gathered during the field work was stored on a password-protected computer at Edinburgh Napier University on an encrypted directory. A backup of the data was kept on an encrypted and portable hard drive, which was stored in a safe location away from the university premises. The qualitative data, when transcribed, was done so in a manner which would ensure that no individual participants could be identified.

For example, any references to names and places were either replaced with pseudonyms or removed. With regards to the quantitative data, IP addresses were removed from the database. In the data analysis stage, no cell in any table was reported if it contained less than five individuals. This was done to prevent identification through a unique variable combination.

### 4.3.8 Method limitations

The research reported in this thesis has a number of notable limitations. For example, the first stage of qualitative data collection cannot be considered exhaustive. Its main utility was to identify variables which could be tested with a larger sample, and not necessarily to provide a complete and detailed description of job search networking amongst young jobseekers, as is often the case with qualitative studies (Atieno, 2009, p.17). Indeed, the maximum variation sampling strategy was used to explore a range of networking experiences as relayed by young people with substantially different backgrounds. However, it is probable that many potential examples of networking that could have been incorporated into the survey design at the second research stage were not identified. Furthermore, only two females participated in the jobseeker interviews, meaning that the perspectives gained from the use of egocentric network methods were male-dominated. Therefore, it should be borne in mind that although this research helps to develop the concept of job search networking, there are many facets of the phenomena that are yet to be explored.

The egocentric network method used in the initial interviews with jobseekers had further limitations. An inherent problem with the name generator approach is the potential for imprecise participant recall of past behaviour (Robins, 2015, p.110-111). In this study, there was no credible way to validate the recalled actions of the participants, or to determine whether they had provided an exhaustive list of job search network contacts from whom they had acquired information. A related issue was the creation of representative network visuals (i.e. sociograms). Due to the complex nature of the contacts (i.e. people and organisations both offline and on social media) the sociograms were limited in scope, and in some instances visually reductive. For example, the participants using job forums or Facebook groups could not be expected to relay the number of contacts on these platforms from whom they had acquired job search information. As such, network

actors such as classmates (on cohort group pages) or job search forum users have been represented by singular nodes. The resultant (visual) underestimation of network size is notable from the sociograms presented in Chapter 5. This means that the networks of the participants must be seen as purely indicative, and not representative of their actual size.

Despite the above, it should be stated that although missing network data can severely bias studies of whole networks (Huisman, 2009), the egocentric networks studied here were completely unconnected. Therefore, whilst having limitations, potential missing data in these circumstances does not have the same negative impact on the overall integrity of the results. Indeed, in this research, the first stage of field work was used primarily as a technique to gather insights on networking as a phenomenon, as opposed to exploring individual networks in great depth. Additionally, it is contended that the use of such a mixed methods approach can “counterbalance the deficiency” of the data gathered in purely qualitative studies (Thurmond, 2001, p.253).

With regards to the survey questionnaire, the findings cannot be considered truly representative of 16-24 year old jobseekers in Scotland. As Table 4.4 indicates, there is a clear sample bias towards students, those with university-level qualifications, and females. This situation was largely created due to difficulties in gaining access to users of the careers service, and subsequent reliance on the Youth Site panel to gather responses. To this end, the vast majority of the panel’s users are educated to university-level. Therefore, the inferences made in the thesis discussion (Chapter 8) as to the meaning of the results must be considered with this in mind. In particular, those relating to young people with lower levels of education should be treated with caution due to the low number of responses from those who only have school or FE qualifications. Indeed, as shown above, only 13.3% of the sample (n=121) have non-university (or no) qualifications.

Another limitation of the survey analysis which is important to bear in mind, is that a small proportion of the statistically significant results are likely to be the product of chance. Indeed, given the substantial number of significant findings reported in Chapter 6, this will almost certainly apply to some of the results in this work.

#### 4.3.9 Conclusion

The methods outlined in this chapter made it possible to generate insights into networking and social media use during job search, amongst 16-24 year olds in Scotland. A three stage exploratory design was implemented to achieve this, using a mixed methods approach associated with pragmatism. At the first stage, qualitative data were gathered via participant interviews and a focus group with young jobseekers. The interviews incorporated egocentric network methods to investigate the nature of networking behaviours, and to identify the types of network contacts mobilised during this process. These findings were incorporated into the design of a survey questionnaire, used at the second stage of the data collection process. Such an iterative design ensured that the scales and indexes included within the questionnaire were based upon genuine examples of networking and social media use within the Scottish youth labour market context. At the third stage of data collection, a focus group with careers advisers was undertaken. The questions used in the focus group were informed by the data gathered during the first two stages of data collection. From this, it was possible to determine the practical contribution of the research findings, and the means by which they could be implemented into the provision of careers services. The research findings produced using the methods outlined in this chapter can be found in the following chapters 5, 6, and 7.

## **Chapter 5 Interview and focus group results**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The results of the first stage of field work - seven interviews and a focus group with jobseekers - are presented in this chapter. The purpose of these sessions was to develop an understanding of job search networking from the perspective of 16-24 year olds based in Scotland. This knowledge was used in the second stage of field work, by informing the design of a survey questionnaire which was distributed to a much larger sample of young jobseekers (see Chapter 6). The interviews and focus group were semi-structured, and their design and analysis was underpinned by Wilson's information needs and seeking model (see Chapter 3).

Specifically to gather data on job search networking, an egocentric network approach was applied during the interviews. The participants were asked to provide the names of people and organisations that had been sources of job search information, and probed for further details about these exchanges. Network visuals were then created, and used to map the contacts from whom the participants had gathered job search information. These visuals have been named 'job search information networks' (JSINs), and are displayed throughout this chapter alongside an analysis of the respective participant's job search activities.

During the focus group, a discussion was generated about some of the key topics addressed in the interviews. This helped to develop further insight into the networking behaviours of young jobseekers, by expanding upon themes which had already been mentioned by the interviewees, or identifying new ones. More detail on the focus group and interview design can be found in Chapter 4.

### **5.2 Interview results**

#### **5.2.1 Job search information types**

The results of the interviews showed that the participants had sourced a variety of information types from their JSINs during the job search process. These have



been coded to five key categories: (1) personal development; (2) industry and role related; (3) practical skills; (4) contacts and leads; and, (5) job opportunities. *Personal development* information related to the delineation of an overall job search goal. Ashley, for example, spoke about an exercise where she was assisted to “make a big mind map of past and present” by a support worker at an employability group, outlining her previous work experience and hobbies. This was used to help her create a narrative for her career progression, and to understand the type of jobs that she could potentially be seeking. *Industry and role related* information was research-based, and related to the undertakings of companies within specific industries, or specific role requirements of certain jobs. Information about *practical skills* related to tasks such as creating CVs or preparing for interviews. *Contact and leads* information were the names and details of other potential contacts who could assist the jobseekers. Finally, *job opportunities* related to the acquisition of information about specific job openings.

### 5.2.2 Network measures, contextual factors, and job search information networks

Displayed in Table 5.1 are some simple network measures related to each of the participants' JSINs, organised in descending order by number of contacts. The degree proportions show how many times the participants passively (in-degree) or actively (out-degree) acquired information from contacts. This indicates that, for example, Suzanne (100% out-degree) was a very active networker during job search, compared with Steve (0% out-degree). It also shows the proportion of formal or informal contacts within each JSIN, and the proportion of these contacts with whom there was a social media exchange of job search information. These figures indicate that social media had a significant bearing on the nature of job search networking, where used. For example, Ross and Michael both had high proportions of social media contacts, and correspondingly high numbers of contacts within their JSINs. Steve also had a high proportion of social media contacts, and it is notable that the removal of these connections would have rendered him the possession of a solitary contact. In addition, each of these participants (i.e. Ross, Michael, and Steve) had the highest proportion of informal contacts in their JSINs. For Ross and Michael, the presence of informal contacts

in their job search was bolstered by interactions with members of the public on online forums.

Table 5-1 Job search information network measures

Participant (length of search)	No. of contacts (n)	In-Degree (%)	Out-Degree (%)	Formal (%)	Informal (%)	Non-social media (%)	Social media (%)
Ross (3 months)	19	16%	89%	68%	37%	26%	79%
Michael (3 months)	14	50%	79%	57%	63%	71%	57%
Simon (6 months)	11	55%	82%	73%	27%	82%	27%
Ashley (7 months)	9	89%	44%	89%	11%	100%	0%
Suzanne (1 month)	9	0%	100%	78%	22%	89%	22%
Craig (2 months)	4	100%	25%	100%	0%	100%	0%
Steve (3 months)	4	100%	0%	50%	50%	25%	75%

As shown in Table 5.1, the In/Out-Degree, Formal/Informal, and Non-social/Social media columns do not always add up to 100%. This is because, in some cases, the JSIN contacts (represented by nodes: see Table 5.2) are a combination of both concepts. For example, some contacts provided the participants with unsolicited job search information (in-degree), but on other occasions the same contacts were actively mobilised for information by the participants (out-degree). Therefore, it is possible that – in a case such as Craig’s where the jobseeker has four JSIN contacts - 100% of the contacts are in-degree,

whilst 25% are out-degree, if at least one contact is simultaneously in-degree and out-degree. For formal/informal contacts, this overlap only occurs for social media contacts. For example, internet forums (represented by a singular node) can contain both members of the public (informal) or organisational representatives (formal). The overlap of social media and non-social media occurs when contacts have provided participants with information via social media channels, but also separately in non-social media environments.

The context of each of the interview participants’ job searches are presented in the following sections, alongside their respective JSIN diagrams. The JSINs are then used as bases to analyse the networking behaviours of the young jobseekers. Given the multilevel nature of the networks, the different characteristics of the JSINs have been denoted using various symbols. These are shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5-2 JSIN symbols and what they represent

Node design	Node shape	Tie direction
<p><b>Grey:</b> (non-social media information exchange)</p> <p><b>White:</b> social media information exchange</p> <p><b>White with cross:</b> (social media and non-social media information exchange)</p>	<p><b>Upwards triangle:</b> participant/jobseeker</p> <p><b>Circle:</b> informal contact</p> <p><b>Square:</b> formal contact</p> <p><b>Downwards triangle:</b> informal and formal contact</p>	<p><b>Out-degree:</b> jobseeker has mobilised contact for information</p> <p><b>In-degree:</b> contact has mobilised on behalf of the jobseeker</p> <p><b>Out/in-degree:</b> jobseeker has mobilised contact for information, and the contact has mobilised on the jobseekers behalf with information, separately</p>

### 5.2.3 Ashley

#### 5.2.3.1 Ashley in context

Ashley’s job search was undertaken whilst on an ‘activity agreement’ in early 2016 i.e. she was receiving support to help her prepare for education, training, or employment (Scottish Government, 2017b). She lived estranged from her family in a youth hostel at the time of interview, and had been actively seeking work for

around seven months. The majority of her job searching took place two days a week at an employability group run by a third sector organisation, where she could gain access to the internet. From an intrapersonal perspective, Ashley was clearly motivated to find employment. Her overall job search goal was to find a full-time job in an administrative role, and she spoke of her desire to have some routine and purpose in life. However, her situation had meant she also had pressing financial constraints. She said, “I actually live in a hostel so I have to pay for everything myself. I need more money”.

**5.2.3.2 Ashley’s job search information network**

As shown in Figure 5, Ashley had a high proportion of network ties which were in-degree (89%) and formal (89%). Many of these contacts were interconnected, illustrating a period whereby organisations and formal individuals had acted on Ashley’s behalf to assist her into employment. This process of formal networking led Ashley to the employability group she attended twice a week as part of her activity agreement. The leader of the group (‘Support worker’) had been influential in her job search, and had helped Ashley secure an interview with a local community centre manager for an administration internship. Ashley noted the

**Figure 5 Ashley’s job search information network**



help she had received. She explained: “It was other people around me helping. I didn’t find out about it”.

Ashley’s JSIN also shows that she acquired information from one informal contact during her job search (‘Boyfriend’). This can be partly attributed to her social context, having become estranged from immediate family members. Notably, there are no social media exchanges represented in her JSIN. She explained that this was due to her limited access to the Internet: “I don’t get the Internet unless I’m here (the employability group). So I don’t get to go on anything. But I used to like social media”. She also described not being able to afford a phone with an Internet connection: “I just got one for Christmas but I have to be connected to Wi-Fi. I don’t have Wi-Fi at the hostel”.

Despite contacts mobilising on her behalf, Ashley also took the initiative to network during job search. For example, she created a contact with ‘Apprentice agency worker’, who agreed to assist her with an application for an administration apprenticeship:

“I was in touch with a lady from [organisation’s name removed] to ask about jobs. She’s on holiday just now, but she emailed me and said just to get in touch after it was finished, just directly to her”.

She had also approached her hostel ‘Key worker’ to ask for help wording emails, and for general advice on job applications. A full typology of contacts and information contained within Ashley’s JSIN is presented in Table 5.3. It is notable that her support worker was a particularly influential contact, having supplied her with information which related to each information type.

Table 5-3 Analysis of Ashley’s JSIN

Nature of contact	Contact type	Type of information provided (by no. of contacts)
Formal Individual	<p><b><u>Industry and business representatives:</u></b> Community centre manager, Apprentice agency worker</p> <p><b><u>Support workers and careers advisers:</u></b> Support worker, Key worker, Careers adviser</p> <p><b><u>Teachers and tutors:</u></b> Guidance teacher</p> <p><b><u>Other formal individuals:</u></b> GP</p>	Personal development (2) Industry/role-related (2) Practical skills (2) Contacts/leads (4) Job opportunities (3)
Formal organisation	<p><b><u>Public bodies and charities:</u></b> Hostel staff</p>	Personal development (1) Practical skills (1)
Informal	<p><b><u>Friends and classmates:</u></b> Boyfriend</p>	Personal development (1) Practical skills (1)

## 5.2.4 Craig

### 5.2.4.1 Craig in context

Craig was also on an activity agreement, and at the time of interview had been actively looking for work for two months whilst living at home with his mother. His job search goal was ill-defined. He stated that he would take “anything, really”, whether part-time or full-time. His key motivator was to earn some extra money. However, he noted that this need was not pressing, citing a modest inheritance and job-seeker’s allowance which gave him “enough to get on with”.

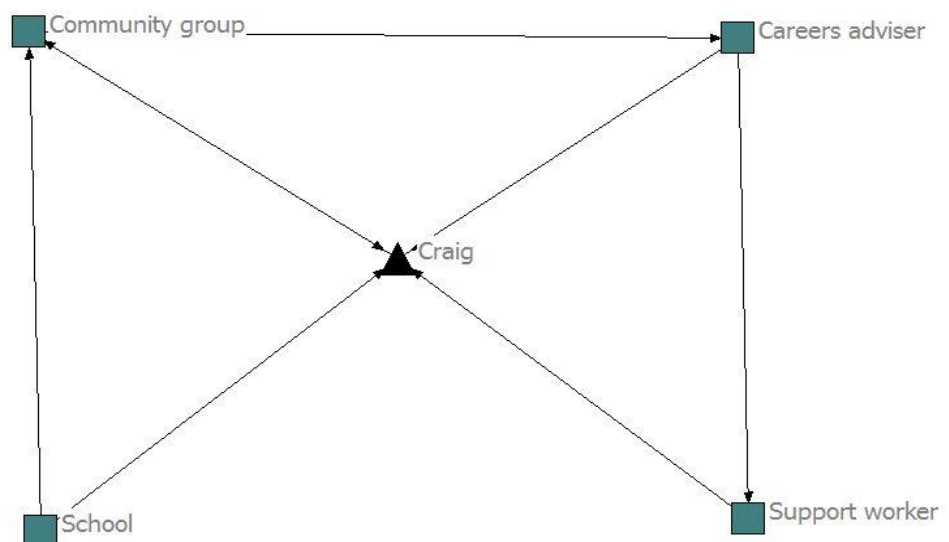
### 5.2.4.2 Craig’s job search information network

Craig’s lack of direction seemed to be reflected in his JSIN (Figure 6), which contained only four formal contacts. Similarly to Ashley, these contacts were also interconnected, indicating a sequence whereby organisations had mobilised on his behalf to precipitate a period of networking:

“(After school) I went to a place called [‘Community group’]. Once I told them that I was wanting a job they got me in touch with a Skills Development Scotland worker, and she came and talked to me a few times, and then we got in touch with [‘Support worker’]”.

Craig conducted all of his job searching twice a week at the employability group run by his support worker. When asked if any of his family or friends had given him advice or information he said “Not really, no. Because I’ve not really been doing it for that long, I’ve not let everybody know what I’ve been doing”. His lack of active job search networking is reflected by a solitary out-degree tie in his JSIN.

Figure 6 Craig’s job search information network



When asked if he had ever seen job search related information whilst using social media he said “I don’t really pay attention to that stuff”. Despite being active on Facebook and Twitter, he described only having access to the internet on a desktop computer at home. A full typology of contacts and information contained within Craig’s JSIN is presented in Table 5.4.

Table 5-4 Analysis of Craig’s JSIN

Nature of contact	Contact type	Type of information provided (by no. of contacts)
Formal Individual	<b><u>Support workers and careers advisers:</u></b> Support worker, Careers adviser	Personal development (2) Practical skills (1) Contacts/leads (1) Job opportunities (1)
Formal organisation	<b><u>Public bodies and charities:</u></b> Community group, School	Personal development (1) Contacts/leads (2)

## 5.2.5 Michael

### 5.2.5.1 Michael in context

Michael had previously been employed as an apprentice in the construction industry. However, he had to leave this job due a health condition that was exacerbated by working conditions associated with the role. Living with his mother, he was unemployed at the time of interview, and had been actively seeking a job for around three months. His main job search goal was to find employment as an apprentice mechanic. However, he explained: “If that wasn’t possible then I would easily settle for something in the construction side”. He also articulated a number of job search motivations:

“I don’t like sitting around doing nothing. I really just want to be out working. Plus it’s great just to have your own income. I feel bad in a sense as well, being there and having to rely on my mum. Also, another thing. I just got a car, so I really need money just to start lessons”.

### 5.2.5.2 Michael’s job search information network

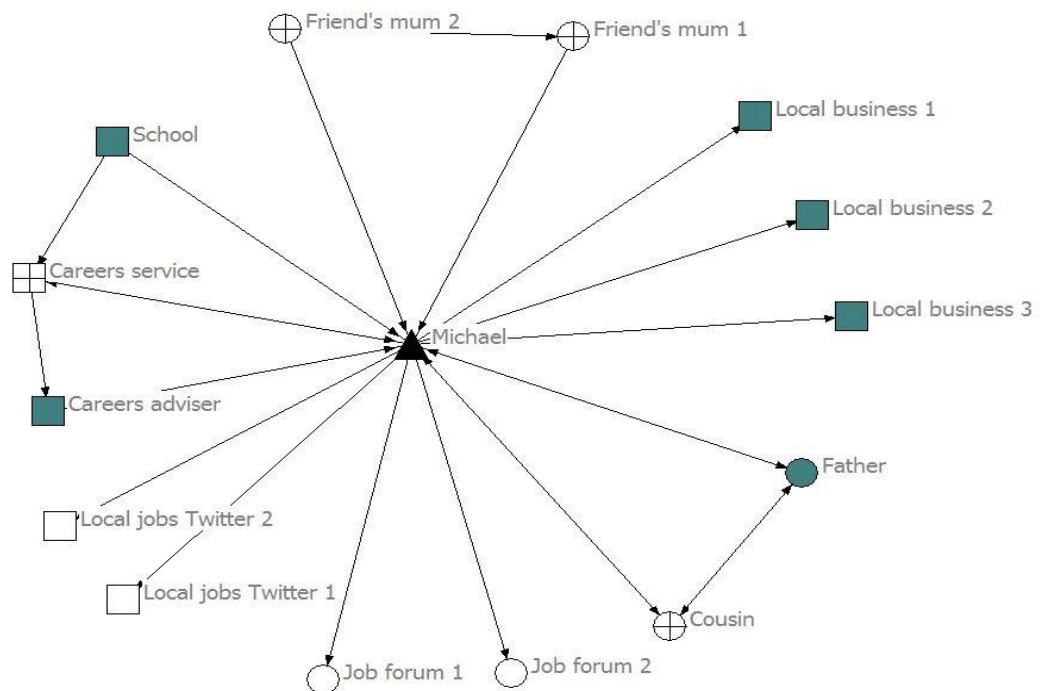
Michael’s determination is reflected in the diversity of his JSIN (see Figure 7) and high proportion of out-degree contacts (73%). His careers adviser was a prominent contact, and he met with her every two weeks for in-depth careers information. She also suggested that he follow the careers service local Facebook



page, and use other social media pages to find job search information. Heeding the advice, he followed two Twitter accounts that posted local job openings (i.e. 'Local jobs Twitter 1/2') and joined job search forums. He stated that he found "most of the jobs" that he had applied for on the careers service's Facebook page, and indicated that searching on social media dovetailed with his use of digital platforms for socialising:

"They tend to intertwine in that sense. I mean if I'm on speaking to friends, as you do for that sort of social media, there's nothing stopping me spending 5, 10 minutes just looking at these sites you know. I just use them for both. Mainly just to keep in contact with friends, obviously".

Figure 7 Michael's job search information network



'Friend's mum 1' and 'Friend's mum 2' told Michael about job openings when he saw them in person. They also sent him messages with job advertisements via the Facebook messenger function. In addition, he also visited various local

businesses to ask directly about jobs. He indicated that this was a useful approach in his local labour market:

“I don’t know as far as other places go. But around here, I’ve noticed a lot that you can’t always rely on ads and social media, because a lot of local firms especially on the mechanical side, they won’t put out an ad. They just put out a little bit of a word”.

A full typology of contacts and information contained within Michael’s JSIN is presented in Table 5.5.

Table 5-5 Analysis of Michael’s JSIN

Nature of contact	Contact type	Type of information provided (by no. of contacts)
Formal Individual	<p><b><u>Support workers and careers advisers:</u></b> Careers adviser</p>	<p>Personal development (1)                      Industry/role-related (1)                      Practical skills (1)                      Contacts/leads (1)                      Job opportunities (1)</p>
Formal organisation	<p><b><u>Public bodies and charities:</u></b>                      Careers service, School</p> <p><b><u>Private bodies and quangos:</u></b>                      Local jobs Twitter 1, Local jobs Twitter 2</p> <p><b><u>Industry and company:</u></b> Local business 1, Local business 2, Local business 3</p>	<p>Personal development (1)                      Contacts/leads (2)                      Job opportunities (6)</p>
Informal	<p><b><u>Family:</u></b> Dad, cousin</p> <p><b><u>Friends and classmates:</u></b>                      Cousin</p> <p><b><u>Other informal:</u></b> Friends mum 1, Friends mum 2, Job search forum 1, Job search forum 2</p>	<p>Industry/role related (2)                      Practical skills (4)                      Job opportunities (4)</p>

## 5.2.6 Ross

### 5.2.6.1 *Ross in context*

Ross was a student at a FE college at the time of interview, and had been engaged in job search activities for around three months whilst living at home with his parents. Hoping to attend university the following year, his job search efforts were aimed at a short-term contract for the summer months. To this end, his goals were multi-level.

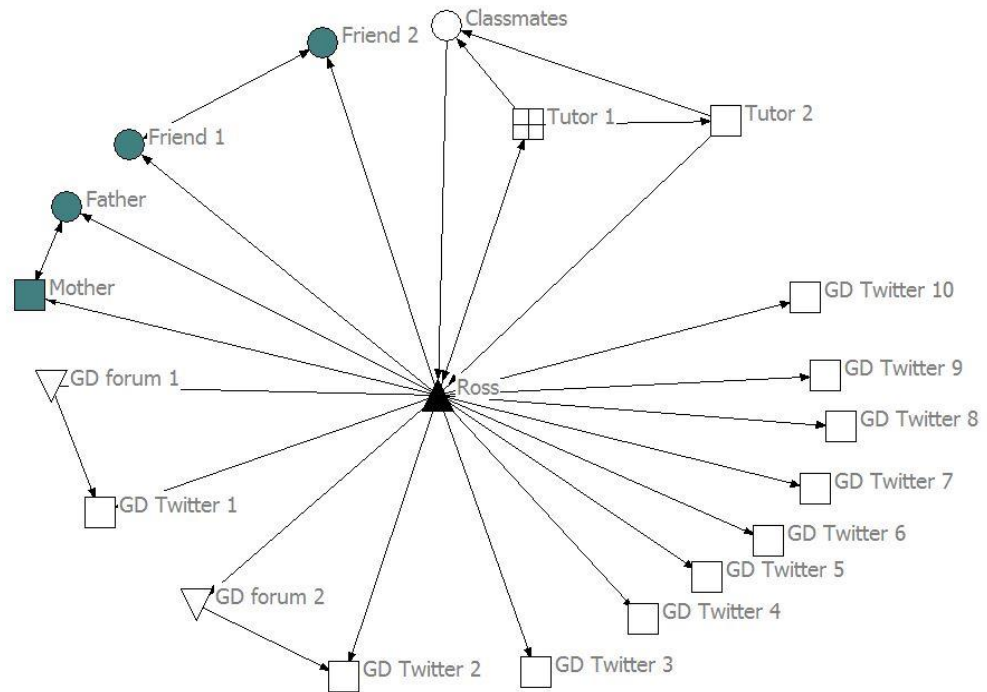
“There’s been two types of jobs I’ve been looking at. I’ve been looking at jobs specific to what I want to do in the future, like after uni. So that would be like junior games designers and all that. And then there’s been just like the jobs that I need to make money out of or whatever. You know, any old type of job, basically”.

Ross’s motivations for finding an internship with a games designer was strategic. He explained this by saying “If you don’t have experience you will struggle to get a job in the software industry.” However, he also needed to save money in case he got offered a place at university, which gave him the impetus to seek a backup option.

### 5.2.6.2 *Ross’s job search information network*

Ross had nineteen contacts in his JSIN (Figure 8). As evidenced by the proportion of out-degree contacts (89%), he was a very active networker during job search. His conscientious attitude was also apparent in the organised nature of his search for an internship. He said, “I’m mainly researching jobs in the industry I want to go into. So that’s looking at Twitter, and that. You know, specific games Twitter accounts”. As shown in Table 5.7, he accrued a wealth of job search information from these sites (i.e. ‘GD Twitter 1-10’). Two of them were also linked to discussion forums where company figureheads would “post videos and that saying ‘this is what we’re looking for in certain people [job applicants]’”. Other members of the public would also use the forums, and he said, “If I have a specific question [about job search] I’ll just shoot it out there”.

Figure 8 Ross's job search information network



Ross sourced job information from the Facebook group page run by his college tutors, one of whom he spoke to in the classroom environment for advice about finding a job in the industry. Additionally, he approached family contacts by “pulling them to the side” for help with applications, and asked two friends who worked with a large local employer about potential casual work. A full typology of contacts and information contained within Ross’s JSIN is presented in Table 5.6.

Table 5-6 Analysis of Ross’s JSIN

Network	Contact type	Type of information provided (by no. of contacts)
Formal Individual	<p><b><u>Teachers and tutors:</u></b> Tutor1, Tutor, 2</p> <p><b><u>Industry and business representatives:</u></b> GD forum 1, GDforum 2</p>	<p>Industry/role-related (4)</p> <p>Practical skills (3)</p> <p>Job opportunities (4)</p>
Formal organisation	<p><b><u>Industry and company:</u></b> GD Twitter 1, GD Twitter 2, GD Twitter 3, GD Twitter 4, GD Twitter 5, GD Twitter 6, GD Twitter 7, GD Twitter 8, GD Twitter 9, GD Twitter 10</p>	<p>Industry/role-related (10)</p> <p>Practical skills (2)</p> <p>Contacts/leads (10)</p> <p>Job opportunities (10)</p>
Informal	<p><b><u>Family:</u></b> Father, Mother</p> <p><b><u>Friends, and classmates:</u></b> Friend 1, Friend 2, Classmates</p> <p><b><u>Other informal:</u></b> Games forum 1, Games forum 2</p>	<p>Industry/role-related (3)</p> <p>Practical skills (2)</p> <p>Job opportunities (2)</p>

## 5.2.7 Steve

### 5.2.7.1 Steve in context

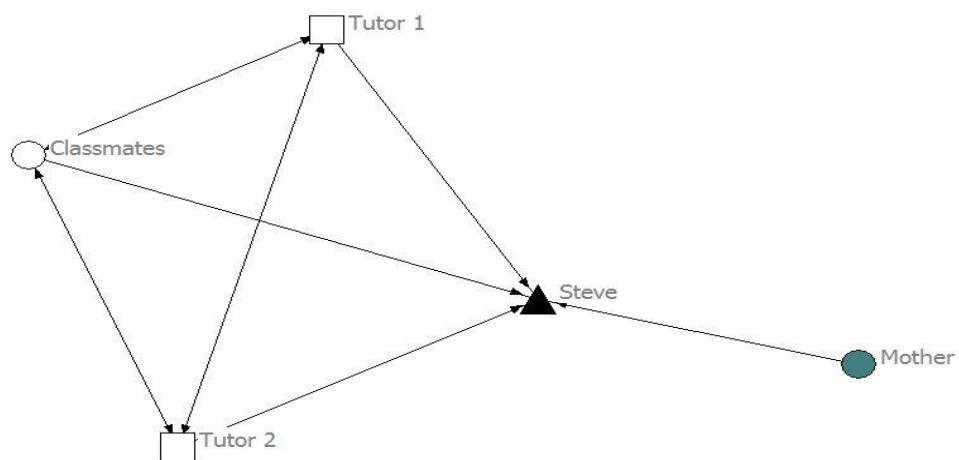
Steve was in the same college class as Ross. He lived at home with his mother, and had been searching for work for three months, albeit “not every day”. He had no clear job goal in mind, and intimated that he would “probably just do anything”. His motivation to work was simply to make some money during the summer. He elaborated:

“I’m pretty good for money right now. I mean I get money from student loans. But that’s not ideal, because it’s not your money, you’ve got to pay it back. So it would be ideal to make my own money. That’s more secure”.

5.2.7.2 Steve’s job search information network

As shown in Figure 9, Steve’s JSIN is small, displaying only four contacts, with no out-degree contacts. Notably, three of these are social media contacts, representing his college class Facebook page, where “our tutors usually put up some job listings if there are any in our area or anything to do with our industry”.

Figure 9 Steve’s job search information network



Steve’s mother was also prominent in his JSIN. He said, “My mum looked at some jobs for me, and she sometimes points me in certain directions on job. I think she uses a job search engine”. A full typology of contacts and information contained within Steve’s JSIN is presented in Table 5.7.

Table 5-7 Analysis of Steve’s JSIN

Nature of contact	Contact type	Type of information provided (by no. of contacts)
Formal Individual	<b>Teachers and tutors:</b> Tutor 1, Tutor 2	Industry/role-related (2) Job opportunities (2)
Informal	<b>Family:</b> Mother <b>Friends and classmates:</b> Classmates	Industry/role-related (1) Practical skills (1) Job opportunities (1)

## 5.2.8 Simon

### 5.2.8.1 Simon in context

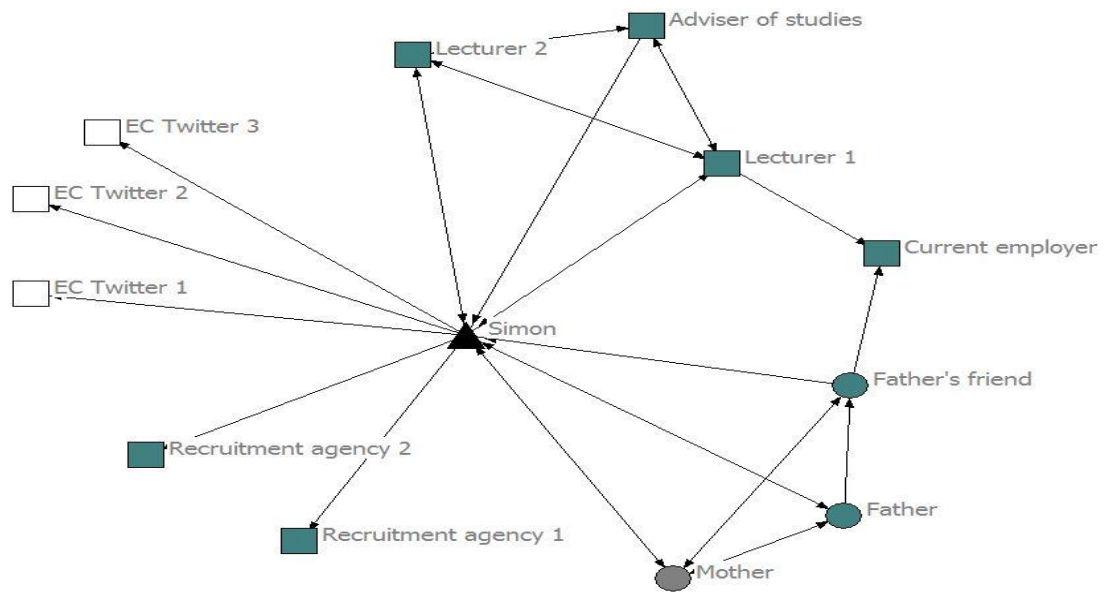
Simon had recently gained employment as an electronic engineer, having completed an MSc in a related discipline. His job search lasted six months, during which time he lived at home with his parents. He stated that his main motivation for finding work was a desire to leave his casual, part-time occupation:

“There was a few people older than me who I’d seen graduate and continue to work in these kinds of places, so I was just like, I don’t want to do that. I mean I wanted a job in the field obviously, but that was probably the biggest driver for me”.

### 5.2.8.2 Simon’s job search information network

Simon’s JSIN shows eleven contacts, a high proportion of which are out-degree contacts (82%). As shown in Figure 10, Simon had acquired job search information from two distinct groups of contacts. One was a formal group that included lecturers from his university course. He explained how he “managed to get in” with the lecturers by volunteering to work with them on summer placements in the department. When he applied for the company where he became employed, his lecturer, who knew the manager (i.e. Current employer), “put in a word” for him.

Figure 10 Simon’s job search information network



The informal group of contacts in Simon’s JSIN includes his ‘Dad’s friend’, who worked for an industry body in his target sector. In addition to providing him with useful industry information, this contact had also “definitely spoken to the manager” about his successful job application. It is notable that Simon also had three social media contacts, all of which were companies in his targeted industry. In relation to job search, he said of social media:

“I did use it for researching companies and stuff like that, if I had an interview. Obviously you can go on the company’s website, but I’ve found social media is quite a good way to see, especially engineering companies, to see what their latest projects and stuff are”.

A full typology of contacts and information contained within Simon’s JSIN is presented in Table 5.8.



Table 5-8 Analysis of Simon’s JSIN

Nature of contact	Contact type	Type of information provided (by no. of contacts)
Formal Individual	<b><u>Teachers and tutors:</u></b> Lecturer 1, Lecturer 2, Adviser of studies	Industry/role-related (2) Practical skills (1) Contacts/leads (2) Job opportunities (2)
Formal organisation	<b><u>Private bodies and quangos:</u></b> Recruitment agency 1, Recruitment agency 2  <b><u>Industry and company:</u></b> EC Twitter 1, EC Twitter 2, EC Twitter 3	Industry/role-related (3) Contacts/leads (3) Job opportunities (2)
Informal	<b><u>Family:</u></b> Dad, Mum  <b><u>Other informal:</u></b> Dad's friend	Industry/role related (1) Practical skills (3) Contacts/leads (1) Job opportunities (1)

## 5.2.9 Suzanne

### 5.2.9.1 Suzanne in context

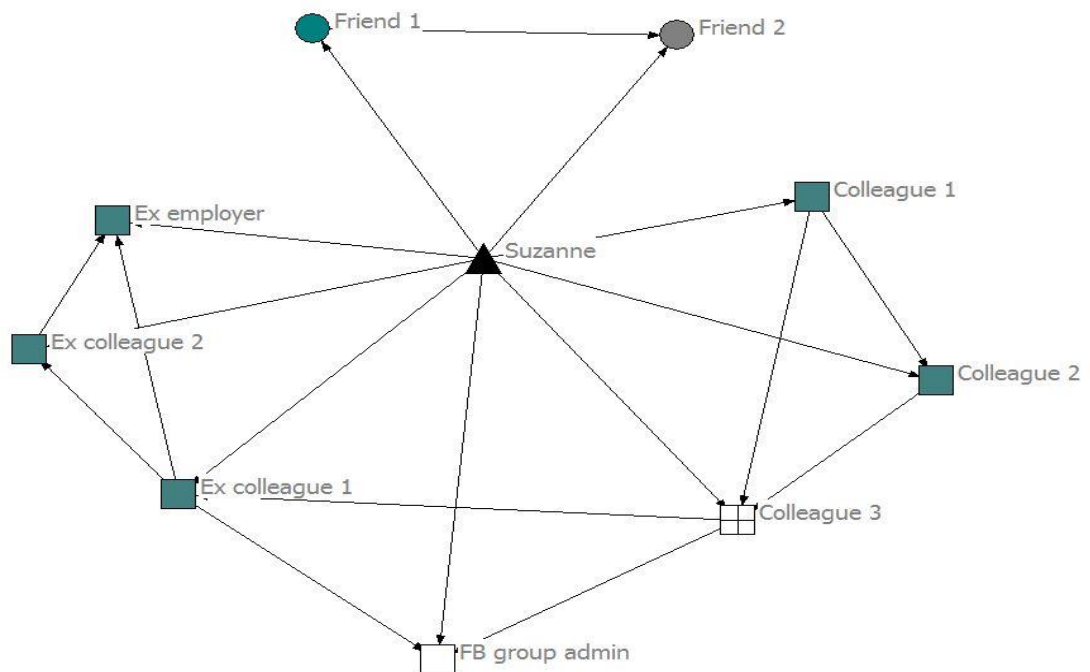
At the time of interview Suzanne was employed on a short-term contract as a researcher in the media industry. She had been job searching for around one month, during which time she found her latest job, and had continued to look for a new contract within the same field. She was motivated to find similar work because she was qualified as a researcher and found work in the media industry to be intellectually stimulating. She compared it favourably with work in previous part-time and casual roles: “I don’t think I could ever do that again, knowing that I’ve done it for so long. The job I’m doing just now researching films is great because you get to get lost in a different world”.

5.2.9.2 Suzanne’s job search information network

Suzanne’s JSIN shows nine contacts (see Figure 11). All are out-degree, thus indicating active networking. Figure 11 illustrates how the contacts in her previous job (e.g. ‘Ex colleague 1’) were connected to her newest colleagues (e.g. ‘Colleague 3’), via a social media contact called ‘FB group admin’, who operates a Facebook group page for people employed within the media industry in Scotland. Suzanne described how she came to be aware of this page, by speaking to one of her ex colleagues:

“I was the one who talked to her about looking for work. And, I was telling her my whole history. Basically, careers in the media. And one thing I think it is quite useful to do (...) is having this conversation about me looking for work, and telling them what other people have done to help me, and who else I’ve spoken to. And that prompts them to also help you”.

Figure 11 Suzanne’s job search information network



The colleague told Suzanne about the Facebook group, and began sending her text messages with screenshots of job vacancies from the group page. Suzanne then decided to set up a Facebook account to access these postings directly. This is where she found out about the new job. Suzanne gave many examples of approaching colleagues and contacting friends to ask for application assistance, CV advice, and about possible job opportunities. A full typology of contacts and information contained within Suzanne’s JSIN is presented in Table 5.9.

Table 5-9 Analysis of Suzanne’s JSIN

Nature of contact	Contact type	Type of information provided (by no. of contacts)
Formal Individual	<p><b>Work contacts:</b> Colleague 1, Colleague 2, Colleague 3, Ex colleague 1, Ex colleague 2</p> <p><b>Industry and company representatives:</b> FB group admin</p>	<p>Practical skills (2)</p> <p>Contacts/leads (2)</p> <p>Job opportunities (5)</p>
Formal organisation	<p><b>Industry and company:</b> Ex employer</p>	<p>Job opportunities (1)</p>
Informal	<p><b>Friends, and classmates:</b> Friend 1, friend 2</p>	<p>Practical skills (2)</p>

### 5.2.10 Intervening variables

As shown in Wilson’s (1981) model, information behaviour can be moderated by intervening variables. These either enable or act as barriers to information seeking. Three main types of intervening variables related to job search networking were identified in the interviews. An analysis of these are outlined below as (1) situational, (2) social, (3) intrapersonal, and (4) platform specific factors.

### 5.2.10.1 *Situational factors*

The situation of the interview participants directed much of their job search networking behaviours. This suggests that the proximity of network contacts is a key enabler of information seeking. Indeed, the unemployed respondents who had left school without a positive destination (i.e. employment, education, or training) networked with public and charity organisations. Meanwhile the students networked with lecturers and classmates, and the one participant who was in employment networked with co-workers. It has been shown above that family members are often present in the JSINs, particularly the parents of jobseekers.

The ascribed nature of situational contacts can have an impact on the quality and/or diversity of information acquired through networking. This is closely linked with social factors, and specific examples are presented in subsequent sections of this chapter. However, situational factors could also be a direct barrier to job search networking. The extreme case of Ashley, for example, reveals that she suffered from a limited availability of strong contacts, having lost touch with her family. Living in a hostel also meant that she had limited access to the Internet. This prevented her from using social media on a regular basis and developing her online network. Craig also had limited access, with no Internet access on his phone.

### 5.2.10.2 *Social factors*

Social factors, particularly the resourcefulness of contacts, are also shown to enable job search networking in this study. For example, Simon noted how “in terms of searching, the [university] department has pretty good industry links”. He explained the benefit of this when applying for jobs in the industry (“I would mention to a lecturer...and then you’d sort of get put in touch with those people”). Ashley and Michael were also keen to expound the usefulness of their support workers and careers advisers in providing in-depth information and support relating to job search, and the approachability of such network contacts. The presence of friends on social media platforms is also an indirect enabler of job search networking online. For example, both Ross and Michael stated that they used these platforms mainly to interact with friends, yet would consume job search information at the same time. This might be achieved passively or through active searching.

In some instances the resourcefulness of contacts is also a barrier to job search networking. For example, Simon said that he stopped visiting his director of studies at university, describing him as “useless” at giving job search advice. Similarly Suzanne claimed that her parents would not be able to help her because they had no industry knowledge. She explained: “They were teachers, so it’s not like they would know”.

### 5.2.10.3 *Intrapersonal factors*

Having an awareness of networking benefits is evident in this study as an enabler of job search networking behaviours. For example, Suzanne stated that the only way to find a job in her industry was by knowing who to ask, and Michael demonstrated an awareness of networking benefits within his local labour market when he said “a lot of local firms, especially on the mechanical side, they won’t put out an ad”, and explained that he found it better just “going up and asking”. Both of these participants also indicated that their use of social media platforms during job search was simply due to their awareness that it could be used for that purpose. Michael said “believe it or not I never really thought about it till they [SDS] mentioned it to us...So yeah, it was because of them that I started looking there”. Suzanne said:

“I don’t really do Facebook. I don’t really do social media. I only got Facebook to get [access to a group]. It’s not something I’ve done because I never knew about it. I never knew about the Facebook thing because I never had a Facebook”.

It is notable that in the cases of both Suzanne and Michael, awareness led to use. This, in turn, led to a positive attitude towards social media as a networking platform. Although Suzanne articulated her general ambivalence towards social media, she conceded “This way is the future of getting jobs because it is people genuinely looking for people other than the council having to legally post a job”. In contrast, Steve had no awareness of how he could potentially use Twitter to network with companies in his industry, and was dismissive of the platform, saying “Nah, nah, nah, nah. I’m not that bothered about Twitter”.

Comfort in approaching contacts and willingness to open a job search dialogue are also seen to be enablers and barriers to job search networking here. Michael,

for example, stated that speaking to people was “no problem at all”, and that it “happens quite frequently in my day-to-day life”. Indeed, speaking about it to his friends’ parents led to their sending him job postings on social media. Craig and Steve were more ambivalent: Craig said “it depends who it is” and Steve noted “I wouldn’t actively ask people”. Simon was of a similar opinion. Of asking people for help he explained:

“I don’t know to be honest. I’m quite a quiet guy. I’m probably not the most outgoing of people. I would probably force myself to, I guess. I would certainly try to open a dialogue with somebody, if I knew they were in a position help. I would definitely try and speak to them about it”.

### 5.2.10.4 *Platform-specific factors*

The participants provided some examples of what could be considered platform-specific enablers and barriers to networking. Ross cited the continual stream of content he would see on his social media news feeds, and how it facilitated ongoing information acquisition during job search. He said: “It just happens automatically. If you go on Twitter or Facebook, you see a post that might interest you”. This example shows how, by following company Twitter accounts, or being in Facebook cohort groups, it is possible to passively consume information. Steve also noted how he would see job openings being posted on his college Facebook page: “There’s been a few times I’ve been scrolling past and there’s like a QA tester, like a QA tester job thing advertised. That’s usually like the basic entry level jobs for games design”.

Another enabler of job search networking on social media is the messenger facility on Facebook. As noted previously, Michael’s friend’s parents had sent him local job adverts they had seen on Facebook. This is an example of an efficient and inexpensive means of disseminating job search information. There is also some indication that social media were viewed as preferable communication tools to more traditional methods. Steve said he would rather communicate with someone online about a job, particularly at the first point of contact: “I’m used to talking to people online normally, so talking to somebody on Facebook about a job would be fine”.

However, social media does not always make the acquisition of information simple or efficient. For example, Suzanne could not initially gain access to the Facebook group that was used by employers in her industry, and had to rely on her colleague to message the page on her behalf: “They have a closed group, so you have to be a member. Not only of Facebook, but you have to be in that group, so you have to be accepted by one of the admins of that group”.

Additionally, an awareness of how to use the functions on Facebook for job search is also required. Suzanne and Ross both stated that finding useful job information on Twitter was only possible by following the right accounts, whilst Michael spoke about the use of hashtags and their efficacy at pooling relevant information via built-in search engines.

### **5.3 Focus group results**

The results from the focus group with six young jobseekers are presented in the following sections. Details of the sample can be found in Chapter 4. As in Wilson’s information needs and seeking model (see Chapter 3), these also focus on (1) the context of job search, (2) information seeking behaviours (i.e. job search networking), and (3) intervening variables. As mentioned previously, the focus group was intended to expand upon the themes identified in the jobseeker interviews, and to generate further insights into job search networking that may have been missed.

#### **5.3.1 Context of job search**

A number of contextual factors emerged from the discussion, which are crucial to understanding the subsequent networking behaviours of the participants. Similarly to the intervening variables which were identified in the interviews, the analysis of these is outlined below as (1) situational, (2) social, and (3) intrapersonal.

##### **5.3.1.1 Situational context**

There is a significant degree of homogeneity in the sample. This was reflected in the situational context of the participants at the time of the focus group. For example, they were all aged between 22 and 24, and had attained - or were close to attaining – specific qualifications or experience relating to their respective job

fields. Indeed, five of the participants were educated to university level. As such, they each were seeking roles which could be considered ‘career options’, as opposed to casual work. Each of the participants also lived at home with their parents whilst searching for jobs.

Despite these commonalities, the situation of the jobseekers also differed in a variety of ways. For example, they sought jobs in industries with a variety of recruitment processes. Callum was a pre-registration pharmacist who was undertaking a training year following graduation. He explained how he, along with his graduate cohorts, was engaged in a clearly delineated formal recruitment process, with a specific timeframe for completion and list of employers:

“I’m part of the process just now. I think I’ve got an interview on Monday. The interview I’ve got is internal with the company I’m working with just now – but I’m applying to other companies as well”.

Mhairi had a similar experience whilst applying for jobs in the nursing profession. However, Scott and Angela were searching within less structured and non-institutional parameters, albeit for graduate jobs with formal recruitment processes. Meanwhile, in complete contrast, David was a tradesman who engaged in a very casual and open-ended job search:

“I’ve never had a CV. I’ve looked for jobs and no one’s ever asked for a CV. They just ask: ‘How long have you been working there? How long have you worked for the previous company you worked for?’ And they’ll phone them and ask”.

Another situational factor was the length of time the participants had been job searching. Scott indicated that he had been searching for a job for several months, and that he initially only allocated one or two days per week to job search. However, as time progressed he noticed that he would miss relevant vacancies. As such, he decided to increase the frequency of his searches. Stephanie also changed her approach after “a long, long, long job search”. In her case it was the focus of the search which changed:

“When I completed my Psychology degree for a while I was just applying for graduate jobs, but when I had no luck with that I was just applying to everything and anything. I broadened it out, because psychology’s a



degree where you can apply it to a lot of stuff, I was not necessarily looking for things inside psychology...I found it quite hard searching with a psychology degree, because it's so broad".

**5.3.1.2 Social context**

The resourcefulness of network contacts, both ascribed and non-ascribed, was raised in the discussion. As noted above, all participants lived at home with their parents at the time of the job search. The financial resources and general goodwill of their families was noted by Angela, who said, "I think at the age we're at, we're still quite fortunate to live with our mums and dads". Callum agreed, and noted the implications this had on the nature of his and the others participants' job searches:

"That means you've got a choice. If you had to get a job to live you would just take whatever you could get. We have a bit of a choice. So we can hold off a bit and find something you actually want. Something you're interested in".

The social context of the participants was also spoken about in relation to job search networking and intervening variables. Specific examples of this are outlined in the sections below.

**5.3.1.3 Intrapersonal context**

Most of the focus group participants were striving towards a clear job search goal, from which they had no plans to deviate. However, as indicated above, Stephanie began to "get quite stressed and worried and would apply to everything" as the length of her job search increased. Also, at the outset of job search, Mhairi had been seeking casual work to earn some extra income. This was in addition to her search for nursing jobs. As time passed she gradually narrowed her search:

"It was maybe once a week and it was a huge effort to me. I just couldn't be bothered filling in all of the application forms, and writing cover letters...I didn't really need a job then and it wasn't that important to me".

These examples reinforce the potentially multilevel nature of job search. They also show how the subjective notion of job search goal can change over time, and that this can be influenced by psychological factors relating to the stress, or

perceived need, of finding employment. In turn, these intrapersonal factors appear to be linked closely to situational context. For example, it is notable that Stephanie was unemployed for much of her job search. However, Mhairi was still a full-time student. This is likely to have impacted their respective motivation levels.

The participants also spoke about the amount of effort they put into job search. Scott emphasised his effort levels and perseverance, stating that he had applied for over forty jobs in the space of a few months. He said, “I’ve been to a lot of job fairs, got a lot of knock-backs, got phone interviews and that coming up”. Callum and Stephanie intimated that they also expended a lot of effort on job search. However, David claimed only to job search when he was fed up with his current position. With regards to the casual jobs she had been seeking initially, Mhairi said: “I wasn’t really like that. I was quite lazy with it. Very complacent. I’m generally quite like that in life anyway. I’m not very good at focusing on things”.

### 5.3.2 Job search networking

When discussing how they engaged with people during job search, some of the participants recalled times when family members had given them information. Mhairi had been a passive recipient of job search information from her mother when she was seeking part-time work, who had helped her prepare a CV:

“My mum put it together for me. Her type of job’s in an office, and she recruits people like me. So she basically typed up something for me that she would be looking for, and I just memorised it to be totally honest”.

Her mother had also provided her with contacts within a Glasgow-based recruitment agency. She indicated that this was a lucky break, because the agency were “a nightmare” at responding to other people, and because of her mother’s influence, she “was able to get on so easily with them”.

Scott highlighted the help he had received from his brother, who “used to help me a lot with CVs (...) and how to act in interviews”. Although his brother worked in a different industry, he had been promoted several times by applying for a number of different roles throughout his career. Stephanie had received similar

help from her cousin, who worked as a support worker for young people who faced barriers to the labour market:

“I went up to her one night when I was applying for this job, like ‘what you should be including and how you should be wording things’...she basically helps young people (...) with their CVs and their skills, and helps them to go on courses”.

Examples of networking with careers advisers, lecturers, and other professionals were also proffered by the participants. Scott had attended a careers workshop which had been hosted by his university department, where he was given additional advice by a careers adviser about his CV. Stephanie had also visited a university careers adviser, who had informed her about lesser known job search engines and potential recruitment agencies. As relayed by Scott, lecturers also provided them with information about jobs:

“I’ve got one of my lecturers who basically emails the up-and-coming jobs in various locations, and he tells you where they all are. It’s quite good that way. But a lot of the time I know the companies so I’ll just go and do a website check on them”.

Contacts made during student placements were also mentioned. For example, Mhairi spoke of a former mentor who had been advising her and sending her information on nursing vacancies. She stated that he was going to “pull some strings” in his department, “which is kind of what you need because usually people have their management placement in a ward and get their job in there”. Angela had recently been offered a graduate job as an engineer. She had previously completed a summer internship with her new employer:

“Because I’m going back to the same office, the same team, the same people, I didn’t have to go through the formal interview process. I still had to apply, but then they said ‘let us know when you’ve applied so we can fish you out’, basically”.

Other examples of networking were given by the participants. Stephanie had signed on for unemployment benefits at the job centre during her job search. She was allocated an adviser who booked her into job fairs and CV workshops. At

one of the job fairs she was offered a temporary administration job by an employer, having approached them with her CV.

**5.3.2.1 The role of social media**

The participants discussed the role of LinkedIn and Facebook as tools for job search. Scott and Angela both had LinkedIn profiles, but were not active users of the platform. Angela said: “I have a LinkedIn profile, but I never used it”. She joked that she put her CV on it and “hoped it found somebody itself”. Callum noted that he used his LinkedIn account as a contingency measure in case he was unsuccessful during the recruitment process:

“The way [my industry] works is that if you don’t get a job with a company, then you’re almost self-contracting – you have to find work yourself. So I’m building contacts with people. Locums can go through an agency or just direct to an owner and say ‘can you give me some shifts’. You have to get your name out there so people know who you are”.

Various Facebook functions were used for networking by the participants. Mhairi acquired relevant industry information via a group page for qualified nurses, where topical issues were debated regularly. Angela and Callum said that they had ‘liked’ Facebook pages where job search information was posted. Callum indicated that he would follow companies who would post vacancies “if they were having a big recruitment drive”. Angela said:

“I just like company pages. To see what projects they’re working on and stuff. There’s nobody of influence working behind that page. You can’t go looking for a job. You could just see what’s interesting and keep up to date with what the company’s doing. It’s good for interviews and stuff, because you know in the back of your mind what’s going on with that company”.

For David, Facebook pages were valuable tools for networking. He stated that he would use the search function to find pages relating to his trade, and then source potential contacts by looking at lists of people who had also liked the page. He would then make contact using the Facebook messenger function to ask about potential vacancies. Due to the nature of his industry, he emphasised that direct contact was the only way he could find a new employer. He added: “Sometimes

they'll put pictures on the page and you can comment on it". He indicated that this was a useful means of increasing visibility within the community.

### 5.3.3 Intervening variables

#### 5.3.3.1 *Situational factors*

Similar to the interview participants, the proximity of contacts created networking opportunities for the focus group participants. For example, the full-time students spoke mostly of exchanges with lecturers or university careers advisers. Family members were also mentioned frequently in the discussion. Again though, reliance upon ascribed contacts could potentially create barriers to job search networking, if close contacts are unable or unwilling to provide useful information.

It also emerged from the discussion that, in some industries, networking is unavoidable during job search. Due to the casual nature of David's industry, he had to source people whom he thought might be able to offer him job information, and contact them directly. Similarly, Callum knew that if he did not get a job with a defined list of companies in the pharmaceutical industry he would have to find work as a locum. As noted above, doing so entailed building his connections list on LinkedIn, to increase his visibility with potential employers. Work experience is also an important factor in this regard, as underlined by Angela's situation. Having undertaken a summer internship, she then had the option of contacting former colleagues to assist with her successful job application. Indeed, Scott regretted not having the same experience: "I could have got placements over the summer which would have helped me to get a job just now. But I didn't".

#### 5.3.3.2 *Social factors*

A key social barrier to job search networking is the perception amongst young people that their parents or family members cannot provide useful information. Angela described her situation:

"Even approaching my mum and dad about CVs and stuff - they've never had to deal with any of that stuff. And my dad's dealing with apprentices who might not have a CV. They're just applying straight from school".

Mhairi stated that "There's nobody in my family in medicine or nursing". Scott felt that a lack of contacts was a direct barrier to networking behaviours "Unless you

know someone that's in the same industry you're trying to get into, and I don't really know anyone".

Stephanie contrasted her two experiences with job centre advisers. She described returning a second time having finished a short work contract:

"It was different though, like I had two different experiences. The first time I was signing on I found it really helpful, they sent me to a lot of things. Whereas the second time they never really. I was kind of left to my own devices. They just signed my paper every time I went in".

In particular, this example highlights the potential limitations of engaging with only ascribed contacts during job search.

### 5.3.3.3 *Intrapersonal factors*

An intrapersonal enabler of job search networking is having the confidence to ask for help. David said that he was happy to do so, and did not think that "anybody would be embarrassed to say they're looking for a job". Awareness emerged as another enabler. For example, Mhairi was aware that she had to network to find a job as a graduate nurse. Notably, she also perceived networking to have negative connotations:

"I know this isn't how it should be – it should be based on how good you are at your profession or your job or whatever. But it's a lot to do with luck and it's a lot to do with who you know to be honest. I know in my profession it really is a lot to do with who you know".

Despite being aware of networking benefits, only Callum said that he had actively prepared a list of people who could assist with his job search. As mentioned previously, he used LinkedIn to create new contacts for future work as a locum. Stephanie said she had "not really thought about it", but that after months of job search "I got to the stage where anybody I spoke to I just asked them where they worked and if they were looking for anybody".

Awareness also emerged as an enabler of social media use for job search. Scott indicated that he was aware of LinkedIn's potential, having listened to the testimonies of his lecturers and peers. However, although this encouraged him to create an account, he admitted to not actually using it very frequently:

“I know people on my course and my pals who have got jobs through that. I know that’s how you could use it. And I know that people do search it. But I’ve made an account, and I’ve not done anything much except fanning about with it”.

Another intrapersonal barrier to job search networking is the perception of being in competition with friends for jobs. For example, Stephanie said:

“I think if you’re looking for something more specific like us...there are only a few of those jobs available. And everybody’s wanting the job. And obviously they’re your friends at the same time”.

David felt similarly, adding “if you find somewhere that’s got potential, you don’t tell anybody”. Scott also indicated that speaking to friends about job search could be a disheartening experience: “You hear everybody getting a job with a certain company and you think ‘aw well, they’ll not be taking on anybody else’. You feel a bit bad about yourself”.

#### **5.3.3.4 Platform-specific factors**

Social media platforms also create specific networking opportunities. For example, David contacted tradesmen across the world through Facebook, and was able to engage with them about potential vacancies. As noted above, Angela also felt that Facebook made networking with employers much easier, as it meant she could track their activities. This information would then be useful for job interviews and writing applications.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

The findings presented in this chapter have provided a micro-level understanding of job search networking and its antecedents. By applying an ego-centric approach, it has been possible to determine the exact nature of the contacts young jobseekers engage with during job search and the types of information acquired in such exchanges. To this end, it has been shown that young people network with a range of informal and formal contacts during job search, at both an individual and organisational level. In doing so they acquire a range of information types that can assist them with the entirety of the job search process, from its formative stages to completing job applications and interviews.

Particularly prominent contacts are family members and formal individuals (e.g. careers advisers, support workers and tutors), whilst exchanges with friends and acquaintances are less frequent. However, it should be noted that young people also create new contacts during job search, in addition to mobilising existing ties. They also passively acquire information, as well as actively seeking out advice.

The JSINs also show that, for some network contacts, exchanges of information take place both offline and on social media. Indeed, digital tools create environments where information can be easily disseminated by contacts and accessed by jobseekers (e.g. via private message or group functions). They also create opportunities to build and maintain networks, and to create ties with different types of contacts. For example, they make employers and industry figures more accessible, thereby facilitating access to valuable industry or job role information. Additionally, the findings indicate that in a minority of cases, social media can be the main source of information for jobseekers. However, despite their informational benefits, it must be acknowledged that not all young people use social media for job search, and that some only use them for specific tasks.

The findings presented above also highlight that 16-24 year olds conduct job searches within a range of different contexts, and that this has a substantial bearing on the nature of their networking behaviours. Contextual factors are also closely associated with various intervening variables, which either enable or act as barriers to information seeking. These are complex, and can be situational, social, intrapersonal, or (social media) platform-specific. Along with measures of networking behaviours (both offline and on social media), many of these variables have informed the design of the questionnaire used in the second stage of field work. The themes which were developed in the analysis and subsequently incorporated into survey questions have been presented in the following sections. Please note that a copy of the questionnaire can be viewed in Appendix C.

### 5.4.1 Survey design: creating contextual questions

As evidenced by the results, contextual factors impacted the nature of networking as an information behaviour during job search, and were often closely linked with



intervening variables. The following contextual factors were used to create indexes and scales in the survey:

- The length of job search (Question 1)
- The perceived level of job search effort, having a clear job search goal, looking for a career option, and willingness to settle for almost any job that pays money (Question 2: a, b, c, d)
- The type of job being sought (Question 3)
- Current situation/employment status (Question 40)
- Examples of previous work experience (Question 41)

#### 5.4.2 Survey design: creating job search networking questions

Many examples of job search networking were provided by the interview and focus group participants. The majority of these exchanges involved a selection of contact types, which included the following:

- Family members, friends, lecturers/teachers, careers advisers, support workers, and acquaintances/weaker ties (Question 4: a, b, c, d, e, f)
- Engaging directly with employers to ask about jobs (Question 5)

Implicit within the wording of the above questions was some form of active behaviour on the part of the jobseekers (i.e. 'how often during job search have you contacted a person you haven't spoken to for more than two weeks to ask for job leads or advice). However, there were also examples where the participants were contacted by someone who then gave them information. A specific scale was used to measure the frequency of such passive information acquisition and was also included in the questions (Question 4: g).

#### 5.4.3 Survey design: creating social media questions

A number of questions in the survey were dedicated to the role of social media platforms as tools for information acquisition during job search. Sections were dedicated to Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, as these were the platforms the participants had appropriated for job search. The following questions related to the 'passive' functions which were mentioned:

- Being a member of a Facebook Group (Question 10)

- ‘Liking’ a Facebook page and following a Twitter account (Question 11 and 19)

Examples of how platforms were used actively for job search were also included:

- Actively searching Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn for jobs (Question 13, 21, 27: a)
- Contacting someone on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to ask about jobs (Question 13, 21, 27: a)

Other themes relating to social media, although not to the use of a specific platform, were also incorporated into the survey. For example, participants spoke about using different online discussion forums as sources of job search information. A question was created to gather data about the use of forums, and also to identify any other platforms which are used for job search but were not mentioned by the participants (Question 29). There were also questions about receiving information from contacts which had originally been sourced on social media (Question 30), and whether social media was the main source of job information (Question 33: a).

#### 5.4.3.1 **Survey design: creating intervening variables questions**

Some of the barriers and enablers relating to job search networking and the use of social media platforms were also included in the survey. One of the key intervening variables was how comfortable the participants were with approaching people for help. This theme was incorporated into questions which related to various contact types (Question 6: a, b, c), and about whether the participants would feel more comfortable conversing on social media than face-to-face (Question 33: b). Also regarding the use of social media for job search, questions were created to determine whether they had been advised/shown how to use social media by professionals (i.e. awareness) (Question 31 and 32), and whether they thought social media platforms were useful (i.e. attitude) (Question 14, 22, 28: b).

## Chapter 6 Survey results

### 6.1 Introduction

The results of the survey questionnaire are presented in this chapter. They are broken down into four broad sections: 1) job search context; 2) job search networking behaviours; 3) the role of social media platforms – namely, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn; and, 4) job search outcomes and logistic regression. With regards to job search context, detail is provided on the circumstances surrounding the respondents' job searches. This information is useful to explicate the findings outlined in the remainder of the chapter. For a detailed description of the sample, see Chapter 4.

The sections on job search networking and social media use contain descriptive statistics which elucidate the prevalence of these behaviours amongst the sample. An analysis of these findings is then presented to show the impact of demographic and contextual factors, and to highlight prominent behavioural antecedents. Outcomes are also tested by analysing the relationship between networking behaviours, job interviews received, and various other measures of job search success. Finally, the key variables that emerge from the analysis are inputted into logistic regression models to identify the biggest predictors of positive job search outcomes.

Please note that in order to increase the validity of the results, much of the analysis contained within Chapter 6 includes only the respondents who *agreed* that they put a lot of effort into job search (n=539). This mitigates for the substantial differences created by the respondents who may only have been engaged in an intermittent or casual job search. Instances where this is the case are clearly signposted throughout the subsequent sections.

### 6.2 Job search context

It is important to gauge the general context and characteristics of the respondents' job search, to fully understand their behaviours. With regards to job search length, the results show that 37.8% (n=341) had been looking for 1 month or under, 40.0% (n=361) had been looking for 2 to 3 months, 9.1% (n=61) had

been looking for 4 to 5 months, and 13.1% (n=91) had been looking for 6 months or more. With the average job search lasting 10 weeks (Peacock, 2013), these figures broadly reflect job search duration in the UK - i.e. only a minority of respondents had been searching for more than 4 months.

A significant association was found between job search length and education level using the Chi square test ( $p < .001$ ). For example, 38.6% (n=46) of those with non-university qualifications had been searching for more than four months, compared with 19.7% (n=154) of those with university qualifications. Being male, unemployed, identifying as Scottish, and being born in Scotland, were also found to be positively associated with job search length.

The respondents were asked to name the types of jobs they were seeking. Their answers were coded in accordance with the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) framework. The framework lists nine major occupational groups in descending order, from 'Managers, Directors, and Senior Officials' to 'Elementary Occupations' (Office for National Statistics, 2010). Those whose responses were in groups 1-3, 4-6, and 7-9 were combined to create *high*, *medium*, and *low* categories, respectively. In total, 33.1% (n=294) of the respondents were looking for jobs in the high occupational category, 11.9% (n=106) in the medium category, and 55.0% (n=488) in the low category. Notably, 57.6% (n=281) of those looking for low occupation jobs were students who *disagreed* they were seeking a career option. It is likely that these respondents were seeking part-time work to supplement their student incomes, as opposed to full-time graduate positions.

Using a Likert-scale, the respondents were asked a number of questions to determine the characteristics of their job search. As shown in Table 6.1, a clear majority *agreed* that they put a lot of effort into job search (61.5%; n=558), had a clear idea of the job they were looking for (59.7%; n=540), and were willing to work evenings and weekends (77.3%; n=701). However, more respondents *disagreed* that they would be happy relocate within the UK for a job (64.1%; n=581). Additionally, there was a smaller variation of opinion with regards to looking for a career option (43.4% *agreed*, 36.0% *disagreed*) and an almost even

split regarding settling for almost any job that would pay money (39.5% *agreed*, 38.2% *disagreed*).

**Table 6-1 Nature of the respondents' job search**

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
I put a lot of effort into finding a job	n	30	152	168	426	132	<b>908</b>
	%	3.3%	16.7%	18.5%	46.9%	14.5%	<b>100.0%</b>
I have a clear idea of the type of job I am looking for	n	19	140	205	381	159	<b>904</b>
	%	2.1%	15.5%	22.7%	42.1%	17.6%	<b>100.0%</b>
I am looking for a job that is a career option	n	82	244	186	245	148	<b>905</b>
	%	9.1%	27.0%	20.6%	27.1%	16.4%	<b>100.0%</b>
I will settle for almost any job as long as it pays me money	n	84	261	202	285	72	<b>904</b>
	%	9.3%	28.9%	22.3%	31.5%	8.0%	<b>100.0%</b>
I am willing to be flexible with the hours I work	n	18	82	106	494	207	<b>907</b>
	%	2.0%	9.0%	11.7%	54.5%	22.8%	<b>100.0%</b>
I would be happy to move to a new area in the UK for a job	n	345	236	100	160	66	<b>907</b>
	%	38.0%	26.0%	11.0%	17.6%	7.3%	<b>7.3%</b>

Demographics had a key bearing on these job search characteristics. Regarding employment status, students were the least likely to *agree* that they put effort into job search, at 52.7% (n=437). They were also the least likely *agree* that they were looking for a career option, at 36.4% (n=275). Using a Pearson product moment correlation test, there was found to be a positive correlation between job search effort and seeking a career amongst the students ( $p < .001$ ) (n=755). Combined, these findings provide further evidence that a substantial proportion of the students in the sample were seeking casual work. Indeed, when removing those who provided a neutral response, 46.3% (n=275) of the students *agreed* they were seeking a career, compared with 53.7% (n=319) who *disagreed*.

Age was also found to be an important variable. For example, the 22-24 year olds were the most likely to *agree* that they had a clear job search goal, at 65.8% (n=148). Age was also positively associated with seeking a career option and

willingness to relocate within the UK, whilst negatively associated with being willing to settle for almost any job. Each of these results were found to be statistically significant using Chi-square tests ( $p < .050$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $p < .001$ , and  $p < .001$ , respectively). However, despite 75.0% being aged 16-18 years old – those with National and no qualifications ( $n=52$ ) were amongst the *most* likely respondents to *agree* that they were looking for a career option (65.4%), and that they would be willing to relocate for work (32.7%). Additionally, 82.7% *agreed* that they would be willing to settle for almost any job. Notably, in comparison with the rest of the sample, these respondents were disproportionately unemployed. Taken together, the analysis shows that amongst this group of jobseekers – i.e. unemployed young people with low qualifications – most are anxious to secure employment of any kind, yet retain ambitions of starting a career.

### **6.3 Job search networking behaviours**

The respondents were asked a number of questions to determine the extent of their networking behaviours during the job search process. The results are presented in the following sections, and include an analysis of the potential demographic and/or contextual antecedents to job search networking, whilst highlighting other important variables. Potential outcomes of job search networking are also presented.

#### **6.3.1 Networking with people**

**Please note:** *in the following sections, only those who **agreed** that they put effort into job search are included in the analysis, unless stated otherwise.*

Speaking with friends and family members is a common job search behaviour, as shown in Table 6.2. However, the respondents were far less likely to have contacted someone they had not spoken to for more than two weeks to ask about job, suggesting the use of weaker network contacts (i.e. acquaintances) is not common during job search. Also shown in Table 6.2, the majority (60.8%;  $n=339$ ) of the respondents had spoken to a professional (i.e. a careers adviser, lecturer, support worker, or teacher) about their job search activities at least once. These figures give a clear indication that engaging with network contacts is common during the job search process. Passive information acquisition is also common,

with 66.9% (n=372) of the respondents having been contacted by somebody with job search information.

**Table 6-2 Networking with people during job search**

	n	Never (0 times)	Rarely (1 or 2 times)	Occasionally (3 to 5 times)	Frequently (at least 6 times)
<b>Family members</b>	558	3.1%	16.0%	31.7%	49.3%
<b>Friends</b>	558	2.2%	18.1%	37.0%	42.8%
<b>Acquaintances</b>	558	62.2%	23.3%	9.0%	5.6%
	<b>Total count</b>	<b>Never (0 times)</b>	<b>At least 1 time</b>		
<b>Professional<sup>a</sup></b>	558	39.2%	60.8%		

<sup>a</sup> e.g. a teacher, tutor, careers adviser, or support worker

#### 6.3.1.1 *Networking with people during job search: the role of demographics*

As shown in Table 6.3, employment status impacts on networking with family members. Students were the least likely to have done so on at least six occasions at 46.0% (n=200), compared with those who were unemployed (62.5%; n=37), and those who were employed (60.3%; n=44). Using a one-way ANOVA, the effect of employment status on speaking to family members throughout job search was found to be statistically significant  $F(2,553) = 8.10, p < .001$ .

There was a similar effect regarding country of birth. To this end, those born outside of Scotland – of whom a high proportion were students - spoke to family members the least during the job search. Using an independent t-test, this was also found to be statistically significant ( $p < .010$ )<sup>9</sup>. These findings could be explained by students residing in term-time addresses having less frequent contact with relatives.

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<sup>9</sup> Spoken to family at least 6 times: Born in Scotland (52.3%), born outside of Scotland (44.3%).

Table 6-3 Networking with family and employment status

Employment status	How often during this job search have you spoken about your job search activities with family members				
	<i>n</i>	<i>Never (0 times)</i>	<i>Rarely (1 or 2 times)</i>	<i>Occasionally (3 to 5 times)</i>	<i>Frequently (at least 6 times)</i>
<b>Employed</b>	73	1.4%	13.7%	24.7%	60.3%
<b>Unemployed</b>	48	4.2%	4.2%	29.2%	62.5%
<b>Student</b>	435	3.2%	17.7%	33.1%	46.0%

Age created the main differences with regards to speaking to friends about job search. At 85.4% (n=129) the 22-24 year olds were the most likely to have done so at least three times, compared with 77.7% (n=129) of 16-18 year olds, and 77.6% (n=184) of 19-21 year olds. Using the one-way ANOVA, the effect of age on speaking to friends was found to be statistically significant  $F(2,551) = 3.99$ ,  $p < .050$ . The Scheffe post hoc test showed that this difference was found between the 19-21 year olds and the 22-24 year olds ( $p < .050$ ).

No clear associations were found between demographics and contacting acquaintances during job search. This suggests that other contextual factors (e.g. situational, social, or intrapersonal factors) were more influential in this regard. However, in terms of employment status, students were the least likely to contact professionals (56.8%; n=248), compared with the unemployed (87.5%; n=42) and the employed (67.1%; n=49).

#### 6.3.1.2 *Networking with people: the role of context*

Job search length was positively associated with contacting family members, friends, and acquaintances during job search. With the exception of acquaintances, these associations were found to be statistically significant using Independent t-tests ( $p < .001$ ), and reflect the accumulation of behaviours over time.

Length of job search was also positively associated with speaking to a professional on at least one occasion. For example, 68.8% (n=141) of those searching for more than 4 months had done so, compared with 58.1% (n=240) of those searching for less than 4 months. This could indicate that, as the job search



progresses, young people seek out the help of people whom they perceive to have careers expertise. This was also found to be statistically significant using the Chi-square test ( $p < .050$ ).

Occupation level is associated with contacting acquaintances during job search. The findings show that those seeking high (16.6%;  $n=33$ ) and medium (18.1%;  $n=13$ ) level jobs were more likely than those seeking low level jobs (11.7%;  $n=32$ ) to have contacted acquaintances for job search information at least three times. Using the one-way ANOVA, the effect of occupational level was found to be statistically significant  $F(2,541) = 3.68, p.05$ . The variance was between those seeking high and low level occupations ( $p < .050$ ).

For contacting a professional, those seeking high (74.4%;  $n=148$ ) level jobs were also the most likely to have done so at least once, followed by medium (69.4%;  $n=50$ ) or low (48.4%;  $n=132$ ) level jobs. This was found to be statistically significant using the Chi-square test ( $p < .001$ ). Combined, these findings could indicate that those seeking higher level jobs require information that they cannot source from close contacts. As such, they are compelled to contact professionals or other people outside of their close network of contacts.

As shown in Table 6.4, job search characteristics are also influential factors. Those who *agreed* they were seeking a career engaged with friends and acquaintances more frequently than those who *disagreed*. Willingness to relocate is also significantly associated with networking with acquaintances. Indeed, a closer inspection of the results reveals that 22.2% ( $n=37$ ) of those who *agreed* that they would relocate within the UK had contacted with an acquaintance at least three times to ask for information, compared with 9.9% ( $n=33$ ) of those who *disagreed*. There could be a number of explanations for this. For example:

1. High proportions of older and better educated respondents were amongst those willing to relocate. Such individuals may have a wider pool of weak contacts to mobilise for job information. It is also possible that in searching for jobs specific to their qualifications they must speak to contacts they do not converse with on a regular basis.
2. Using a Pearson product moment correlation test, there was found to be a positive correlation between willingness to relocate and comfort asking

relative strangers for information ( $p < .001$ ). This indicates that people who are willing to relocate are more extroverted, and less perturbed by the prospect of asking people for help.

Table 6-4 Networking with people and job search characteristics<sup>1&2</sup>

	Agree /disagree	N	Networking with people (mean)		
			Family	Friends	Acquaintances
I put a lot of effort into job search	Agree	556	3.44	3.33	1.58
	Disagree	182	2.71	2.86	1.35
P value of difference			P<.001	P<.001	P<.010
I am looking for a job that is a career option	Agree	290	3.56	3.43	1.68
	Disagree	149	3.37	3.21	1.35
P value of difference			P=.077	P<.050	P<.001
I would be happy to move to a new area in the UK for a job	Agree	166	3.45	3.40	1.84
	Disagree	333	3.41	3.27	1.43
P value of difference			P=.729	P=.173	P<.001

1 The job search effort variable relates to the entire sample of respondents.

2 Means are derived from Likert scale responses relating to frequency of networking behaviours: 1 = 'Never (0 times)'; 2 = 'Rarely (1 or 2 times)'; 3 = 'Occasionally (3 to 5 times)'; 4 = 'Frequently (6 to 9 times)'; 5 = 'Very frequently (at least 10 times)'.

Also shown in Table 6.4 is that – *amongst the entire sample of respondents* - job search effort had a substantial impact on networking with informal contacts.

### 6.3.1.3 Networking with people: other important factors

Other factors had an impact on networking frequency. Using Independent t-tests, the following statistically significant differences on the mean were found:

- Those who *agreed* that they would be comfortable asking someone they did not know very well for job information (n=235) had networked with acquaintances ( $p < .001$ ) more often than those who *disagreed* (n=168)
- Those who *agreed* (n=120) that they **did not** like to ask people for help with job search had networked with family ( $p < .050$ ) **less often** than those who *disagreed* (n=280)

- Facebook use for job search was associated with networking with people; for example, those who occasionally (i.e. at least three times) used Facebook (n=154) to actively search for jobs had networked with friends ( $p < .010$ ), and acquaintances ( $p < .001$ ) more often than those who had not (n=385)
- Those who occasionally (i.e. at least three times) used Twitter (n=33) to actively search for jobs had networked with acquaintances ( $p = .01$ ) more often than those who had not (n=244).

The findings above provide evidence that intrapersonal factors (e.g. extraversion, self-efficacy) are key enablers/barriers in relation to networking with people during job search. The connection between the use of social media for job search and frequency of networking with people - particularly acquaintances - could also indicate that digital platforms create environments wherein it is easier to contact weaker network ties for information.

Notably, the social capital measures included in the survey – i.e. having an immediate family member who attended university and having access to job referees with high occupational prestige – were not positively associated with frequency of job search networking. Having work experience was linked with contacting an acquaintance, but this was not found to be statistically significant.

#### **6.3.1.4 Outcomes of networking with people**

Independent t-tests were conducted to test the relationship between networking with people and job search outcomes. To attain a level of homogeneity amongst the respondents included in the analysis, only those who perceived themselves to be putting effort into job search and who had been searching for more than four months were included (n=141). Table 6.5 shows that, for each different contact type, job search networking was associated with a higher number of face-to-face interviews. However, the findings were only statistically significant for family members and acquaintances.

Also using Independent t-tests, it was found that:

- Those who networked with family members (n=121) on at least three occasions had been contacted by someone they knew with job

information more often than those who had done so less than three times (n=20) ( $p < .010$ )

- Those who networked with acquaintances on at least three occasions (n=25) had been contacted by someone they knew with job information more often than those who had done so less than three times (n=116) ( $p < .001$ )
- Those who had spoken to a professional at least once (n=97) had been contacted by someone they knew with job information more often than those who had never done so (n=44) ( $p < .050$ )
- Those who had contacted acquaintances at least three times (n=25) were more confident that they were making progress with job search than those who had done so less than three times (n=116) ( $p < .010$ ).

Table 6-5 Networking with people and mean number of face-to-face interviews

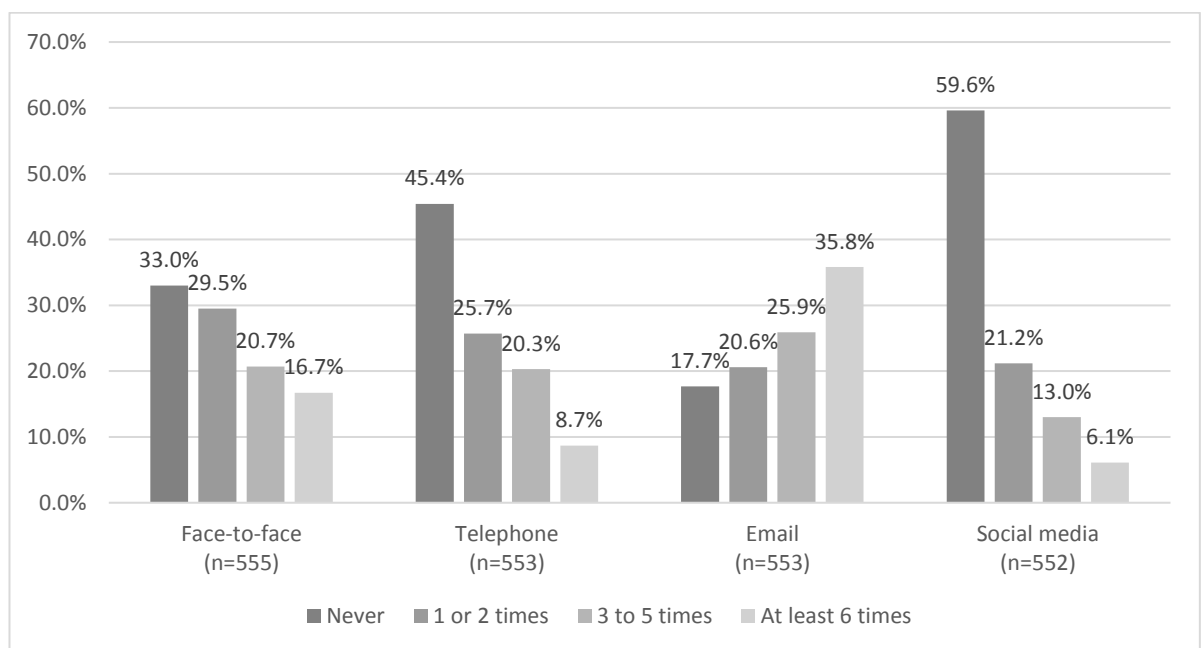
		Mean no. of face-to-face job interviews	N	P
<b>Family members</b>	3 times >	1.79	121	<.050
	< 3 times	1.20	20	
<b>Friends</b>	3 times >	1.71	115	.930
	< 3 times	1.69	26	
<b>Acquaintances</b>	3 times >	2.08	25	<.050
	< 3 times	1.63	116	
<b>Professional</b>	At least once	1.80	97	.110
	Never	1.50	44	

### 6.3.2 Networking with employers

The respondents were asked how often they had contacted employers directly to ask about jobs: a) face-to-face, b) on the telephone, c) by email, d) on social

media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn). As shown in Figure 12, the most popular method of contact with employers was email, with over a third (35.8%, n=198) having done so at least six times. Using social media was the least popular method of contacting employers directly, with only 6.1% (n=34) having done so at least six times. This could indicate that, despite the pervasiveness of social media use amongst younger people, there is a general disinclination to appropriate them for functional purposes. However, it could also be a reflection of the means by which employers make themselves available to be contacted.

Figure 12 Networking with employers per method of contact



### 6.3.2.1 Networking with employers: demographics

There were no statistically significant differences by demographics for contacting employers via email. This indicates that it is a universally popular method of contacting employers. However, for each of the other methods there were crucial differences per employment status and education level. With regards to the former, the following results were found using the one-way ANOVA:

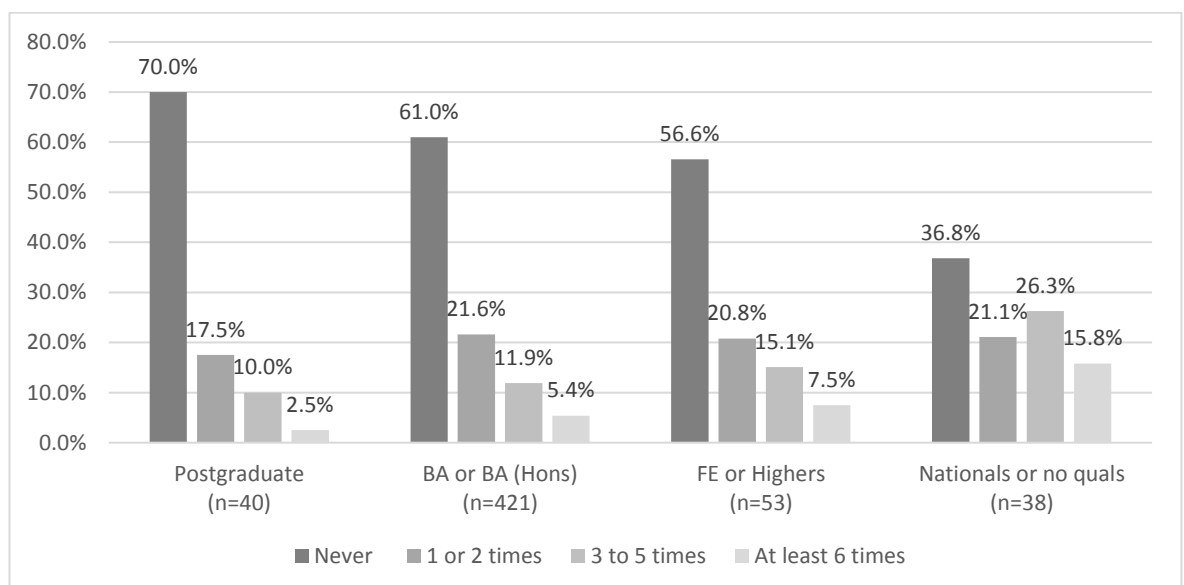
- The effect on face-to-face contact was statistically significant  $F(2,552) = 4.01, p < .050$ , with the employed respondents having done so the least

frequently (a statistically significant difference was found between the students (n=435) and the employed (n=73) ( $p < .050$ ))

- The effect on telephone contact was statistically significant  $F(2,550) = 4.62$ ,  $p < .050$ , with the students having done so the least frequently (statistically significant difference was found between the unemployed respondents (n=47) and the students (n=433) ( $p < .050$ ))
- The effect on social media contact was statistically significant  $F(2,549) = 4.70$ ,  $p < .010$ , with the employed respondents and the students having done so the least frequently (statistically significant difference was found between both the unemployed respondents (n=47) and the students (n=433), and the unemployed respondents and the employed respondents (n=73) ( $p < .050$ ))

Also using the one-way ANOVA, significant differences were found by education for telephone ( $p < .001$ ) and social media ( $p < .010$ ) contact. In both of these cases there was a negative relationship, with those in the lowest educational attainment group having done so the most frequently. It is shown in Figure 13 that those with National or no qualifications were distinctly more likely to have contacted employers directly on social media than those within the other educational

**Figure 13 Networking with employers via social media, per education level**



subgroups. Indeed, at 63.2%, they were from the only educational subgroup where a majority had done so on at least one occasion.

### 6.3.2.2 **Networking with employers: the role of context**

Job search length had a predictable impact on frequency of networking with employers, with respondents who had been searching for at least four months (n=140) having done so more frequently than those who had been searching for less than four months (n=408). Using Independent t-tests, these results were found to be statistically significant for face-to-face ( $p<.001$ ), telephone ( $p<.050$ ), email ( $p<.001$ ), and social media ( $p<.050$ ) contact.

Using the one-way ANOVA test ( $F(2,538) = 14.21, p<.001$ ), the occupational level being sought was found to have an impact on face-to-face contact with employers. The Scheffe post hoc test shows that the difference was between those seeking the low/medium occupational category jobs, and those seeking the highest category jobs ( $p<.001$ , and  $p<.050$ , respectively), with the respondents seeking the lower category jobs having done so more frequently.

Job search characteristics had a complex relationship with how the respondents' networked with employers during the job search. As shown in Table 6.6, the most important enabling factor was job search effort. However, amongst only those who *agreed* that they put effort into job search, it is clear that being willing to settle for almost any job was linked to contacting employers through each channel. With the exception of face-to-face contact, seeking a career was also influential. These are seemingly contradictory findings, as the survey respondents who were willing to take any job were less likely to *agree* that they were also seeking a career option (at 39.8%, n=84) than those who would not settle for any job (at 60.9%, n=109). Additional analysis helps to explain this:

1. When removing the respondents who *agreed* that they would settle for any job from the analysis, looking for a career option no longer created any significant findings in relation to networking with employers, with the exception of contacting employers face-to-face. For the other methods, there was very little variation in behaviour.

2. When removing the respondents who *disagreed* that they were looking for a career option from the analysis, being willing to settle for almost any job created a larger differences in means for each method of contact.

**Table 6-6 Networking with employers and job search characteristics<sup>1</sup>**

	Agree /disagree	N	Networking with employers (Mean)			
			Face-to-face	Telephone	Email	Social media
I put a lot of effort into job search	Agree	558	2.26	1.94	2.93	1.67
	Disagree	182	1.69	1.51	2.20	1.34
P value of difference			p <.001	p <.001	p <.001	P<.001
I have a clear idea of the type of job I am looking for	Agree	365	2.27	2.02	2.94	1.68
	Disagree	55	2.07	1.51	2.73	1.51
P value of difference			P=.260	P<.010	P=.261	P=.237
I am looking for a job that is a career option	Agree	288	2.13	1.97	3.04	1.75
	Disagree	149	2.44	1.78	2.83	1.54
P value of difference			P<.050	p =.061	P=.119	P<.010
I would settle for almost any job that pays me money	Agree	231	2.46	2.10	3.04	1.83
	Disagree	201	2.08	1.79	2.74	1.52
P value of difference			p <.010	P<.010	p <.050	p <.010

<sup>1</sup> Means are derived from Likert scale responses relating to frequency of networking behaviours: 1 = 'Never (0 times)'; 2 = 'Rarely (1 or 2 times)'; 3 = 'Occasionally (3 to 5 times)'; 4 = 'Frequently (6 to 9 times)'; 5 = 'Very frequently (at least 10 times)'.

These findings indicate that the respondents who were seeking a career, but who were also willing to settle for any job that paid money, were particularly likely to have contacted employers directly via each method. It is also a notable finding that those who were seeking a career had contacted employers face-to-face less frequently. This suggests that career option jobs are associated with more formal methods of contact.

**6.3.2.3 Networking with employers: other important factors**

Other factors also impacted the frequency with which the respondents networked with employers during job search. Using Independent t-tests, the following statistically significant variations on the mean were found:



- Those who had spoken to a professional (e.g. a teacher, tutor, careers adviser, or a support worker) on at least one occasion during job search (n=337) had contacted employers face-to-face ( $p<.050$ ), on the telephone ( $p<.001$ ), by email ( $p<.001$ ), and on social media ( $p<.001$ ) more often, than those who had not (n=218).
- Those who *agreed* that they would be comfortable asking someone they did not know very well for job information (n=320) had contacted employers face-to-face ( $p<.001$ ), on the telephone ( $p<.050$ ), and on social media ( $p<.001$ ) more often more often than those who *disagreed* (n=232).
- Those who had some work experience (n=526) had contacted employers face-to-face ( $p<.050$ ) and via email ( $p<.010$ ) more often than those who had no work experience (n=30)

Those who did not like to ask people for help with their job search were equally as likely as those who did to have contacted employers frequently. No significant differences were found with regards to availability of internet access on mobile phones, tablets, and desktop computers. Also, no differences were found in relation to social capital access.

#### 6.3.2.4 *Outcomes of networking with employers*

The outcomes of networking with employers were tested. Only those who *agreed* they put effort into job search and had been searching for a job for at least four months were included in the analysis. The results for receiving face-to-face interviews are presented in Table 6.7. The findings show that those who engaged with employers on at least three occasions via each method of contact received more face-to-face job interviews than those who did so less than three times. However, using an Independent t-test, this finding was only statistically significant for face-to-face networking ( $p<.010$ ). Under the same conditions of analysis, those who contacted employers both face-to-face and on the telephone at least three times (n=69, and n=50) had received more telephone interviews ( $p<.010$ , and  $p<.010$ ) than those who had done so less than three times (n=72, and n=90).

Table 6-7 Networking with employers and face-to-face interviews

		Mean no. of face-to-face job interviews	N	P
<b>Face-to-face</b>	3 times >	1.94	69	<.010
	< 3 times	1.49	72	
<b>Telephone</b>	3 times >	1.94	50	.057
	< 3 times	1.59	90	
<b>Email</b>	3 times >	1.81	98	.113
	< 3 times	1.50	42	
<b>Social media</b>	3 times >	1.86	35	.353
	< 3 times	1.67	105	

#### **6.4 The role of social media platforms**

The respondents were asked questions specifically relating to Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. These covered general usage of the platforms, and their use for job search purposes. With regards to the latter, the questions focused on both the passive and active search behaviours which enabled information acquisition. The findings are presented in the following sections, in addition to the outcomes of using these platforms for job search.

It is notable that the respondents were also asked to provide names of any other social media platforms that they used for job search purposes. Only 25 respondents in the entire sample did so, and the platforms mentioned included Student Rooms forums (n=9), Instagram (n=7), miscellaneous job forums (n=3), and Pinterest (n=2). The lack of responses suggest that Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are the most used platforms for job search amongst 16-24 year olds in Scotland, and provide justification for only including questions which specifically relate to these social media sites.

## 6.4.1 Facebook

### 6.4.1.1 General Facebook use

Analysis relating to the general use of Facebook includes the whole survey sample (n=909). The findings show that Facebook use was pervasive amongst the respondents, and that it was the most popular social media platform of those included in the survey. Indeed, 96.9% (n=881) of the respondents had a Facebook account. Usage levels were also very high, with around half of those who had an account (53.6%) claiming to use it *throughout* the day, and 91.1% using it at least once a day. The vast majority of Facebook users (79.3%) also had more than 200 Facebook ‘friends’, whilst around half (48.8%) had more than 400. These findings are presented in Table 6.8.

**Table 6-8 Frequency of Facebook use and number of Facebook friends**

	<b>Total count</b>	<b>Once a week or less</b>	<b>A few times a week</b>	<b>Once a day</b>	<b>A few times a day</b>	<b>Throughout the day</b>	
How often do you use Facebook?	879	2.2%	6.7%	8.5%	29.0%	53.6%	
	<b>Total count</b>	<b>1 to 199</b>	<b>200 to 399</b>	<b>400 to 599</b>	<b>600 to 799</b>	<b>800 to 999</b>	<b>1000 or more</b>
No. of Facebook friends	880	20.7%	30.6%	26.4%	10.2%	5.1%	7.0%

Despite the above, only 16.8% of those with a Facebook account *agreed* that they posted regular updates (3.1% of whom *strongly agreed*). In contrast, 68.5% *disagreed*, whilst 36.6% *strongly disagreed*. These figures suggest that whilst Facebook use is pervasive amongst young people, they are more likely to be passive consumers of the content, as opposed to active contributors.

### 6.4.1.2 General Facebook use and demographics

Membership of Facebook was scarcely impacted by differences between or within demographic groupings. Notably, only 1 of the 27 respondents who did *not* have a Facebook account was unemployed (21 were students and 6 were employed). Indeed, unemployed respondents were in the demographic subgroup

most likely to be a member of Facebook, at 98.5% (n=67) compared with the average of 96.9% across the sample.

With regards to frequency of Facebook use, only education level created notable differences. As Table 6.9 shows, those with the lowest levels of qualifications were distinctly more likely than any other educational subgroup to use Facebook *throughout the day*, at 73.5%. Using the one-way ANOVA, the effect of education level on frequency of Facebook use was found to be significant,  $F(3,874) = 4.51$ ,  $p=.004$ . The Scheffe post hoc test showed that this difference was found between those with National level and no qualifications and those with FE and higher qualifications ( $p=.017$ ).

**Table 6-9 Frequency of Facebook use and number of Facebook friends, per education level**

	Education	n	Once a week or less	A few times a week	Once a day	A few times a day	Throughout the day	
<b>How often do you use Facebook?</b>	NQs & no quals	49	4.1%	4.1%	0.0%	18.4%	73.5%	
	FE & Highers	68	5.9%	8.8%	13.2%	30.9%	41.2%	
	BA	705	1.7%	6.2%	8.7%	29.4%	54.0%	
	Postgrad	56	1.8%	12.5%	8.9%	32.1%	44.6%	
	Education	n	1 to 199	200 to 399	400 to 599	600 to 799	800 to 999	1000 or more
<b>How many Facebook friends do you have?</b>	NQs & no quals	49	16.3%	24.5%	28.6%	8.2%	4.1%	18.4%
	FE & Highers	68	29.4%	33.8%	19.1%	4.4%	2.9%	10.3%
	BA	706	20.3%	32.0%	26.6%	10.6%	5.0%	5.5%
	Postgrad	56	19.6%	14.3%	28.6%	14.3%	10.7%	12.5%

It is also shown in Table 6.9 that the highest and lowest educational attainment groups – i.e. those with National or no qualifications (59.3%) and Postgraduate qualifications (66.1%) – had the highest proportion of respondents with more than 400 Facebook friends. The effect of education level on number of Facebook friends was also found to be significant,  $F(3,875) = 4.86$ ,  $p=.002$ . The Scheffe post hoc test showed that this difference was found between those with

Postgraduate qualifications and those with BA ( $p=.046$ ) and FE/higher qualifications ( $p=.048$ ).

It is not clear from further analysis of the data *why* those with the highest levels of qualifications had more Facebook friends. One hypothesis is that a higher proportion of these respondents were older, and therefore would have accrued more contacts than the younger respondents. However, the analysis shows that the 22-24 year olds actually had the lowest mean number of friends compared to the other age-groups.

### 6.4.1.3 Facebook and job search behaviours

**Please note:** in the following sections, only those who agreed that they put effort into job search are included in the analysis, unless stated otherwise.

The respondents who had Facebook accounts ( $n=539$ ) were also asked about the different platform functions and whether they used them for job search activities. Half (50.3%,  $n=269$ ) had 'liked' a Facebook page where job search information was posted, whilst around one third (36.2%,  $n=19$ ) were members of a Facebook group where job search information was posted. However, only 10.1% ( $n=54$ ) had posted a Facebook status asking friends for job leads or advice. These findings reinforce the notion that those on Facebook, whether for general or job search purposes, are more likely to use the platform to passively consume information than to actively contribute content or ask for information.

To understand more about potential active uses of Facebook for job search, the respondents were asked how often they had engaged in particular behaviours. As shown in Table 6.10, the majority (59.7%) indicated that they had used it to actively search for jobs at least once, whilst almost half (44.3%) had contacted someone directly through Facebook to ask about a job. However, the proportions of those who had done so at least six times were negligible (8.0% and 3.0%, respectively). This indicates that these behaviours were not a feature of day-to-day job searching. It is also notable that the majority of respondents (85.5%) had never used Facebook hashtags to find job search information.

Table 6-10 Active use of Facebook for job search activities

How often during this job search have you:	Total count	Never (0 times)	Rarely (1 or 2 times)	Occasionally (3 to 5 times)	Frequently (at least 6 times)
Actively used Facebook to search for job opportunities	539	217	168	111	43
	100.0%	40.3%	31.2%	20.6%	8.0%
Contacted someone through Facebook and asked them about a job	536	299	137	84	16
	100.0%	55.8%	25.6%	15.7%	3.0%
Used Facebook Hashtags to find information about job search	538	460	40	21	17
	100.0%	85.5%	7.4%	3.9%	3.2%

#### 6.4.1.4 Facebook and job search: self-efficacy and perceived usefulness

The respondents were asked if they knew how to use the features on Facebook for job search activities. Only 32.4% (n=175) *agreed* that they knew how to use it for job search, whilst 47.5% (n=256) *disagreed*. Included in those figures, only 4.8% (n=26) *strongly agreed*, whilst 19.5% (n=105) *strongly disagreed*. This indicates that very few of the respondents were assured that they knew how to use Facebook for job search. There was a similar trend with regard to how useful the respondents perceived Facebook to be for job search activities. The results show that 26.0% (n=140) *agreed* that it was useful, whilst 42.3% (n=228) *disagreed*. Considerably more respondents were neutral in their opinions about the usefulness of Facebook (31.7%, n=171) than their ability to use it (20.0%, n=108).

Using a Pearson product moment correlation test, there was found to be a positive correlation between knowing how to use Facebook, thinking Facebook is a useful tool, and actively using Facebook for job search ( $p < .001$ ). For this test, active use of Facebook for job search was based upon a composite variable which added 'actively used Facebook to search for job opportunities', and 'contacted someone through Facebook and asked them about a job'. Using a principal component analysis, these variables were found to have a commonality score of 0.76. Although the direction of causality cannot be determined from these findings alone, it is logical to assume that increased Facebook use for job search

improved the respondents' levels of self-efficacy and their general attitude towards the platform as a tool for job search.

**6.4.1.5 Using Facebook for job search and demographics**

The clearest trend that emerged between demographics and using Facebook for job search related to education level. Those with National level or no qualifications were by far the most likely to have used each of the Facebook functions for job search purposes. For example, 48.6% (n=18) of these respondents were members of a Facebook group with job search information, whilst 62.2% (n=23) had liked a page with job search information, and 27.0% (n=10) had posted a status update asking for job search information. For each respective behaviour, the closest educational subgroups were BA & BA (Hons) (37.0%, n=152), BA & BA Hons (49.5%, n=202), and FE & Highers (11.5%, n=6). Using Chi-square tests, the association between education level and being a member of a Facebook group ( $p < .050$ ) and posting a Facebook status were found to be statistically significant ( $p < .010$ ).

There were also negative relationships between education level and actively using Facebook to look for jobs, contacting people through Facebook to ask about jobs, and using Facebook hashtags to find job search information. As shown in Table 6.11, these findings were statistically significant using the one-way ANOVA ( $p < .001$ ,  $p < .001$ , and  $p < .010$ ). The Scheffe post-hoc test revealed that, for the former two behaviours, the biggest differences were between the lowest education subgroup and the two university level subgroups (BA & BA (Hons) ( $p < .010$ ) and postgraduate ( $p < .010$ )). However there were also significant variances between those with FE & Highers and the two university level subgroups (BA & BA (Hons) ( $p < .050$ ) and postgraduate ( $p < .050$ )).

There were other notable associations between demographic groupings and use of Facebook for job search. For example:

- Unemployed respondents (n=48) – of whom 81.3% were in the lowest two educational attainment subgroups - were the most likely in terms of employment status to post a status asking for job search information (using

the Chi-square,  $p < .050$ ), to actively search for jobs, and to contact someone for job search information (using the one-way ANOVA,  $p < .010$ )

- In terms of age, the 22-24 year old respondents ( $n=142$ ) were the most likely to be a member of a Facebook Group, to have liked a Facebook page with job information, and to post a status asking for job information – although none of these findings were statistically significant
- Those from “any other White background” ( $n=71$ ) were the most likely to be in a Facebook group or to like a Facebook page where job search information was posted - for both of these behaviours the association with ethnicity was found to be statistically significant using the Chi-square test ( $p < .001$ )

Table 6-11 Active use of Facebook and education level<sup>1</sup>

		Actively used Facebook to look for job opportunities	Contacted somebody through Facebook and asked them about a job	Used Facebook hashtags to find information about job search
National & no qualifications	Mean	2.59	2.22	1.65
	n	37	37	37
FE & Highers	Mean	2.37	2.11	1.31
	n	52	52	52
BA & BA (Hons)	Mean	1.90	1.59	1.21
	n	411	409	410
Postgraduate	Mean	1.74	1.32	1.15
	n	39	38	39
		<i>p</i>	<.001	<.010

<sup>1</sup> Means are derived from Likert scale responses relating to frequency of networking behaviours: 1 = ‘Never (0 times)’; 2 = ‘Rarely (1 or 2 times)’; 3 = ‘Occasionally (3 to 5 times)’; 4 = ‘Frequently (6 to 9 times)’; 5 = ‘Very frequently (at least 10 times)’.

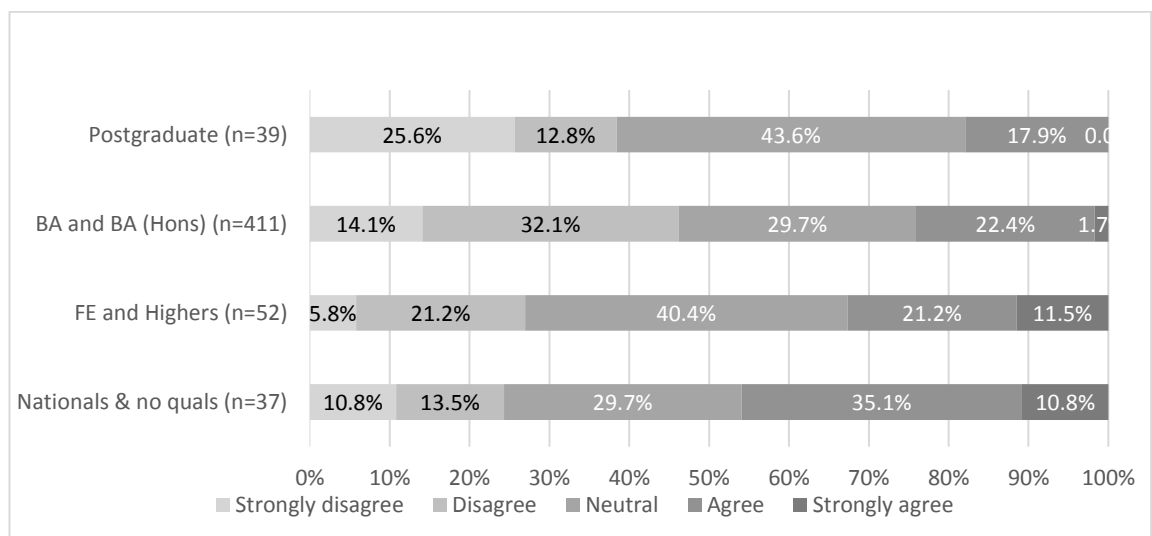


Those from ‘any other White background’ were the least likely to be born in Scotland. It is therefore possible that these respondents were using Facebook group and page functions to interact with other expat students from their home countries.

**6.4.1.6 Demographics, Facebook self-efficacy and perceived usefulness**

As established above, there is a positive correlation between knowing how to use Facebook, thinking Facebook is a useful tool, and actively using Facebook for job search. This finding is given further credence when considering the effect of demographics on Facebook self-efficacy and perceived usefulness. For example, with regards to the former, there was found to be a negative trend with education level. At 56.7% (n=21), the majority of those with National level or no qualifications *agreed* they knew how to use Facebook for job search, compared with 40.4% (n=21) of those with FE & Highers, 29.4% (n=121) of those with BA & BA (Hons), and 30.8% (n=12) of those with Postgraduate qualifications. Using the Chi-square test, the association between education level and Facebook self-efficacy was found to be statistically significant ( $p < .010$ ). There was a similar relationship between education level and perceived usefulness of Facebook ( $p < .001$ ), as shown in Figure 14.

**Figure 14 Perceived usefulness of Facebook and education level**

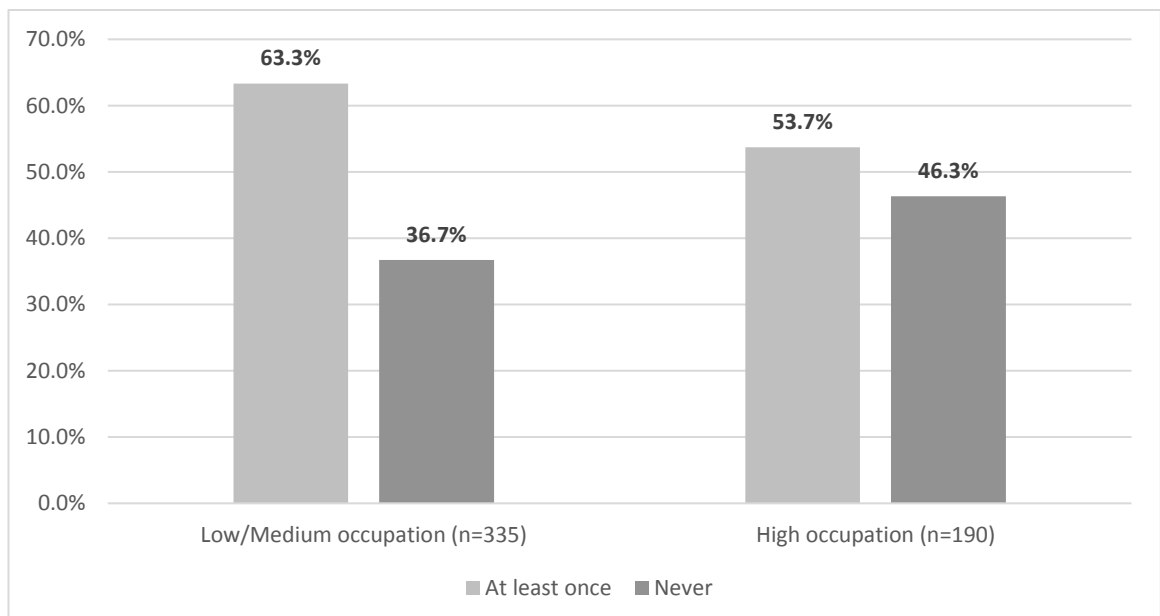


#### 6.4.1.7 Facebook and job search: the role of context

The length of time the respondents were seeking a job impacted their use of Facebook for job search purposes. For example, 16.9% ( $p=23$ ) of those who had searched for more than four months had posted a status asking friends for job search information, compared with 7.8% ( $n=31$ ) of those who had searched for less than four months. This finding suggests that, as job search length increased, so did the propensity to post a public status on Facebook asking for help with job search - despite the general disinclination of young people to post updates on Facebook on any subject matter.

Level of occupation sought also accounted for key differences in the use of Facebook for job search. Figure 15 shows how those seeking a job of low/medium occupational status were more likely to have actively searched for jobs on Facebook than those seeking jobs of higher occupational status. Indeed, the associations between occupational status and both active job search on Facebook ( $p<.050$ ) and contacting someone of Facebook about a job ( $p<.010$ ) were found to be statistically significant using Independent t-tests.

**Figure 15** Level of occupation sought and actively using Facebook for job search (at least once)



With the exception of being a member of a Facebook group where job search information was posted, putting effort into job search was significantly associated

with every other use of Facebook for job search. Using Chi-square tests, it was found (amongst those who *agreed* that they put effort into job search) that:

- Those who *agreed* they were looking for a career option (60.3%, n=277) were significantly more likely than those who *disagreed* (35.1%, n=148) to have liked a Facebook page where job search information was posted ( $p < .001$ )
- Those who *agreed* that they were happy to relocate within the UK (56.4%, n=156) were significantly more likely than those who *disagreed* (46.6%, n=326) to have liked a Facebook page where job search information was posted ( $p < .050$ )
- Those who *agreed* that they were willing to take almost any job (14.7%, n=156) were significantly more likely than those who *disagreed* (7.8%, n=326) to have posted a Facebook status asking for job search information ( $p < .050$ )

Using a Pearson product moment correlation test, there was found to be a positive correlation between seeking a career option and willingness to relocate ( $p < .001$ ), which explains the similarity in the first two findings. This suggests that companies offering career-type roles are more likely to have a presence on Facebook, or to use their Facebook pages to advertise positions. The latter finding suggests that the respondents who were under more pressure to earn some income, or who were less prescriptive about the type of job they required, were willing to request information on a public forum.

As shown in Table 6.12, there were similar findings with regards to active uses of Facebook for job search. Amongst those who *agreed* that they put a lot of effort into job search, the respondents who were willing to settle for any job that paid money had actively searched Facebook for jobs, and contacted someone on Facebook about jobs the most frequently. These findings were statistically significant using Independent t-tests ( $p < .001$ ). Additionally, looking for a career option was positively associated with each behaviour.

Table 6-12 Active use of Facebook for job search and job search job search characteristics<sup>1</sup>

	Agree /disagree	N	Active Facebook use (Mean)		
			Actively used Facebook to search for job opportunities	Contacted somebody on Facebook to ask about a job	Used Facebook hashtags to find job search information
I put a lot of effort into job search	Agree	539	1.99	1.66	1.25
	Disagree	179	1.60	1.36	1.20
P value of difference			p <.001	p <.001	p =.404
I am looking for a job that is a career option	Agree	279	2.03	1.74	1.32
	Disagree	148	1.86	1.50	1.15
P value of difference			P=.101	p <.010	P<.050
I would settle for almost any job that pays me money	Agree	224	2.20	1.85	1.30
	Disagree	193	1.77	1.48	1.20
P value of difference			p <.001	p<.001	p <.126

<sup>1</sup> Means are derived from Likert scale responses relating to frequency of networking behaviours: 1 = 'Never (0 times)'; 2 = 'Rarely (1 or 2 times)'; 3 = 'Occasionally (3 to 5 times)'; 4 = 'Frequently (6 to 9 times)'; 5 = 'Very frequently (at least 10 times)'.

#### 6.4.1.8 Facebook use, job search, and other important factors

The survey findings also provide evidence that other factors had a keen influence on the use of social media for job search purposes. Most notably, those who had either a) been advised by a professional (e.g. a careers adviser, teacher/tutor, or a support worker) to use social media as part of job search, or b) been shown by a professional how to use social media for job search, were considerably more likely to have done so. Table 6.13 shows how, using Chi-square tests, both of these factors were found to be significantly associated with being a member of a Facebook group, liking a Facebook page, or posting a Facebook status asking for job search information.

Using Independent t-tests, there were also found to be a positive association between being advised/shown by a professional and actively searching Facebook for jobs ( $p < .001$ ;  $p < .010$ ), contacting someone on Facebook to ask for

job information ( $p < .001$ ;  $p < .010$ ), and using Facebook hashtags ( $p < .010$ ;  $p < .050$ ).

Table 6-13 Using Facebook functions for job search and being advised/shown by a professional

		Have you been advised by a professional to use social media websites as part of your job search?			Have you been shown by a professional how to use social media websites as part of your job search?		
		Yes	No	<i>p</i>	Yes	No	<i>p</i>
<b>Member of a Facebook group where job search information is posted</b>	Yes	50.7%	30.1%	<.001	50.7%	33.3%	<.010
	No	49.3%	69.9%		49.3%	66.7%	
	n	134	372		67	448	
<b>“Liked” a Facebook page where job search information is posted</b>	Yes	69.9%	42.3%	<.001	74.2%	45.6%	<.001
	No	30.1%	57.7%		25.8%	54.4%	
	n	133	369		66	445	
<b>Posted a status update asking for job search information</b>	Yes	17.2%	7.0%	<.010	20.9%	7.8%	<.010
	No	82.8%	93.0%		79.1%	92.2%	
	n	134	370		67	447	

Also using an Independent t-test, it was found that those who *agreed* that they were more comfortable asking people they did not know very well for job search information ( $n=226$ ) were more likely to have contacted someone on Facebook to ask about jobs than those who *disagreed* ( $n=335$ ) ( $p < .010$ ). However, there were no other significant associations between using Facebook for job search purposes and asking relative strangers for job search information.

Those who *disagreed* that they would be comfortable speaking to people they did not know very well, but *agreed* that they preferred speaking on social media ( $n=106$ ), had contacted people on Facebook more frequently than was the average across the sample ( $n=536$ ). Using a One-sample mean test, the difference in means was found to be statistically significant ( $p < .050$ ). This finding could indicate that social media platforms offer less confident jobseekers an outlet for communication with contacts.

The results also provide some evidence that having a mobile phone with internet access is valuable to job search. For example, 51.2% (n=266) of those who did have a phone with internet access had “liked” a page where job search information was posted, compared with 21.4% (n=3) of those who did not. This was found to be statistically significant using the Chi-square test ( $p < .050$ ). Social capital indicators (i.e. having an immediate family member with a university degree, or having access to potential job referees in jobs with higher occupation prestige) were not associated with Facebook use for job search.

**6.4.1.9 Facebook and job search outcomes**

A series of Independent t-tests were conducted to determine the relationship between using Facebook for job search purposes and job search outcomes. Only those who had been seeking a job for at least four months were included in the analysis, to mitigate for potentially misleading findings caused by jobseekers who had been searching for significantly different lengths of time.

Under these conditions it was found that whilst those who liked a page with job search information (n=74), or had posted a Facebook status asking for job search information (n=23) had received a higher number of job interviews than those who had not (n=74 and n=113), the differences were not statistically significant. Table 6.14 shows that both actively seeking jobs on Facebook and contacting people about jobs were associated with higher numbers of job interviews. However, only the former was found to be statistically significant ( $p < .050$ ).

The following results were also found to be statistically significant using Independent T-tests:

- Those who were members of a Facebook group where job search information was posted (n=51) had been contacted by someone with job search information more often than those who had not (n=85) ( $p < .010$ )
- Those who had liked a Facebook page where job search information was posted (n=74) had been contacted by someone with job search information more often than those who had not (n=62) ( $p < .010$ )

Table 6-14 Face-to-face interviews and active uses of Facebook for job search

		Mean no. of face-to-face job interviews	N	P
<b>Actively used Facebook to search for jobs</b>	At least once	1.89	83	<.050
	Never	1.49	53	
<b>Contacted someone on Facebook about jobs</b>	At least once	1.80	69	.474
	Never	1.67	66	
<b>Used Facebook Hashtags to find job search information</b>	At least once	1.67	24	.761
	Never	1.74	111	

- Those who had posted a status asking Facebook friends for job search information or advice (n=23) had been contacted by someone with job search information more often than those who had not (n=113) ( $p < .010$ )
- Those who had actively searched Facebook for job opportunities at least once (n=83) had been contacted with job search information more often than those who had not (n=53) ( $p < .001$ )
- Those who had contacted someone through Facebook to ask about a job at least once (n=69) had been contacted with job search information more often than those who had not (n=66) ( $p < .010$ )
- Those who had used Facebook hashtags to find for job search information at least once (n=24) had received more phone interviews ( $p < .050$ ), had been contacted more often with job search information ( $p < .010$ ), and were more confident that they were making progress with job search ( $p < .010$ ), than those who had not (n=111).

## 6.4.2 Twitter

### 6.4.2.1 General Twitter use

Questions relating to the general use of Twitter include the whole survey sample (n=909). At 51.3% (n=466), just over half of the respondents had a Twitter account. Table 6.15 shows that, amongst these Twitter users, 57.2% used it at least once a day. In terms of Twitter contacts, 40.3% were followed by a minimum of 200 Twitter accounts, whilst 46.8% followed at least 200 Twitter accounts. These figures indicate that whilst Twitter was used by a sizeable proportion of the respondents, it was not used as widely or intensively as Facebook.

**Table 6-15** Frequency of Twitter use and number of Twitter connections

	<b>Total count</b>	<b>Once a week or less</b>	<b>A few times a week</b>	<b>Once a day</b>	<b>A few times a day</b>	<b>Throughout the day</b>	
How often do you use Twitter?	467	28.7%	14.1%	10.1%	20.6%	26.6%	
	<b>Total count</b>	<b>1 to 199</b>	<b>200 to 399</b>	<b>400 to 599</b>	<b>600 to 799</b>	<b>800 to 999</b>	<b>1000 or more</b>
How many Twitter followers do you have?	467	59.7%	21.4%	9.6%	2.4%	1.7%	5.1%
How many Twitter accounts do you follow?	466	53.2%	22.7%	9.9%	6.0%	2.4%	5.8%

Despite Twitter use being lower than Facebook in almost every other area, significantly more Twitter users *agreed* that they regularly posted on Twitter (31.4%) than was the case for Facebook (16.8%).

### 6.4.2.2 General Twitter use and demographics

There was a markedly even distribution of Twitter users by age and gender. However, using Chi-square tests, having a Twitter account was found to be significantly associated with education level, employment status, and ethnic background ( $p < .001$ ,  $p < .050$ , and  $p < .010$ , respectively). The subgroups which created the main differences were the lowest educational attainment group (n=52), of whom only 23.1% had an account, the employed and unemployed



respondents (n=83 and n=68)), of whom 61.4% and 36.8% had an account, respectively, and those who identified as being from any other White background/any other background (n=264), of whom a combined 42.0% had an account. Therefore, in general, it can be deduced that those with higher education levels, the employed, and those who identified as Scottish, other British or Irish, were the most likely to have a Twitter account.

Age and ethnic background had the biggest effect on frequency of Twitter use. As shown in Table 6.16, the association with age was negative, with 70.8% (n=97) of 16-18 year olds using the platform at least once a day, compared with 54.6% (n=119) of 19-21 year olds, and 45.5% (n=51) of 22-24 year olds. Using the one-way ANOVA, the effect of age was found to be significant,  $F(2,464) = 9.66, p < .001$ . The Scheffe post hoc test showed that the biggest variances were between 16-18 year olds subgroup and the two older age groups (19-21 year olds ( $p < .010$ ) and 22-24 year olds ( $p < .001$ )).

It is also shown in Table 6.16 that there were key differences per ethnic background, with Scottish respondents using Twitter the most frequently. Again, using the one-way ANOVA, the effect of ethnicity was found to be significant,  $F(3,463) = 22.635, p < .001$ . The Scheffe post hoc test showed that the biggest variances were between the Scottish respondents (n=287) and those in the any other background (n=42) ( $p < .010$ ) and any other White background (69) ( $p < .001$ ) subgroups.

**Table 6-16 Frequency of Twitter use per age group and ethnic background**

	<b>Age group n=878</b>	<i>Once a week or less</i>	<i>A few times a week</i>	<i>Once a day</i>	<i>A few times a day</i>	<i>Throughout the day</i>	<b>p</b>
<b>How often do you use Twitter?</b>	16-18	20.4%	8.8%	9.5%	22.6%	38.7%	<.010
	19-21	28.9%	16.5%	12.4%	21.6%	20.6%	
	22-24	38.4%	16.1%	6.2%	16.1%	23.2%	
	<b>Ethnic background n=467</b>	<i>Once a week or less</i>	<i>A few times a week</i>	<i>Once a day</i>	<i>A few times a day</i>	<i>Throughout the day</i>	<b>p</b>
	Scottish	20.2%	12.2%	9.8%	21.3%	36.6%	<.001
	Other British & Irish	30.4%	15.9%	7.2%	26.1%	20.3%	
	Other White background	53.6%	17.4%	15.9%	13.0%	0.0%	
	Any other background	42.9%	19.0%	7.1%	19.0%	11.9%	

Scottish respondents appeared to be the heaviest Twitter users of all demographic subgroups. For example, excluding 16-18 year olds, those who identified as Scottish were still the most likely to use Twitter throughout the day (35.1%, n=57), followed by those who identified as Other British and Irish (20.8%, n=11). Also, excluding Scottish respondents, the proportion of 16-18 year olds who used Twitter *throughout the day* fell from 36.6% to 16.1% (n=5) (albeit the negative trend between age and Twitter usage remained, and was statistically significant). It is also notable that Scottish respondents had the most followers on Twitter, and followed the most Twitter accounts.

#### 6.4.2.3 Twitter and job search behaviours

**Please note:** *in the following sections, only those who agreed that they put effort into job search are included in the analysis, unless stated otherwise.*

The Twitter users within the sample were asked whether they used its various functions for job search purposes. The results show that 31.4% (n=87) followed an account where job search information was posted, whilst only 5.4% (n=15) had posted a Tweet asking for job information. Table 6.17 shows that large

**Table 6-17 Active use of Twitter for job search activities**

<b>How often during this job search have you:</b>	<b>Total count</b>	<b>Never (0 times)</b>	<b>Rarely (1 or 2 times)</b>	<b>Occasionally (3 to 5 times)</b>	<b>Frequently (at least 6 times)</b>
Actively used Twitter to search for job opportunities	277	197	47	19	14
	100.0%	71.1%	17.0%	6.9%	5.0%
Contacted someone through Twitter and asked them about a job	278	241	28	6	3
	100.0%	86.7%	10.1%	2.2%	1.1%
Used Twitter Hashtags to find information about job search	278	230	29	13	6
	100.0%	82.7%	10.4%	4.7%	2.2%

majorities had *never* actively searched for jobs on Twitter, contacted someone on Twitter to ask about jobs, or used Twitter hashtags to find job search information. Additionally, only very small proportions had engaged in any of these behaviours on at least three occasions. These figures indicate that active Twitter use is not a regular feature of job search.

#### **6.4.2.4 Twitter self-efficacy and perceived usefulness**

Only 25.6% (n=71) of Twitter users *agreed* that they knew how to use Twitter for job search activities, including 4.7% (n=13) who *strongly agreed*. In comparison, 55.4% (n=154) *disagreed* that they knew how to use the platform for job search. This figure included 31.3% (n=87) who *strongly disagreed*. There was a similar pattern with regards to its perceived usefulness as a tool for job search, with 18.0% (n=50) who *agreed* (including none (n=0) who *strongly agreed*), and 49.6% (n=138) who *disagreed* (including 27.3% (n=76) who *strongly disagreed*).

Using a Pearson product moment correlation test, there was found to be a positive correlation between knowing how to use Twitter, thinking Twitter is a useful tool, and actively using Twitter for job search ( $p < .001$ ). Active use of Twitter for job search is based upon a composite variable which added 'actively used Twitter to search for job opportunities', and 'contacted someone through Twitter and asked them about a job'. Using a principal component analysis, these variables were found to have a communality score of 0.74. Given the associations between these variables, it is logical to assume that increased Twitter use for job search improved the respondents' levels of self-efficacy, and their general attitude towards the platform as a tool for job search.

#### **6.4.2.5 Using Twitter for job search and demographics**

Despite the associations between those who identified as being Scottish and general use of Twitter, this did not translate to clear differences in use for job search purposes. Indeed, demographics created few clear differences in this regard. However, there is some indication that age and education level had an effect on Twitter job search. For example, 40.5% (n=30) of 22-24 year olds followed accounts where job search information was posted, compared with 30.8% (n=36) of 19-21 year olds, and 24.4% (n=21) of 16-18 year olds.

**6.4.2.6 Demographics, Twitter self-efficacy and perceived usefulness**

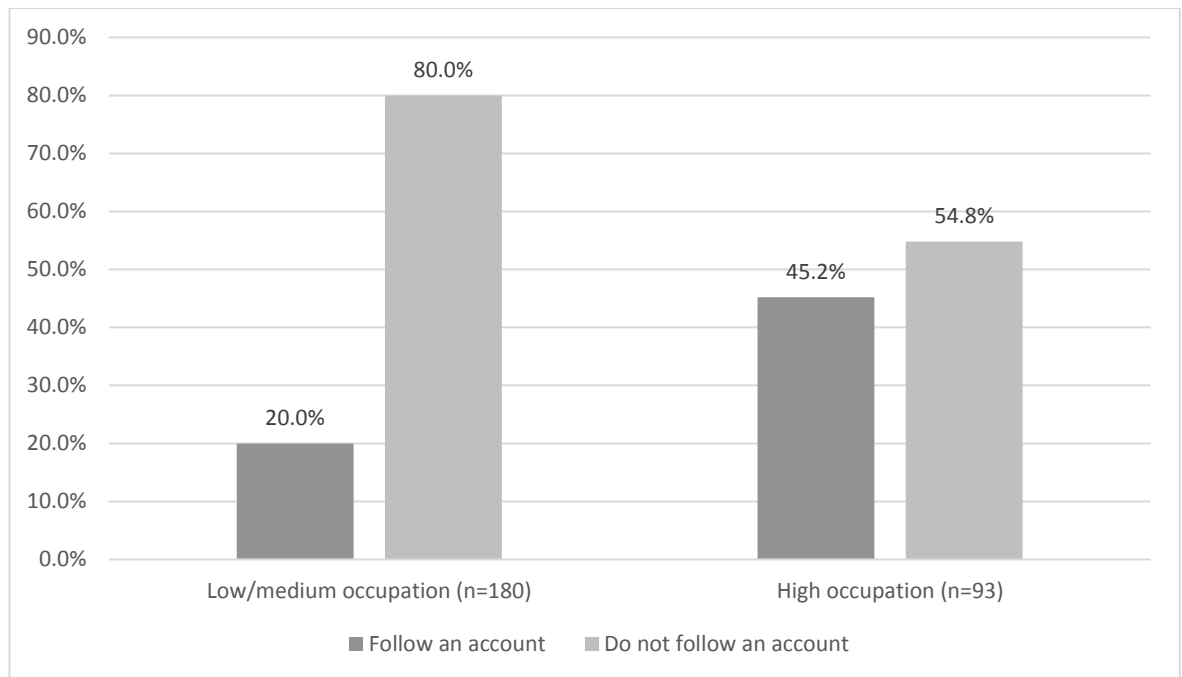
There were no statistically significant associations within demographic groups in relation to Twitter self-efficacy and perceived usefulness. However, the older respondents were more likely to agree that they knew how to use Twitter for job search (35.2% (n=26) of 22-24 year olds compared with 22.1% (n=45) of 16-21 year olds), and that they thought it was a useful tool for job search (21.6% (n=16) of 22-24 year olds compared with 15.9% (n=34) of 16-21 year olds). These results give further credence to the findings above, which show that there is a correlation between using Twitter for job search, knowing how to use it for job search, and thinking it is a useful tool for job search.

**6.4.2.7 Twitter and job search: the role of context**

The length of time the respondents spent looking for work was positively associated with all Twitter uses for job search, with the exception of following a Twitter account where job search information was posted. For example, 34.2% (n=25) of those who had been searching for at least 4 months had actively used Twitter to search for job opportunities, compared to 27.1% (n=55) of those who had been searching for less than 4 months. However, none of the results were found to be statistically significant.

Level of occupation sought also accounted for key differentials in the use of Twitter for job search. Indeed, as shown in Figure 16, those seeking jobs in the highest occupational category (n=93) were more likely to be following a Twitter account where job search information was posted than those who were seeking low or medium level occupations (n=180). This was found to be statistically significant using a Chi-square test ( $p < .010$ ). Using Independent t-tests, it was also found that those seeking high occupation level jobs (n=142) actively used Twitter to search for jobs ( $p < .001$ ) and used Twitter hashtags to find job search information ( $p < .050$ ) more often than those seeking lower level jobs (n=132).

**Figure 16 Level of occupation sought and following a Twitter account where job search information is posted**



The job search characteristics which created the biggest differences in Twitter use for job search were looking for a career option and willingness to relocate within the UK. Indeed, 44.7% (n=55) of those who *agreed* that they were seeking a career option followed an account where job search information was posted, compared to 20.5% (n=18) of those who *disagreed*. Similarly, 40.3% (n=31) of those who *agreed* that they would relocate within the UK for a job followed an account where job search information was posted, compared to 23.7% (n=42) of those who *disagreed*. Both of these findings were statistically significant using Chi-square tests ( $p < .010$ ).

As shown in Table 6.18, looking for a career option and willingness to relocate were also important factors in regard to active Twitter job search behaviours. When considering the whole sample of Twitter users (n=377), job search effort was not found to be an influential characteristic.

Table 6-18 Active job search on Twitter and job search characteristics<sup>1</sup>

	Agree /disagree	N	Active Twitter use (Mean)		
			Actively used Twitter to search for job opportunities	Contacted somebody on Twitter to ask about a job	Used Twitter hashtags to find job search information
I am looking for a job that is a career option	Agree	279	1.72	1.23	1.37
	Disagree	148	1.19	1.10	1.11
P value of difference			P<.001	P=.065	P<.010
I would be happy to move to a new area in the UK for a job	Agree	78	1.68	1.23	1.41
	Disagree	176	1.33	1.14	1.16
P value of difference			p <.010	P=.189	p <.050

<sup>1</sup> Means are derived from Likert scale responses relating to frequency of behaviours: 1 = 'Never (0 times)'; 2 = 'Rarely (1 or 2 times)'; 3 = 'Occasionally (3 to 5 times)'; 4 = 'Frequently (6 to 9 times)'; 5 = 'Very frequently (at least 10 times)'.

#### 6.4.2.8 Twitter use, job search, and other important factors

The survey findings also provide evidence

that other factors have a keen influence on the use of social media for job search purposes. Most notably, those who had either a) been advised by a professional (professional i.e. a teacher, tutor, careers adviser, or support worker) to use social media as part of job search, or b) been shown by a professional how to use social media for job search, were considerably more likely to have used Twitter for all of the job search behaviours measured in the survey.

The association between having been advised/shown by a professional and following a Twitter account where job search information is posted, and posting a Tweet asking for job search information, is shown in Table 6.19. Using Independent t-tests, it was also found that those who were advised (n=65) or shown (n=33) had undertaken the following behaviours more often than those who had not (n=195 and n=237, respectively):

- Actively used Twitter to search for job opportunities (p<.001 and p<.010)
- Contacted someone through Twitter to ask about a job (p<.010 and p<.001)

- Used Twitter hashtags to find job search information ( $p < .010$  and  $p < .050$ ).

**Table 6-19 Using Twitter functions for job search and being advised/shown by a professional**

		Have you been advised by a professional to use social media websites as part of your job search?			Have you been shown by a professional how to use social media websites as part of your job search?		
		Yes	No	<i>p</i>	Yes	No	<i>p</i>
Follow a Twitter account where job search information is posted	Yes	61.5%	22.1%	<.001	41.2%	30.0%	.417
	No	38.5%	77.9%		59.2%	70.0%	
	n	65	195		34	237	
Posted a Tweet asking for job search information	Yes	10.6%	3.6%	.095	11.8%	4.7%	.188
	No	89.4%	96.4%		88.2%	95.3%	
	n	66	194		34	236	

As with Facebook, those who *disagreed* that they were comfortable asking people they did not know well for information, but *agreed* they preferred speaking on social media ( $n=41$ ), contacted people on Twitter more frequently than was the average across the sample ( $n=278$ ). The difference in means was found to be statistically significant using the One-sample mean test ( $p < .001$ ). Again, this indicates that social media platforms offer less confident jobseekers an outlet to speak to people about job search. It is also notable that when including all Twitter users, those who *agreed* they were more comfortable speaking on social media than face-to-face ( $n=95$ ) were more likely than those who *disagreed* ( $n=103$ ) to have engaged in every Twitter job search behaviour.

In addition to the above, it was found that for every measured behaviour, those who had access to a mobile phone with internet access ( $n=271$ ) were more likely to have used Twitter than those who did not ( $n=6$ ). For example, 32.1% ( $n=87$ ) of those who had a mobile with internet access followed accounts where job search information was posted, compared with none ( $n=0$ ) of those who did not have a phone with internet access. However, due to the small numbers of Twitter users who did not have a phone with internet access, it is difficult to determine the veracity of these findings.

#### 6.4.2.9 Twitter and job search outcomes

A series of Independent t-tests were conducted to determine the relationship between using Twitter for job search purposes and job search outcomes. Only those who had been seeking a job for at least four months were included in the analysis, to mitigate for potentially misleading findings caused by jobseekers who had been searching for significantly different lengths of time. Under these conditions it was found that, whilst using Twitter was positively associated with receiving face-to-face and telephone interviews, the findings were not statistically significant, and only accounted for minor differences.

### 6.4.3 LinkedIn

#### 6.4.3.1 General LinkedIn use

Questions relating to the general use of LinkedIn include the whole survey sample (n=909). At 28.4% (n=259), just over a quarter of the respondents had a LinkedIn account. As shown in Table 6.20, the vast majority were not prolific users, with only 7.7% (n=20) using it on a daily basis. Additionally, only 8.9% (n=23) had more than 200 connections with other users on LinkedIn. Based upon these figures, LinkedIn was not as popular or used as frequently as Facebook or Twitter for general use.

**Table 6-20 Frequency of LinkedIn use and number of LinkedIn connections**

	Total count	Once a week or less	A few times a week	Once a day	A few times a day	Throughout the day	
<b>How often do you use LinkedIn?</b>	259	70.7%	21.6%	5.0%	1.9%	0.8%	
	Total count	1 to 199	200 to 399	400 to 599	600 to 799	800 to 999	1000 or more
<b>How many LinkedIn connections do you have?</b>	259	91.1%	5.4%	3.1%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%

Despite the above, 47.1% (n=121) of the LinkedIn users *agreed* that they put a lot of effort into creating their account profile, compared with 28.0% (n=72) who *disagreed*. Of the former group, 45.5% (n=55) used LinkedIn at least a few times



a week, including 14.1% (n=17) used it at least once a day. The effect of putting effort into the creation of a LinkedIn profile on frequency of use was found to be statistically significant using an Independent t-test ( $p < .001$ ).

#### 6.4.3.2 General LinkedIn use and demographics

The association between having a LinkedIn account and demographics was very pronounced. For example, 47.1% (n=106) of 22-24 year olds had an account, compared with 31.3% (n=132) of 19-21 year olds, and 7.6% (n=20) of 16-18 year olds. The association between age and having a LinkedIn was found to be significant using the Chi-square test ( $p < .001$ ). Those with university level education (31.8% (n=250) were also considerably more likely to have an account than those with non-university education (6.6%, n=8), whilst more employed respondents (43.4%, n=36) had an account than those who were students (28.0%, n=212) or unemployed (14.7%, n=10).

Using Pearson product moment correlation tests, the correlation between age and education level, and age and employment status, were found to be statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ). Using the same test, there were also positive correlations between age and frequency of LinkedIn use ( $p < .001$ ), and age and number of LinkedIn connections ( $p < .010$ ). These results give a clear indication that LinkedIn was predominantly used by older respondents who were better educated.

#### 6.4.3.3 LinkedIn and job search behaviours

**Please note:** in the following sections, only those who agreed that they put effort into job search are included in the analysis, unless stated otherwise.

Despite the lack of prolific LinkedIn users, 56.4% (n=92) of those who had an account were in a group where job search information was posted. As shown in Table 6.21, active use of LinkedIn to search for job opportunities was also considerable, with a majority of users (74.8%, n=122) having done so at least once. Therefore, proportionately more users of LinkedIn appropriated the platform to search for jobs than was the case for Facebook or Twitter, amongst the sample. Almost half (45.4%, n=74) had contacted someone on LinkedIn to ask about a job, whilst a sizeable minority (39.0%, n=64) had shared or published a post on LinkedIn on at least one occasion.

Table 6-21 Active use of LinkedIn for job search activities

How often during this job search have you:	Total count	Never (0 times)	Rarely (1 or 2 times)	Occasionally (3 to 5 times)	Frequently (at least 6 times)
Actively used LinkedIn to search for job opportunities	163	41	31	54	37
	100%	25.2%	19.0%	33.1%	22.7%
Contacted someone through LinkedIn and asked them about a job	163	89	31	29	14
	100%	54.6%	19.0%	17.8%	8.6%
Shared or published a post on LinkedIn	164	100	25	29	10
	100%	61.0%	15.2%	17.7%	6.1%

#### 6.4.3.4 *LinkedIn self-efficacy and perceived usefulness*

Half (50.0%, n=82) of those with a LinkedIn account *agreed* that they knew how to use it for job search activities, whilst 35.4% (n=58) *disagreed*. However, a clear majority of 70.2% (n=115) *agreed* that it is a useful tool to find job search information, whilst only 10.4% (n=17) *disagreed*. Using a Pearson product moment correlation test, there was found to be a positive correlation between knowing how to use LinkedIn, thinking LinkedIn is a useful tool, and actively using LinkedIn for job search ( $p < .001$ ). Active use of LinkedIn for job search is based upon a composite variable which added 'actively used LinkedIn to search for job opportunities', and 'contacted someone through LinkedIn and asked them about a job'. Using a principal component analysis, these variables were found to have a communality score of 0.76. Given the associations between these variables, it is logical to assume that increased LinkedIn use for job search improved the respondents' self-efficacy and their general attitude towards the platform as a tool for job search.

#### 6.4.3.5 *Using LinkedIn for job search and demographics*

Age was also the most significant demographic variable with regards to LinkedIn use for job search. Indeed, the association between age and each use of LinkedIn for job search was positive and linear. With regards to being a member of a LinkedIn group where job search information was posted, 72.0% (n=54) of those

aged 22-24 had done so, compared to 43.2% (n=38) of those aged 16-21. The association was found to be statistically significant using the Chi-square test ( $p < .010$ ). Using a one-way ANOVA, it was also found that the effect of age on actively using LinkedIn to search for job opportunities was statistically significant,  $F(2,160) = 6.07$ ,  $p < .010$ . The Scheffe post hoc test showed that the difference was created between 22-24 year olds (n=76) and both the 16-18 year olds (n=13) ( $p < .050$ ) and the 19-21 year olds (n=74) ( $p < .050$ ).

#### **6.4.3.6 Demographics, self-efficacy and perceived usefulness**

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the oldest respondents were the most likely to *agree* that they knew how to use the features on LinkedIn for job search activities at 61.9% (n=47), compared to 40.0% (n=30) of 19-21 and 38.5% (n=5) of 16-18 year olds. There was a similar trend regarding the perceived usefulness of LinkedIn, with 81.5% (n=62) of 22-24 year olds thinking it was a useful tool for job search, compared to 64.0% (n=48) of 19-21 and 38.5% (n=5) of 16-18 year olds. The association between age and the perceived usefulness of LinkedIn was found to be statistically significant using the Chi-square test ( $p < .010$ ). These results also give further weight to those outlined previously, which show that there is a correlation between using LinkedIn for job search, knowing how to use it for job search, and thinking it is a useful tool for job search.

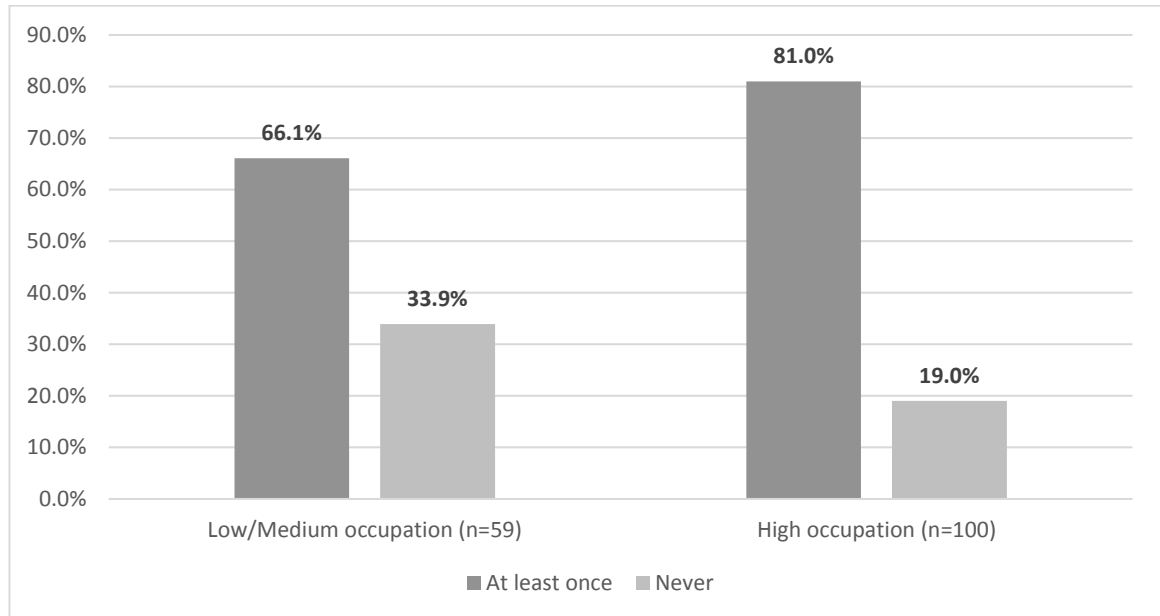
#### **6.4.3.7 LinkedIn and job search: the role of context**

Job search length was positively associated with all of the measured LinkedIn job search behaviours. For example, 69.0% (n=29) of the respondents who had been searching for at least four months had actively used LinkedIn to search for job opportunities at least three times, compared with 50.8% (n=61) of those who had been searching for less than four months. However, none of these associations were found to be statistically significant.

The level of occupation being sought by the respondents was also positively associated with the use of each LinkedIn function for job search. For example, 64.6% (n=64) of those who were seeking a job of high occupational status were members of a LinkedIn group, compared with 43.3% (n=26) of those who were seeking low or medium category jobs. The association between occupation level sought and being a member of a LinkedIn group was found to be statistically

significant using the Chi-square test ( $p < .050$ ). Figure 17 shows the impact occupational status sought had on actively using LinkedIn to search for jobs. This finding was also statistically significant, using an Independent t-test ( $p < .010$ ).

**Figure 17 Level of occupation sought and actively using LinkedIn for job search (at least once)**



Amongst the whole sample of users ( $n=258$ ) job search effort had a considerable impact on the use of LinkedIn for job search purposes. For example, the results show that 56.4% ( $n=92$ ) of those who *agreed* that they put a lot of effort into job search were a member of a LinkedIn group which provided job search information, compared to 36.4% ( $n=20$ ) of those who *disagreed*. This association was found to be statistically significant using the Chi-square test ( $p < .001$ ). Using Independent t-tests, it was also found that putting effort into job search was significantly associated with actively using LinkedIn to search for job opportunities ( $p < .010$ ), contacting someone through LinkedIn to ask about a job ( $p < .001$ ), and sharing a post or an update on LinkedIn ( $p < .050$ ).

Amongst those putting effort into job search, it was also found that:

- Using a Chi-square test, those who *agreed* that they had a clear idea of the type of job they were looking for ( $n=112$ ) were more likely to be in a LinkedIn group than those who *disagreed* ( $n=15$ ) ( $p < .050$ )

- Using a Chi-square test, those who *agreed* that they would take almost any job that paid money (n=51) were **less** likely to be in a LinkedIn group than those who *disagreed* (n=76) ( $p < .050$ )
- Using an Independent t-test it was found that those who *agreed* that they had a clear idea of the type of job they were looking for (n=112) had contacted someone on LinkedIn to ask about jobs more often than those who *disagreed* (n=15) ( $p < .001$ )
- Using Independent t-tests, it was found that those who *agreed* that they were willing to relocate within the UK for a job (n=80) had actively used LinkedIn to search for jobs ( $p < .010$ ) and had shared an update or published a post ( $p < .050$ ) often than those who *disagreed* (n=69).

**6.4.3.8** *LinkedIn use, job search, and other important factors*

The survey findings also provide evidence that other factors had a keen influence on the use of LinkedIn for job search purposes. For example, those who had either a) been advised by a professional to use social media as part of job search (i.e. a teacher, tutor, careers adviser, or support worker), or b) been shown by a professional how to use social media for job search, were considerably more likely than those who had not, to have used LinkedIn for all measured job search behaviours.

The association between having been advised/shown by a professional and being in a LinkedIn group where job search information is posted, is shown in Table 6.22. These were found to be statistically significant using Chi-square tests ( $p < .010$ ). Using Independent T-tests, it was also found that those who were advised (n=60) or shown (n=29) had undertaken the following behaviours more often than those who had not (n=96 and n=130, respectively):

- Actively used LinkedIn to search for job opportunities ( $p < .001$  and  $p < .050$ )
- Contacted someone through LinkedIn to ask about a job ( $p < .050$  and  $p < .050$ )
- Shared an update or published a post on LinkedIn ( $p < .010$  and  $p < .050$ ).

Table 6-22 Using LinkedIn functions for job search and being advised/shown by a professional

		Have you been advised by a professional to use social media websites as part of your job search?			Have you been shown by a professional how to use social media websites as part of your job search?		
		Yes	No	<i>p</i>	Yes	No	<i>p</i>
Are you a member of any LinkedIn groups which provide job search information	Yes	65.6%	51.6%	<.010	58.7%	56.9%	<.010
	No	34.4%	48.4%		41.3%	43.1%	
	n	61	88		29	130	

#### 6.4.3.9 *LinkedIn use, job search, and outcomes*

A series of Independent t-tests were conducted to determine the relationship between using LinkedIn for job search purposes and job search outcomes. Only those who had been seeking a job for at least four months were included in the analysis, to mitigate for potentially misleading findings caused by jobseekers who had been searching for significantly different lengths of time. Under these conditions, the following results were found to be statistically significant:

- Those who had contacted someone through LinkedIn at least once (n=23) to ask about a job had received more phone interviews than those who had not (n=19) ( $p < .050$ )
- Those who had contacted someone through LinkedIn at least once (n=23) had been contacted by someone with job search information more often than those who had not (n=19) ( $p < .010$ )
- Those who had shared an update or published a post on LinkedIn at least once (n=17) (n=19) ( $p < .050$ ) had been contacted by someone with job search information more often than those who had not (n=25) ( $p < .010$ ).

### 6.5 *Job search outcomes and logistic regression models*

Some of the key variables identified in this chapter relating to job search networking were applied within logistic regression models to predict the likelihood of a) receiving more than one face-to-face or phone interview, and b) the

subjective notion of making progress with job search. With regards to the former, a composite variable was created containing responses to the questions ‘how many phone interviews have you had?’ and ‘how many face-to-face interviews have you had?’

The resulting data were recoded to a binary outcome variable which measured: a) those who had only received a maximum of one face-to-face or phone interview, and b) those who had received at least two interviews, either face-to-face, on the phone, or a combination of both. Only those who *agreed* that they put effort into job search were included in the analysis. Table 6.23 shows the

**Table 6-23 Logistic regression model of the likelihood of getting more than one face-to-face or phone interview**

Variable	Coefficient	S.E.	p	Odds Ratio
Length of job search	.265	.104	.011	1.304
Clear job goal	.368	.115	.001	1.445
Seeking a career option	-.029	.099	.766	.971
Settle for almost any job	.184	.097	.058	1.202
Networking with family	.249	.100	.013	1.282
Networking with acquaintances	-.103	.130	.428	.902
Networking with professionals	.127	.217	.560	1.135
Networking with employers face-to-face	.273	.092	.003	1.314
Active Facebook use for job search	.217	.070	.002	1.242
Networking comfort	-.024	.097	.801	.976
Age-group	.354	.162	.029	1.425
Education level	-.031	.187	.870	.970
Social capital access	-.163	.109	.134	.849
Work experience	.395	.446	.376	1.485
Constant	-5.467	1.296	.000	.004

variables which were included in the regression as predictors of attaining more than one job interview. The model successfully predicted 71.1% of those who had received more than one interview, and 58.7% of those who had received only one interview or less. For all respondents, 65.4% were predicted correctly. This test confirms an association between receiving job interviews and the contextual factors job search length ( $p < .050$ ) and having a clear job search goal ( $p < .001$ ). Particularly of interest is the effect of networking behaviours as predictors of receiving job interviews. The results show that networking with family members ( $p < .050$ ), networking with employers face-to-face ( $p < .010$ ), and the active use of Facebook ( $p < .010$ ), were each found to be significant. Of the demographic factors included, only age was a significant predictor, with the older respondents being more likely to have had more than one interview ( $p < .050$ ).

Table 6.24 shows how the same variables included in the first model predicted the subjective notion of making progress with job search. The model successfully predicted 94.1% of those who *agreed* that they were making progress, but only 20.7% of those who *disagreed*. For all respondents, 73.8% were predicted correctly. The test also confirms an association between the subjective notion of job search progress and having a clear job search goal ( $p < .010$ ). However, it shows a negative association between job search progress and job search length ( $p < .010$ ), indicating that the longer the respondents were looking for a job the less likely they were to perceive they were making progress. There was also a negative association with being willing to settle for any job ( $p < .050$ ). Using a Pearson product moment correlation test, there was found to be a positive correlation between the length of job search and willingness to settle for any job ( $p < .001$ ). Notably, in terms of networking behaviours, speaking to family members was the only significant predictor of job search progress ( $p < .050$ ), whilst none of the demographic factors in the model were found to be of significance.



Table 6-24 Logistic regression model of the likelihood of subjectively making job search process

Variable	Coefficient t	S.E.	p	Odds Ratio
Length of job search	-.414	.125	.001	.661
Clear job goal	.439	.137	.001	1.545
Seeking a career option	-.023	.124	.852	.976
Settle for almost any job	-.275	.126	.029	.755
Networking with family	.266	.123	.030	1.319
Networking with acquaintances	.005	.163	.976	1.003
Networking with professionals	-.080	.275	.771	.900
Networking with employers face-to-face	.119	.114	.298	1.137
Active Facebook use for job search	.083	.088	.346	1.103
Networking comfort	.149	.119	.210	1.153
Age-group	.172	.199	.387	1.224
Education level	.395	.226	.080	1.426
Social capital access	-.138	.132	.296	.870
Work experience	.830	.526	.115	2.293
Constant	-3.308	1.50 0	.027	.037

## 6.6 Conclusion

### 6.6.1 Job search networking

The findings presented in this chapter indicate that networking with stronger contacts such as family members and friends is a common behaviour throughout the job search, and that the majority of young jobseekers also consult professionals (e.g. careers advisers, teachers/tutors) for advice. However, the respondents were much less likely to have networked frequently with acquaintances during job search, suggesting that they were less inclined or had less impetus to contact weaker contacts. The following antecedents were

identified from the results as being particularly relevant to networking with people during job search:

- Being a student (inverse relationship) and not liking to ask people for help during job search (inverse relationship) were associated with speaking to family members during job search
- Being older, looking for a career option, and active use of social media for job search were associated with speaking to friends during job search
- Seeking jobs of higher occupational status, willingness to relocate within the UK, comfort asking relative strangers for information, and active use of social media for job search were associated with asking acquaintances for information during job search
- Being a student (inverse relationship), being unemployed, having lower education, and seeking jobs of higher occupational status were associated with asking professionals for information during job search.

In terms of outcomes, networking frequently with family members and acquaintances was associated with more face-to-face job interviews and being contacted more often with job search information. Speaking to friends frequently had no discernible impact on outcomes, whilst speaking to professionals had a positive – but not significant – bearing.

Contacting employers directly about jobs was also a frequent activity amongst the respondents, with email being the most popular communication channel, followed by face-to-face, telephone, and social media, respectively. Being unemployed, having lower education, seeking jobs with lower occupational status, and being willing to settle for most jobs were all factors which were closely associated with contacting employers directly. Confidence also appeared to be a key antecedent of contacting employers on all channels except email, with those who were comfortable asking people they did not know very well being more likely to have done so frequently. Of all methods of contacting employers directly, doing so face-to-face was associated with receiving the most job interviews.

### 6.6.2 The role of social media platforms

Facebook was the most popular platform for general use. Almost all of the respondents had an account, of whom the vast majority used it daily. In comparison, around half of the respondents had a Twitter account, and a quarter LinkedIn. Both sites were used less intensively than Facebook, albeit LinkedIn markedly so. However, the results show that substantial proportions of the respondents who use Facebook and LinkedIn had appropriated them for different job search purposes, whilst notably smaller proportions had appropriated Twitter for the same ends. In spite of this, a similar trend across all platforms was that using functions frequently for job search was a minority behaviour. This indicates that social media were used only intermittently by jobseekers to find information, as a supplementary method. Some of the key antecedents of using social media for job search were identified as follows:

- Being unemployed, having lower education, seeking jobs with lower occupational status, and being willing to settle for almost any job were all closely associated with Facebook appropriation
- Higher educational attainment, seeking jobs of higher occupational prestige, and seeking a career option were all closely associated with Twitter appropriation
- Being older, seeking jobs of higher occupational prestige, having a clear job search goal, and willingness to relocate within the UK were associated with LinkedIn appropriation
- Being advised to use social media for job search by a professional was closely associated with the appropriation of all three platforms

The final point above – i.e. being advised to use social media by a professional - indicates that awareness is a key factor in appropriation. The findings also show that frequent appropriation was positively associated with user self-efficacy and how useful the platforms were considered to be as job search information sources. This pattern could indicate a causal relationship whereby increased awareness leads to greater use, which in turn leads to an improved attitude towards social media as tools for job search. However, the findings revealed a

significant degree of ambivalence towards Facebook and Twitter as sources of job search information, which reflects the fact that they were being used largely as supplementary tools.

Regarding job search outcomes, only Facebook and LinkedIn had a particularly notable impact. Indeed, actively seeking jobs on Facebook was associated with receiving more face-to-face job interviews, whilst all of its functional uses of job search were positively associated with being contacted more often with job search information. For LinkedIn, contacting people directly for information was associated with more phone interviews, whilst contacting people and publishing an update were associated with being contacted more often with job search information.

## **Chapter 7 Towards implementation: a focus group with careers advisers**

### ***7.1 Introduction***

The results of the third stage of field work – a focus group with careers advisers – are presented in this chapter. The focus group was used as a method to gather data pertaining directly to the following research question:

**RQ3** How can knowledge gained from (RQ1) and (RQ2) inform the work of careers services in order to assist young people achieve better job search outcomes?

The session was designed to generate discussion about the key results highlighted in Chapters 5 and 6, and their relationship to the participants' own experiences of advising young clients. To this end, two broad themes were covered: 1) advising young people to use networks during job search, and 2) advising young people to use social media during job search. Insight was generated in these areas, and also on the main challenges associated with advising clients about networks and social media. Potential means of addressing these challenges were also provided by the participants, and may be used as a basis for informing future practice.

### ***7.2 Results of the focus group with careers advisers***

#### **7.2.1 Advising young people to use networks**

The participants were asked to share their experiences of how advice relating to networking was embedded into the provision of careers information. A clear consensus emerged that young clients who used the careers service were always encouraged to use their networks during job search. Indeed, one participant noted how it was “very much a part of the (careers) interview”. However, a broad distinction was made between the nature of the advice given to young people who are distant from the labour market and those who face fewer barriers. Bill, who works primarily with those in the former group, was keen to emphasise that his biggest challenge was making them aware of networks:

## **Chapter 7 – Towards implementation: a focus group with careers advisers**

“...even when you ask them what their parents do, they say ‘aw yeah my mother works at...’. Then you say, ‘what about your father’. And they say, ‘I’m not sure to be honest’. And I’m sat there completely amazed that they’re sixteen years old, in the same household, and they’re not sure what their dad does. So it’s very much a case of saying ‘These are your career management skills, and one of them is networks’, and just trying over a period of time to help them find out what your friend does, what your friend’s father does”.

Marie, who works with the same client group as Bill, stated that “the networks are more about the people that can support or help with drugs or offending behaviours or things like that”. In the first instance, she explained, a “supportive family-type network of people” would be set up to help with basic life problems, before progressing onto opportunities such as searching for job vacancies.

The focus group participants gave examples of how they advise clients who are closer to the labour market to engage with network contacts. According to Joanne, “When they say they want this career, then you ask them if they know anybody in that career to find out first-hand about job opportunities”. Emma also gave an example:

“So you are just asking them, ‘Which area are you wanting to go into, do you know someone in it?’ You hear most of them saying how ‘my neighbour is doing this’, and that’s when you introduce networks. You say, ‘you could actually talk to your neighbour. They might be able to help you into construction and things like that”.

Emphasising the informal nature of the local labour market, Laura said that her school’s correspondence with former pupils reveals “most people are going to work with their uncle, or their dad’s company, or their friend’s dad or something like that”. On this basis, she said that she always advises young people to speak to “family members, family friends - you know, anybody”.

### **7.2.2 Networking and confidence issues amongst young people**

To generate more discussion on job search networking, the participants were presented with a key finding from the PhD research. This was met with unanimous agreement.

*Finding 1: On average, young jobseekers who network more often with family members and acquaintances a) receive more job interviews, and b) are contacted more often with job information.*

Bill agreed with the findings, adding that “by being more active you’re getting more back into yourself”. A discussion ensued, where the participants recounted anecdotes about young clients who had been persistent about contacting employers directly, with some success. However, these were presented as unique occurrences, with particularly determined jobseekers. Lynn summed this up, saying that speaking to relative strangers “takes a lot for young people”, and that “being confident to do that would make them more employable anyway”. Noting the theme of confidence, the next two findings from the research were presented to the group.

*Finding 2: Young jobseekers are more likely to rely on “close proximity” contacts for job search information. Only a small proportion engage with acquaintances.*

*Finding 3: A prominent barrier to job search networking with acquaintances is a lack of confidence in speaking to relative strangers.*

In light of the findings, participants were asked to consider if a lack of confidence amongst young clients could be ameliorated by the careers service. Some of the participants felt that to be addressed properly, steps would have to be taken earlier in young peoples’ development. For example, noting the potential for an intervention, Emma said:

“I think if there was some sort of confidence building course that they could go in, or some kind of programme that might help with confidence, then the picture might be a lot different. I think the confidence from a young age

is quite key, possibly. The earlier we start seeing them, from S4 to S6<sup>10</sup> - I think by that time it's maybe a bit too late for some of them".

Bill echoed this sentiment, adding that "confidence needs to be permeated into the school system from a young age". Several examples were proffered which underline the extent of pervasive anxiety amongst young people. Whilst it was emphasised that these issues are chronic with a "big pocket of young people in school who can't even leave their home", it was also noted that "the kids who you think are able often struggle with confidence". Marie felt that young people might also view asking people for help as a negative thing. She said "I think it's seen as cheeky almost. And it's like, 'Who's this upstart asking me a question?' It shows that thing in Scotland - a 'brass neck' - you know, some kind of awful thing to do".

### **7.2.3 Building networking confidence in young people**

The participants recalled instances when they had encouraged clients to take the initiative on different tasks, to illustrate how they approach the issue of low confidence. For example, Marie said she asks young people to phone up college or university admissions departments when they are thinking about applying to a course. However, she finds that many are very reluctant to do so. Other examples of practical, confidence-building tasks include asking clients to take a bus to the town where they are interested in going to college, and providing mock job or college interviews for young people. Whilst these are interesting practical examples of confidence building exercises, they are non-standardised and indirectly related to job search networking. When pressed on these issues, and asked whether any practical exercises are used to help clients specifically with networking, Marie cited online tools developed by an external organisation:

"You were saying about practical things you could do to help build that up. They've got a programme on the Internet called 'Skills to succeed', and there's a particular video sequence on that that I find really good for networking. And it shows a boy phoning a friend of his dad's to get a sort of inroads into a construction job, and that's quite useful".

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<sup>10</sup> S4 and S6 include senior year pupils at secondary school in Scotland, aged between 15 and 18.



Joanne stated that there are also some materials available on SDS's 'My World of Work' website. However, she added that it could also be a barrier, as some young people prefer to be given advice by an adviser directly. Laura agreed that advice on networking is non-standardised, and that it is "all very individual-based" depending on the circumstances of the young person.

#### **7.2.4 Advising young people to use social media**

The participants were asked how advice on using social media is embedded into the provision of careers information. A key discussion point was the local SDS Facebook page and its place in careers interviews. Joanne said:

"We've got a local Facebook page, they're all across Scotland. We'd encourage young people to go on it, because it's specific to Fife, the vacancies. But I would say we encourage young people to use social media. It's a way of getting a link to a vacancy....We don't just promote vacancies. We're promoting employability skills as well, and anything else that's going to be interesting to the young person".

Joanne highlighted the different types of content posted on the local SDS page. She reemphasised that "rather than just jobs, [the clients are] seeing a wide range of information". Emma added that the page was promoted to school pupils as well, through the distribution of small business cards. She said "that promotes social media at the same time, and you explain to them how to get there".

Another key talking point was the means by which young clients are pressed to think about their online image. Laura said that "One of the key things we do is teach them how to market themselves on social media". She added that she advises young people to consider their privacy settings. Bill agreed: "I cover that in my S6 talks as well, that employers do check social media so they have to be careful what they put on". Emma agreed, noting that "there's also potential employers digging up about you as well".

In addition to promoting the local SDS Facebook page and advising clients to think about their online image, using social media as a general information source was also mentioned. For example, Bill tries to make clients aware that social media can be used "as a whole tool (...) to try and find employment". Expanding

## Chapter 7 – Towards implementation: a focus group with careers advisers

on this, Emma gave an example of how she encourages school pupils to network with employers on LinkedIn:

“I get them speaking about LinkedIn and how they can start targeting companies that they would want in a few years’ time to be employed by. So that they get to know more about the company. And when the time comes they can always approach the company. Having a good profile helps. Building it up now helps as well. So we do talk about social media to them”.

### 7.2.5 Functionality, and understanding how young people use social media

The participants were shown two key findings from the PhD research which related to social media use and job search networking.

*Finding 4: On average, young jobseekers who actively use social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn) during job search a) receive more job interviews, and b) are contacted more often with job information.*

*Finding 5: Social media is used, amongst other things, to search for job opportunities, contact people about jobs, post public statuses asking for information, follow organisational pages, join cohort group pages, and to receive private messages from contacts.*

The participants’ focus was drawn to Finding 5, on which they had diverging opinions. For example, Laura was sceptical about the benefits of using the different functions on social media during job search:

“It’s fair enough young people being able to like pages, send messages, join all these groups on Facebook. But nothing will beat actually going for the interview, and being able to handle the situation at the interview. And having the confidence to sell themselves in that situation. It’s easy to like a page behind a screen, and speak to people behind a screen”.

Joanne had a different view, based upon her own experience of running the local SDS Facebook page. She highlighted the increasing number of private messages

## Chapter 7 – Towards implementation: a focus group with careers advisers

customers send to the page, indicating that many young people seem to be more comfortable initiating contact that way. However, she emphasised that this creates opportunities for further engagement: “When they’re messaging our pages though, that would be something like myself saying ‘ok you’ve got an interview, remember and come in’. I’m encouraging them all the time to come into the centre”.

Conflicting views continued in relation to the following findings:

*Finding 6: Facebook is the most popular social media platform amongst 16-24 year olds, for general purposes and also for job search.*

*Finding 7: Jobseekers with the lowest levels of educational attainment use Facebook the most, for general purposes and for job search.*

The focus of the conversation centred on Finding 6. The participants had differing opinions about the popularity of Facebook and other social media platforms amongst young people, mostly based upon anecdotes. Indeed, there was a general theme of confusion about social media use. For example, Joanne agreed with Finding 6:

“I would say yeah. Although people think young people don’t use Facebook, every one I’ve spoken to they say ‘yeah, I am on Facebook’. Whether they’re using it actively, I don’t know, but they have got a page. Maybe they have other platforms, but they do use Facebook. So aye, the one’s I’ve spoken to, I’d agree with that”.

Bill speculated that younger people have Facebook accounts, but may not use them as much anymore. His based his observations on his son’s Facebook use. Lynn agreed, noting that Facebook pages may just be lying dormant:

“I think it just depends, maybe they dip in and dip out. Obviously Instagram’s for pictures, then they’ve got Snapchat. Always different groups. Then they’ve got Twitter - Twitter seems to have died. I know that young people I’ve spoken to don’t seem to use it now. But they still have their Facebook page. So they still dip into that...”

## **Chapter 7 – Towards implementation: a focus group with careers advisers**

Laura and Emma felt that young people, especially those of school age, do not often use Facebook for job search. Laura said “I don’t hear a lot of young kids coming in and saying ‘aw I saw this opportunity for a job on Facebook’”. Emma said that school pupils told her that Facebook was “so overrated” and that “it’s now for old people”.

Despite having different opinions and experiences, the participants were in unanimous agreement that careers advisers lack a general understanding of social media use amongst young people. There was also an agreement that problems regarding social media appropriation and use affected the whole organisation. Bill said “you can only use the new platforms when you understand what the young people are using”, and that “if there’s a trend, you’ve got to change with that trend”. Noting barriers to achieving this, Joanne and Marie opined that, with the exception of Facebook, the organisation’s appropriation of social media platforms is not localised enough. Joanne contended that she often lobbies to have content local to Fife posted on the My World of Work Twitter feed, without success. Marie added that, at both local and national level, there is not enough freedom of expression on the social media pages:

“They definitely need to bridge the gap. I mean, our selling point is our friendliness and our people and our social skills. Yet we’re not allowed to show any personality or individuality, and show people the reality on Facebook, Twitter, or whatever”.

Despite the above, Joanne was keen to emphasise that running social media pages is time consuming, and that SDS has to be careful about how pages are run. She said “obviously it would be great to have everything, but then it’s the management side as well, and the legal side”. Laura felt that it would be easier if they had a “local social media person” for whom posting online content was their main job.

### **7.2.6 Challenges to advising young people on social media**

Much of the discussion focused on using SDS’s social media pages to engage with clients. However, the participants were also asked to relay if/how they advise clients to use social media for other purposes than to connect with SDS pages. There was some hesitation amongst the group about this question. Emma stated

## Chapter 7 – Towards implementation: a focus group with careers advisers

that she was “not very knowledgeable on things like Facebook, and Instagram”, and aside from providing clients with basic advice would say “much more extensive stuff about actually going and meeting people”. Joanne felt similarly, saying “as careers advisers, if you’re not comfortable using those platforms, or if you don’t use them, then it’s difficult to promote them to the young person”.

The participants were shown the following related finding:

*Finding 8: Half (51.0%) of young jobseekers who are advised to use social media by a professional do appropriate them for job search, compared to 30.0% of those who are not advised.*

On viewing these, a general consensus emerged that more training is needed for careers advisers. Bill extolled the virtues of the training course he had recently attended about social media awareness. Referring specifically to Finding 8, he said: “That’s why the course were brilliant! I’m totally aware of them now, and I promote them. And I tell (young people) how it can be used”. Emma said of the course that “we’ve all been given the opportunity to attend that, and I think the more that we attend then the more we are likely to promote it within schools”. Elaborating on the advice he was given at the course, Bill said:

“With LinkedIn, I’d never thought about Linking in with young people to use that. They said you know, with a sixteen year old, get them to set up a profile, and if they want to be a hairdresser, tell them to LinkedIn with the hairdressers in the local area and say ‘I’m very interested in becoming a hairdresser, do you mind telling me how you started?’ Find your opportunity. If anything you’re getting information back about that organisation anyway”.

Bill’s experience highlights the importance of raising awareness amongst careers professionals on the different ways social media platforms can be used to gather job search information. However, the validity of this advice was questioned by Joanne, who stated: “Every hairdresser in Fife has advertised their vacancy on

Facebook”. This detail indicates that advising young people to use social media platforms requires an understanding of the environmental context.

The participants also discussed the practicalities of demonstrating social media use to young people. Emma indicated that it could be an issue if it meant advisers logging in with a personal account, and potentially exposing their own information. However, she noted that she currently helps clients to navigate the My World of Work webpage, and so she could extend this training to social media platforms. Marie also indicated that she helps the clients to use webpages, and said of showing them how to use social media that “it would just involve including in their action plans how to use Twitter, or liking the Facebook pages or messaging companies”. Joanne highlighted the potential in this approach, and how it could enlighten young people regarding functional uses of digital platforms:

“Again, when they’re liking the pages then they’re getting the newsfeed. They know they can talk to pals on it, and they can share their photos and things. But they’re not actually thinking ‘I can like Fife College or an employer and I’ll get the newsfeed so when the vacancies are coming in’. That’s the understanding we need to work more on, maybe”.

### **7.3 Conclusion**

The findings from the focus group indicate that encouraging clients to use networks during job search is integral to the provision of careers services. Indeed, the participants not only articulated the benefits of job search networking, but emphasised its importance within the local labour market. To this end, they were in full agreement with the research findings that young people who engage with acquaintances and family members frequently have better job search outcomes.

There was also an agreement about a reluctance amongst young people to approach people outside of their close network of contacts to ask for job information. To the participants’ minds this is a common issue for customers, which in some cases is chronic. Whilst they gave different examples of addressing confidence issues by setting young people small tasks, these are not standardised across the service. There is also no evidence that young people are being offered networking-specific confidence exercises, or practical guidance on *how* to approach network contacts during job search.

## **Chapter 7 – Towards implementation: a focus group with careers advisers**

Regarding social media, it is clear from the discussion that a key focus of the service is to engage with young people via SDS's own platforms, and to disseminate a variety of information types to young people via these channels. Indeed, the participants spoke at length about the SDS platforms, and the barriers they had encountered to using them effectively. They also stressed how encouraging customers to present an edifying online image is an integral feature of the careers interview, as part of their "duty of care" in the role.

Despite the above, the discussion also reveals a great deal of confusion and differing ideas about how young people actually use social media. A consensus was reached that careers advisers are not up to date with latest trends in social media use, and that this issue affects SDS at an organisational-level. There was also recognition that many careers advisers do not know enough about social media to provide young people with useful advice. However, there is a clear appetite to learn, and to incorporate practical training into the service provision. As the case with Bill shows, training on this issue has the capacity not only to raise awareness, but also to change attitudes towards digital platforms as tools for job search.

## Chapter 8 Discussion

### 8.1 Introduction

The findings from Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are discussed in this chapter, and the means by which they extend existing knowledge on job search networking amongst 16-24 year olds in Scotland. The discussion addresses each research question explicitly, and provides a commentary to explain findings concomitant to these questions. The questions are as following:

**RQ1.** What are the key job search networking behaviours employed by young jobseekers based in Scotland?

**RQ2.** What role do social media platforms have in the job search networking behaviours of young jobseekers based in Scotland?

**RQ3.** How can knowledge gained from (**RQ1**) and (**RQ2**) inform the work of careers services in order to assist young people achieve better job search outcomes?

Regarding RQ1 and RQ2, the discussion draws from the qualitative findings presented in Chapter 5 and the survey findings presented in Chapter 6. In both cases, these data were gathered from young jobseekers. A combination of the findings in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 form the basis of discussion for RQ3. Chapter 7 is based on data that were gathered from careers advisers employed by SDS. To demonstrate the novelty of these findings within the wider academic context, related literature is cited throughout this process. A full literature review outlining topics relevant to this thesis can be found in Chapter 2.

Highlighting the theoretical contribution of the thesis, a revised version of Wilson's (1981) information needs and seeking model is invoked at the end of the chapter. This is based upon the discussion of findings outlined above. The original model provides a framework for the thesis (see Chapter 3), and so places its output within the domain of information science. To date, job search networking has not previously been studied from an information perspective. Thus, the knowledge gained by this research is informed by - and *informs* - theory relating to the concept of information behaviour.



## ***8.2 Information sourced via networking offline and on social media***

Information is a social capital resource contained within individuals' networks, and is considered influential to positive employment outcomes (Lin, 1999). The findings reported in this thesis demonstrate this to be the case. They show that young people in Scotland engage in networking behaviours – both offline and on social media platforms - to acquire multiple types of job search information. This information relates to activities at both the preparatory and active phases of job search (Blau, 1993; 1994), showing that networking is a valuable information behaviour throughout the job search process. For example, some young people receive personal development information at the formative stages of job search, helping them to identify jobs which match their skill sets and interests. A clear job search goal is conducive of positive outcomes, as shown by the regression analyses presented in Chapter 6. To this end, young people with clear goals receive more interviews and are more likely to feel as though they are making progress with job search. Previous studies have also shown that goal establishment is a crucial starting point in successful job searches (McArdle et al., 2007; Van Hooft & Noordzij, 2009).

Through the analysis of interview data it is revealed that young jobseekers receive varying amounts of information from network contacts. As shown in the survey results frequent networking behaviours are associated with better job search outcomes. Combined, these findings demonstrate that receiving more information improves job search products (e.g. applications, CVs, interviews) and the ability to find suitable job vacancies or leads. It is a contribution of this thesis that the operational role of information in labour market transitions has been explored in greater depth. A common method in previous studies has been to create proxy indicators of social capital (e.g. occupational prestige), and to test them in relation to employment outcomes (see for example, Chen & Volker, 2016; De Graaf & Flap, 1988; Gayen et al., 2010; Macmillan et al., 2015; Russell, 1999). This approach renders the role of information unclear. Equally, in network studies relating to tie strength, the focus is often on the information exchanges that lead directly to employment (see for example, Granovetter, 1974; Franzen & Hangartner, 2006). By focusing on one intersection of the search process, and in

considering only successful applications, these studies also provide limited insight on networked information acquired earlier in the job search. In contrast, this work highlights the utility of networked information at each stage of job search, thus extending knowledge on the role of network structure and social capital resources.

### **8.3 Job search networking behaviours**

Findings relating to RQ1 are discussed in the following sections. They mostly pertain to the 'offline' networking behaviours of young jobseekers i.e. information exchanges that take place outside of social media platforms. As the first stage of field work incorporated ego-centric network methods, it is possible to approach these behaviours from a relational viewpoint. This is another key contribution of the research reported in this thesis. Indeed, the findings furnish new knowledge on the process of job search networking, the nature of the contacts mobilised during this process, and how these specific exchanges influence outcomes. Important contextual factors and intervening variables (i.e. enablers of, and barriers to networking) are also discussed. Firstly though, the modes of search that characterise job search networking are described and analysed.

#### **8.3.1 Modes of job search networking**

Wilson (1997, p.562) highlights four different modes of search that are relevant to information behaviour: active search, ongoing search, passive attention, and passive search. Ego-centric network measures (see Table 5-1) show that both active and passive ties are present in job search information networks. The qualitative findings illustrate that networking during job search can involve *active search* – i.e. meeting new needs as they arise - and *ongoing search*. With regards to the latter, Suzanne approached work colleagues for assistance with her CV, despite having previously secured a temporary job contract. In such cases, individuals have established a search framework which they continue to update with new knowledge. Such temporal dynamics and the need for jobseekers to continually reevaluate their search strategies/information sources are recognised as key features of looking for a job (Van Hoyer et al., 2013, p.23). They also show that active networking can be an important part of ongoing search, and job search information acquisition.

Active networking involves creating new contacts in addition to mobilising existing ties. This is an important dimension of the job search networking process, and one that has been identified in relation to career networking (Wolff, Moser & Grau, 2008, p.4; Gibson, Hardy III & Buckley, 2014, p.150). To this end, many jobseekers create links with people who work in the industry or job roles they are targeting, or contact other professionals for assistance with job search. For example, survey results show that contacting employers directly to ask about jobs is an integral part of job search, and that young people are more inclined to contact professionals as the job search progresses. Despite this, the qualitative accounts of young jobseekers indicate that networking is seldom the product of strategic thinking or planning. Instead it is an experiential process where immediate needs are satisfied by speaking to contacts within close proximity. This lack of planning was confirmed by the focus group participants, the majority of whom admitted to not listing potentially helpful job search contacts. The survey findings reflect this, showing that young people mobilise weak ties much less frequently than strong ties, and indeed that a majority do not enlist the help of acquaintances at all.

The interview participants also gave examples of *passive search*, where contacts mobilised on their behalf to give them information or advice. This was sometimes the result of the jobseekers' proactive behaviour. Indeed, the survey confirms that young people who engage frequently with contacts are contacted with more information in return. This is an important finding, as it demonstrates the efficacy of networks as sources of new information. It also indicates that active job search networking is an exploratory behaviour which can create opportunities for young people, as described by the happenstance learning theory (Krumboltz, 2009). However, there are also circumstances where jobseekers benefit from networked information whilst remaining largely inert. The interviews show that this is especially the case where young people face barriers to the labour market (i.e. Ashley and Craig) and/or have seemingly little motivation to find work (i.e. Craig and Steve). In these instances, familial or institutional contacts are likely to intervene to provide assistance. A full description of the different modes of job search networking used in offline environments is detailed in Table 8.1.

Table 8-1 Modes of job search networking (offline)

Mode of search	Description
<b>Active</b>	<i>Seeking information or advice on new job search activities from network contacts. This process can involve existing contacts, or building new ones.</i>
<b>Ongoing</b>	<i>Engaging with network contacts (existing or new) to develop new knowledge relating to an already established search framework.</i>
<b>Passive (harvested)</b>	<i>Receiving information from contacts as a result of previous networking behaviours (e.g. asking friends to forward relevant job opportunities they find).</i>
<b>Passive (inert)</b>	<i>Receiving information from contacts without having previously asked them for assistance (e.g. schools helping vulnerable pupils, or parental interventions).</i>

### 8.3.2 The nature of offline contacts

#### 8.3.2.1 Informal contacts

Family members are vital sources of information for 16-24 year olds seeking employment. The interviews show that they are the most prominent *informal* contacts within job search information networks, and that parents have a particularly diverse role as sources of information. The participants recounted examples where parents provided advice pertinent to the jobs being targeted (e.g. industry/recruitment knowledge, leads to industry figures), or in some cases general assistance (e.g. help with CVs, interviews, and sourcing job vacancies). The survey provides further evidence that young people speak frequently with family members during job search, and that those who do so more often have better job search outcomes. Previous studies have also established a link between family social capital and the employment outcomes of young people (Caspi, Wright, Moffitt & Silva, 1998; Furstenberg Jr & Hughes, 1995; Hook & Courtney, 2011).

The specific role of friends has not been explored in existing job search networking studies. Previously, studies of networking have measured the

influence of family and friend contacts in combination (Van Hoyer, van Hooft, Lievens, 2009; Wanberg, Kanfer & Banas, 2000). The survey findings in this thesis show that young people *speak* frequently to friends about job search. However, these exchanges have no perceptible bearing on job search outcomes. Indeed, young people who speak to friends frequently about job search activities do not receive more interviews, and are not contacted more often with information. Perhaps tellingly, the qualitative accounts indicate that young people seldom receive information from friends. Therefore, it can be interpreted from the findings that young people talk to friends frequently about job search, but not necessarily to ask for help. Also, for the most part, these exchanges do not lead to friends giving them assistance at a later date. Given the common ground young people have in making the school-to-work transition, this could represent a missed opportunity to benefit from pooled knowledge amongst those with direct experience of the job search process.

The impact of weak contacts on employment outcomes is a key focus of network theory, and has been tested in many empirical studies. Studies relating to the strength of network ties are discussed at length in Chapter 2. A basic premise of the weak ties theory is that individuals with a higher number of acquaintances will receive more novel job information, because weaker ties are more likely to reach into the wider social system (Granovetter, 1973). The qualitative accounts produced few clear examples of information exchanges with acquaintances. This trend is reflected in the survey results, which show that the majority (62.0%) of the respondents had not contacted acquaintances to ask for advice or information during job search. However, frequent contact with weak ties is associated with more face-to-face job interviews, and the subjective notion of job search progress. Young jobseekers who ask acquaintances for advice are also contacted more frequently with job search information.

When comparing the role of different types of informal contacts, it is clear that family members and acquaintances are influential sources of information for young people. However, the regression analyses show that, amongst all contact types, frequent networking with family is the strongest predictor of receiving interviews. These findings underline the significance of family members for young people entering the labour market, and reflect the obligation and trust that exists

within these relationships (Bian, 1997; Granovetter, 1983). Indeed, the findings show that not only family members can be valuable as direct sources of information, but they can also be gatekeepers to a wider pool of network contacts.

### 8.3.2.2 *Formal contacts*

Using the ego-centric network approach, it has been shown that young jobseekers network with formal ties at both individual and organisational levels. This develops previous job search research, where only informal ties are considered as network sources of information (for a review, see Saks, 2005). Institutional contacts (e.g. careers services, schools, and universities) are very prominent sources of networked information for 16-24 year olds. In addition to possessing vital industry, role, or recruitment process knowledge, they also facilitate access to industry figures. Where young people reside in dysfunctional environments (e.g. Ashley and Craig), professionals in some cases act as proxies for family capital. The survey indicates that a substantial amount of young jobseekers consult careers advisers, teachers/tutors, or support workers about job search, and that doing so is strongly associated with receiving more job information from contacts. It is also moderately associated with receiving job interviews.

The interviews provide evidence that young people contact employers directly to ask about jobs, via different communication channels. Indeed, the survey findings show that the majority of young jobseekers contact employers directly to ask about jobs, and that each method of contact (i.e. face-to-face, telephone, email, and social media) is positively associated with receiving more job interviews. However, only face-to-face contact is closely linked with receiving interviews. Indeed, the regression analysis shows that face-to-face contact with employers is one of the strongest predictors of receiving interviews of all the variables included in the study. This is likely to reflect the informal nature of the recruitment processes used by employers that welcome direct approaches from jobseekers, and underlines the efficacy of this approach for those seeking jobs with lower entry requirements.

Table 8.2 shows the types of contacts with whom young people are networking, in terms of the frequency of exchanges and their association with receiving face-to-face interviews.

Table 8-2 Contact types, frequency of exchange, and association with outcomes

Contact type	Frequency of information exchange	Associated outcomes (strength of association)
<b>Family members</b>	<i>High</i>	<i>Face-to-face interviews (strong)</i> <i>Feeling of making progress (strong)</i> <i>Receiving more information (strong)</i>
<b>Friends</b>	<i>Low</i>	<i>No difference.</i>
<b>Acquaintances</b>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Face-to-face interviews (moderate/strong)</i> <i>Feeling of making progress (moderate/strong)</i> <i>Receiving more information (strong)</i>
<b>Professionals (e.g. careers advisers, teachers)</b>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Face-to-face interviews (moderate)</i> <i>Receiving more information (strong)</i>
<b>Employers</b>	<i>High (Email)</i> <i>Medium (Face-to-face)</i> <i>Medium (Telephone)</i> <i>Low (Social media)</i>	<i>Face-to-face interviews (strong – face-to-face contact; moderate – other methods of contact)</i> <i>Receiving more information (strong – all methods of contact)</i>

### 8.3.3 Context of job search networking

The context of networking relates primarily to the job search goal of the young person, which is influenced by a number of situational, social, or intrapersonal factors (e.g. age, motivation, qualification level). Goals vary widely in terms of the job type or industry being targeted, and also their flexibility and clarity. With regards to networking with family members, the qualitative findings suggest that most young jobseekers can turn to at least one contact (e.g. a parent or sibling) for job search information. This is reflected in the survey findings, which show that few contextual factors - such as the level of occupation being sought - have a bearing on how often young people network with family members during job search. Therefore, it can be interpreted that irrespective of the job search goal in

question, asking family members for help is a common information behaviour amongst young people.

The survey shows an association between seeking jobs of higher occupational status, contacting acquaintances, and contacting professionals. This indicates that the demands of seeking such roles creates the impetus to reach beyond close contacts for information, for more tailored advice. Indeed, previous studies have shown that jobseekers with higher education levels secure better jobs by contacting people with superior knowledge and experience (Ericksen & Yancey, 1980; Wegener, 1991).

The survey findings also show that speaking to a professional (e.g. a careers adviser, teacher/tutor, or support worker) is strongly associated with being unemployed. To this end, the qualitative accounts of Ashley, Craig, and Michael reveal that organisations such as schools and the careers service mobilise on behalf of young jobseekers susceptible to unemployment whilst making the school-to-work transition. Indeed, the careers services in Scotland provide post-school support for over 17,000 unemployed 15-19 year olds between 2016 and 2017 - their biggest customer group (SDS, 2017, p.15).

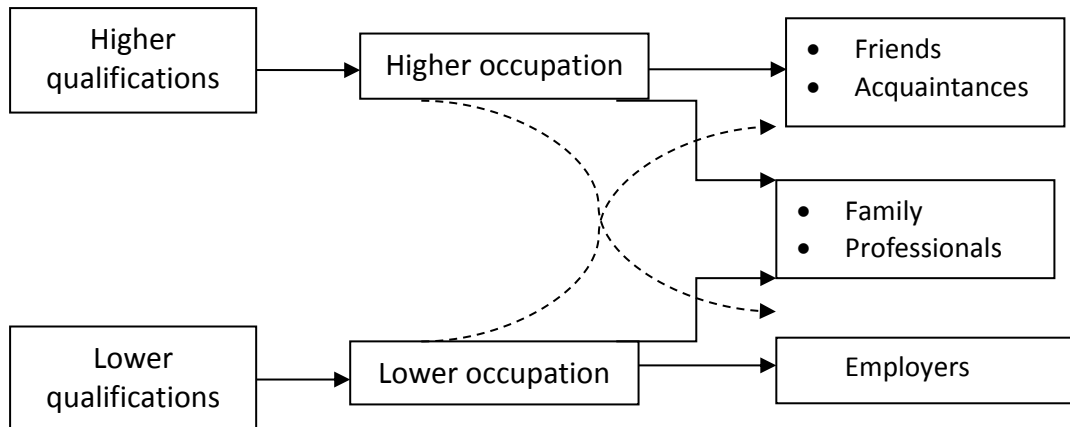
With the exception of email contact, which is popular for all demographic groups, the survey findings show that young people seeking jobs of lower occupational status are the most likely to contact employers directly. This supports the contention above that contacting employers is conducive of interviews due to the lower recruitment standards of companies who accept informal approaches. Notably, those with the lowest educational attainment are especially likely to contact employers directly. With a high proportion of unemployed young people in this group, it could be interpreted that this reflects their determination to find employment of any kind. Indeed, the survey results show that those in the lowest educational attainment group are the most likely to be seeking a career role, but also to accept almost any job that pays money.

A conceptual model showing the relationship between job search context, search goals, and the nature of contacts mobilised is presented in Figure 18. It shows that, in general, young people target occupations that align with their qualifications. In turn, seeking jobs of higher or lower occupational level is linked to networking with specific contact types. The dashed lines indicate that those



seeking different job types also engage with contacts on the other side of the model, albeit less frequently. Notably, the model is *not* applicable to students seeking casual jobs, rather for those seeking full-time employment.

Figure 18 the relationship between context and mobilised contact types (mediated by job goal)



### 8.3.4 Intervening variables

Young jobseekers face many intervening variables to job search networking. Depending on the individual these can be both barriers to, and enablers of networking. A crucial variable is job search effort. The qualitative findings show that those who are less motivated to find a job mobilise fewer contacts for information. They also indicate that there is a link between a lack of motivation and not having a clear job search goal. The survey findings support this, showing that job search effort is strongly associated with frequency of networking behaviours. In turn, frequent networking and having a clear job search goal are conducive of receiving interviews. These findings are reflected in previous studies which find job search effort to be strongly associated with positive employment outcomes (Saks, 2005; Wanberg, 2012). They also show that for young people lacking in motivation and with no clear goal, there is a strong need to develop a sense of purpose when finding work.

Young jobseekers are inclined to mobilise contacts in close physical proximity. Confidence is a crucial variable in this regard. The survey reveals that young people who are comfortable asking people they do not know very well for information are more likely to network with acquaintances and employers.

Networking comfort has previously been identified as an antecedent of job search networking (Wanberg et al., 2000). Various other studies have found personality factors such as extraversion and proactivity to be antecedents (Forret & Dougherty, 2001; Van Hoye et al., 2009; Wanberg et al, 2000). As indicated in the interviews and focus group, awareness of networking is also key. The survey data gives some support for this, showing a link between speaking to professionals and contacting employers directly about jobs. In such cases, advice from professionals could be encouraging young people to be more proactive when seeking employment, by adopting a direct approach.

Another important variable is the perceived resourcefulness of network contacts. For example, some of the interviewed participants doubted whether their parents could provide them with useful information about their targeted jobs, or the recruitment process in general. Some also mentioned that their lack of relevant work experience is a barrier to finding employment and contacting people. Notably, the survey findings reveal an association between having work experience and contacting acquaintances for information. In combination, these findings demonstrate the uneven distribution of social capital within network structures (Lin, 1999), and highlight the need for young people with limited social capital to create new ties when seeking work. This is especially true for those who come from dysfunctional backgrounds, who are the most susceptible to poor employment outcomes (Hook & Courtney, 2011).

Many other intervening variables have been identified in the research findings. For example, the survey findings show that jobseekers who prefer not to ask for help avoid networking with close contacts, despite being just as likely to network acquaintances and professionals. This could be interpreted as an assertion of their independence from family members. However, the results presented in this thesis indicate that marginalising the contacts who are most inclined to provide assistance could have deleterious impact on the efficiency of job search.

As revealed in the focus group with jobseekers, peer competition is a barrier to networking with friends. Notably, the survey shows that 22-24 year olds are the most likely to network frequently with friends during job search. Combined, these findings could show that as members of cohort groups enter the labour market the sense of job search competition declines. Consequently, young people may

become more likely to ask friends for assistance. Another important variable is frequency of social media use, which is linked with frequent networking. This indicates that digital platforms are conducive of information sharing, as shown in previous studies (Foster, 2003; Meho & Tibbo, 2003).

### ***8.4 The role of social media tools during job search***

The findings relating to RQ2 are discussed in the following sections. These relate to information exchanges that take place on social media platforms during job search. The use of ego-centric network methods makes it possible to discuss the platforms used by young jobseekers to gather information from network contacts, how they are being appropriated, and the types of contacts that are being accessed. Contextual factors and influential intervening variables are also highlighted, helping to provide a deeper analysis of online networking behaviours. This is another contribution of the thesis, as little is currently known about the role of social media as tools for job search. Firstly though, it is first useful to consider general social media use amongst young people.

#### **8.4.1 General use of social media**

The research findings show that Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are the only digital platforms appropriated to any great extent by young jobseekers in Scotland. Their dominance is reflected in social media research in other contexts, where they are also frequently the subject of investigation (see for example, Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Chua & Chua, 2017; Correa, Hinsley & de Zuniga, 2010; Huberman, Romero & Wu, 2009; Hughes, Rowe, Batey & Lee, 2012; Liu, Cheung, & Lee, 2016; Longridge, Hooley, & Staunton, 2013; Nikolaou, 2014).

Of these platforms, Facebook is the most popular amongst 16-24 year olds in Scotland, both in terms of having an account and frequency of use. The survey shows that over 90% of young jobseekers are active on the site, of whom the vast majority log in at least a few times a day. Its use is also pervasive irrespective of demographics, although young people with very low qualifications - a group characterised by higher levels of unemployment – are Facebook's most intensive users. This corresponds with previous research showing that unemployed young people in the UK spend the most time per day on SNSs (Mowbray, Raeside, &

Hall, 2016), and is likely to reflect the spare time they have compared to those in work or full-time education. Despite its popularity, the survey findings shows that only a minority of Facebook users actively post content on the site. This phenomenon has been termed 'lurking', and is a common dynamic in online communities where individuals contribute very infrequently but are regular visitors and consumers of content (Nonnecke & Preece, 1999). Whilst less popular in almost every other regard, the survey indicates that young people contribute more content on Twitter.

Frequency of Twitter use is more aligned with Facebook than LinkedIn. Indeed, the survey findings show that a majority of 16-24 year old Twitter users log in at least once a day, whilst only a small proportion use LinkedIn on a daily basis. However, in most respects, Twitter and LinkedIn are distinctly less popular than Facebook. Also, whilst Facebook use is pervasive across demographics, there are notable trends associated with Twitter and LinkedIn use. For example, although 16-18 year olds use Twitter more intensively, having an account on the platform is associated with being older and having higher levels of education. Indeed – in direct contrast with Facebook - young people with the lowest qualifications are the least likely to have an account on the platform. This indicates that those who are further from the labour market favour Facebook over Twitter for general use. This should also be a key consideration for public careers organisations. As noted previously, unemployed 15-19 year olds are the biggest customer group of the careers service in Scotland (SDS, 2017, p.15). With regards to LinkedIn, the trend is clear in that it is predominantly used by older respondents with higher levels of education. This aligns with findings from previous studies (Adecco Group, 2014; Nikolaou, 2014).

Given the purported value of weak ties to the acquisition of 'novel' job search information (Granovetter, 1973), the quantity of network contacts young people have on social media platforms is important to consider. The survey shows that on Facebook, around half have more than 400 contacts. A similar proportion of Twitter users have over 200 contacts (i.e. they follow, and therefore receive information, from over 200 accounts). Combined with frequent usage rates, these findings indicate that both platforms are useful for relational reconnection (Ramirez, Sumner, & Spinda, 2017), and can facilitate a stronger awareness

and knowledge of network contacts and their activities (Levordashka & Utz, 2016). As such, assisted by Facebook and Twitter, many young people in Scotland are continually acquiring knowledge about an expanding network of contacts. This is further evidence of the social capital embedded in online networks (Ahmad, Mustafa, & Ullah, 2016; Ellison et al., 2007; Schrock, 2016; Valenzuela, Park & Kee, 2009)

In comparison to Facebook and Twitter, only small minority of young people report having over 200 contacts on LinkedIn. As LinkedIn is a professional networking site (Ouiridi, Ouiridi, Segers & Henderickx 2014, p.119), this is likely to reflect the early stages of young peoples' career development. Indeed, Granovetter (1995, p.85) contends that mobility is self-generating during job search, with work experience providing access to a widening pool of weaker network contacts. However, due to the potency of occupational homophily in networked job attainment (Chen & Volker, 2016), actively creating and maintaining even a small number of contacts on LinkedIn could be advantageous to young jobseekers.

### 8.4.2 Modes of search on social media

As with offline networking, social media platforms also facilitate active and passive networking behaviours. The survey reveals that - amongst those who have an account on each platform - Facebook and LinkedIn are the most used for active job search behaviours (e.g. seeking jobs and contacting people). These findings diverge significantly from those in previous studies which show that LinkedIn is the dominant tool amongst UK jobseekers, and that only a minority use either Facebook or Twitter for job search (Adecco Group, 2014; Ofcom, 2014). It is probable that this reflects the young age of the sample population in the current study.

It should be emphasised that few of the survey respondents frequently use social media for job search, suggesting that they are supplementary information sources. Indeed, only a small minority (10%) reported that social media platforms are their main source of job search information. Despite this, the findings reveal that frequent use of social media has a positive impact on job search outcomes. Indeed, active Facebook use is linked with face-to-face interviews, whilst LinkedIn

is associated with receiving phone interviews. Active Twitter use also has a positive, albeit modest, impact.

Young jobseekers passively consume information on social media sent via direct messages. Being easily and quickly accessible to contacts is a key affordance of social media to jobseekers. Following organisational accounts and being in groups also allows them to consume information that automatically appears on social media newsfeeds. Such acquisition is similar to the phenomenon that Wilson (1997, p.562) terms “passive attention”, where information is gathered without intentional seeking. It also aligns with research that shows how using digital platforms can lead to accidental knowledge gain and increased engagement (e.g. with news and political information) through continuous exposure to content (Barker, Dozier, Scmitz, & Borden, 2015; Boczkowski, 2017; Valeriani & Vaccari, 2016). However, the survey shows that the use of passive social media functions only has a moderate impact on outcomes, compared with active behaviours. This is reflected in job search literature, where it has been shown that search intensity is frequently associated with positive job search outcomes (Saks, 2005; Wanberg, 2012).

Table 8-3 Social media platform, modes of search, and association with outcomes

Modes of search	Frequency /uptake	Associated outcomes (strength of association)
<b>Active (contacting people, searching for vacancies)</b>	<i>Medium (Facebook, LinkedIn)</i>  <i>Low (Twitter)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Face-to-face interviews (strong - Facebook; weak/moderate – Twitter, LinkedIn)</i></li> <li>• <i>Phone interviews (strong – LinkedIn; weak/moderate – Facebook, Twitter)</i></li> <li>• <i>Receiving more information (strong - all)</i></li> </ul>
<b>Passive (Pages, groups)</b>	<i>Medium (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Face-to-face interviews (weak/moderate - all)</i></li> <li>• <i>Phone interviews (weak/moderate – all)</i></li> <li>• <i>Receiving more information (strong - all)</i></li> </ul>

Table 8.3 summarises the frequency with which jobseekers actively search on social media platforms, and the general uptake of passive functions such as groups and pages. Associated outcomes are also presented.

### **8.4.3 Nature of contacts**

To understand the role of Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn as networking tools, it is useful to consider which types of contacts young jobseekers engage with on these platforms. The qualitative accounts of the interview participants show that there is an overlap with offline networking contacts on Facebook. For example, some exchanges involved the same formal individuals (e.g. college tutors) and organisations (e.g. SDS) that the participants consulted in person. Facebook is also the only platform where interactions with known informal contacts are mentioned in relation to job search. In contrast, the participants predominantly use Twitter to network with formal organisations with which they had no offline contact. The survey reveals that these findings are representative of 16-24 year old jobseekers. They show that just under half (45%) contact people directly to ask about jobs on Facebook, compared to a minority on Twitter (13%). This supports findings from previous studies showing that Facebook lends itself more to reciprocal social exchange, whilst Twitter is used for sharing information and opinions (Huberman, Romero & Wu, 2009; Kwak, Changhuyun, Park & Moon, 2010; Mo & Leung, 2014). It also partly explains Facebook as more conducive of positive job search outcomes.

Of the participants in the interviews and focus group, only Thomas provided an insight into the nature of contacts on LinkedIn. He uses it to connect with organisations in his industry who he may contact in the future for contract work. The survey shows that, like Facebook, just under half (45%) of young jobseekers who have a LinkedIn account use it to contact people directly to ask about jobs. This indicates that LinkedIn's functionality is also conducive to reciprocal social exchange, and may be useful for young people seeking information from industry figures or employers. Indeed, in spite of their differences, a commonality between Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, is that they increase the accessibility of formal contacts to young people. The qualitative accounts show how networking online with formal contacts facilitates a better understanding of employer activities, and

the accumulation of industry knowledge. This is a key social capital affordance of social media to jobseekers.

#### 8.4.4 Context of networking on social media platforms

Multiple contextual factors impact social media use during job search. On Facebook, those with lower education levels, who are unemployed, seeking low or medium level jobs, and are willing to settle for almost any job that pays, are the most likely to engage in active job search behaviours. It can be interpreted from these results that the type of job being sought is the primary enabler of active job search on Facebook, and that it is more useful for those seeking jobs of lower occupational status. The qualitative accounts give some precedence for these findings. To this end, examples of actively searching for information on Facebook were provided by Michael, Suzanne, and David, whose target jobs are in industries with less formal recruitment methods. In combination, the evidence from this research shows that Facebook is more conducive of face-to-face job interviews because it facilitates access to jobs with informal recruitment methods, and/or jobs with lower entry requirements. This confirms a trend that has already been established regarding the efficacy of networking with family members and face-to-face with employers.

Conversely, those with higher qualifications who are seeking careers are more likely to use Facebook's passive functions (i.e. groups and pages), and all of the functions on Twitter and LinkedIn. These findings align with previous studies showing that older students are more likely to be in Facebook groups (Cicevic, Samcovic, & Nestic, 2016), and that most graduate employers in the UK appropriate page functions on social media as part of their recruiting strategies (for a review, see Williams, Tassinari, & Ball, 2015). The latter also describes graduate application processes as being highly formalised and involving multiple stages (e.g. online application forms, assessment centres, phone interviews, and face-to-face interviews). The challenge of acquiring such positions could partly explain why the appropriation of passive Facebook functions and most Twitter and LinkedIn uses are only moderately linked with positive job search outcomes. Indeed, it is likely that a combination of other job search behaviours (e.g. using multiple information sources) and additional factors (e.g. human capital) are equally important in securing interviews in these circumstances. Notably though,



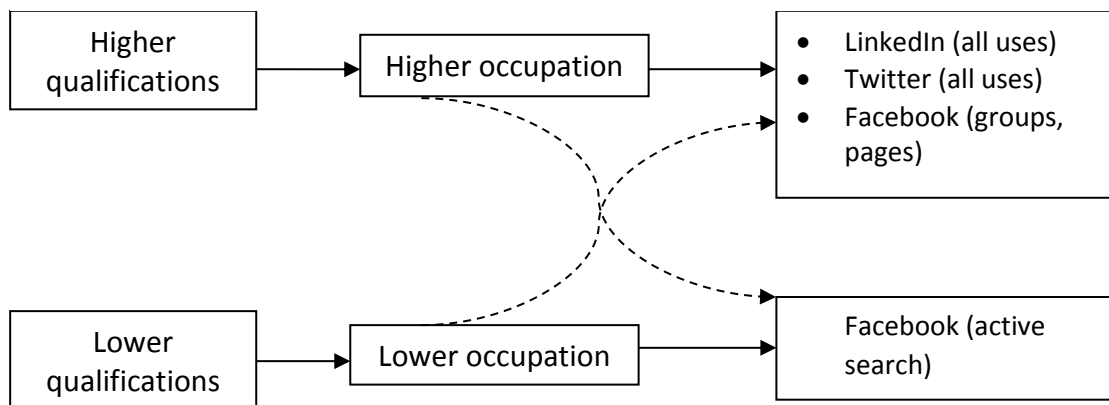
and as mentioned previously, active LinkedIn use is significantly associated with receiving phone interviews. Combined, these findings: (1) show that acquiring information on LinkedIn is beneficial for job seeking graduates; and 2) explain why phone interviews are associated with LinkedIn use, given their role in graduate recruitment processes.

A commonality between Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn use for job search purposes is that for all passive and active functions there is a positive association with age. This reflects the increased likelihood that jobseekers aged 22-24 have a clear job search goal, are seeking careers, and are not willing to settle for any job that will earn them money (see Section 6.2). To this end, it is probable that they are more committed to job search and willing to explore a wider range of information sources. As indicated in the literature review, age has been found to create key differences in how social media are appropriated to seek information in other contexts. Of particular note, younger employees and jobseekers favour Facebook over LinkedIn for information relating to employment (Nikolaou, 2014). Additionally, young information seekers prefer to receive anecdotal responses to queries as opposed to documented sources of evidence (Kim et al, 2014; Sin & Kim, 2013; Salmeron, Macedo-Rouet, & Rouet, 2016). These findings are reflected in this thesis report, which shows that - despite 22-24 year olds being more likely to use all of Facebook's functions for job search - in general, 16-18 year olds are more likely to appropriate Facebook for job search than they are Twitter or LinkedIn.

The literature also highlights the role of gender in relation to social media adoption. For example, it has been found that females are more likely than males to appropriate SNSs (Zywica & Danowski, 2008; Nadkarni & Hoffman, 2012), and that males are more likely to use social media platforms for task-oriented purposes (Lin & Lu, 2011). However, the results presented in this thesis indicate that there are no gender differences regarding general use of Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn, or the ways in which they are appropriated for job search. This is likely to reflect the year-on-year upward trend of social media use amongst the adult population in the UK (ONS, 2017). Having grown up with digital technologies, it is likely that 16-24 year old social media users are an increasingly homogenised group.

A conceptual model showing the relationship between job search context, search goals, and social media appropriation is presented in Figure 19. It shows that, in general, young people target occupations that align with their qualifications. In turn, seeking jobs of higher or lower occupational level is linked to the appropriation of different social media platforms (or functions within platforms) for job search. The dashed lines indicate that those seeking different job types also appropriate the other platforms, albeit to a lesser degree.

**Figure 19 The relationship between context and social media appropriation (mediated by job goal)**



### 8.4.5 Key intervening variables

Key intervening variables emerge from the findings relating to the appropriation and use of social media tools for networking. The qualitative findings show that accessing the internet through a mobile device can facilitate continuous job search information acquisition, and that those without such access may not be able to use social media for job search. The survey findings provide some support for this, showing that young people without mobile access to the Internet are less likely to appropriate different functions for job search purposes. Therefore, despite a reported 98% of 16-24 year olds in the UK having accessed the internet ‘on the go’ in 2017 (ONS, 2017), there remains a disparity in social media use which affects a small proportion of young people in Scotland. Given the positive impact of social media use on job search outcomes, this lack of frequent access creates (or deepens) social capital inequality.

Many intrapersonal variables impact networking on social media platforms. A basic and very influential factor is awareness. The qualitative accounts reveal that simply being advised to use social media during job search or being made aware of their informational benefits leads to appropriation. The survey findings support this, showing a clear link between being advised to use social media by a professional and actual appropriation. These findings reveal that young people are not predisposed to view social media as information tools, but that this perception can be embedded via interventions (Longridge, Hooley, & Staunton, 2013). Indeed, the survey findings also show that those who use social media frequently for job search are more likely to have a positive attitude towards them as job search information sources. This aligns with previous research which shows that the perceived usefulness of networking sites is positively associated with actual intentions to use (Carlos Martins Rodrigues Pinho, & Soares, 2011), and that positive experiences with technology can lead to acceptance over time (de Graaf, Allouch, & van Dijk, 2017).

Confidence is an important antecedent of contacting people on social media to ask about jobs. The survey shows that those who are comfortable asking acquaintances for advice are significantly more likely to contact people on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Therefore, the internal barriers young people face to offline networking also affect social media communication. Despite this, there is some evidence that social media platforms *do* level the playing field for introverted young jobseekers. To this end, those who prefer talking to people on social media, but are uncomfortable engaging offline with acquaintances, contact people online more often than is the average for young jobseekers. It should also be emphasised that confidence has no bearing on other uses of social media for job search. So, for example, those who do not like to network offline are *not* less likely to post public messages on social media asking for advice, or to join Facebook groups. Combined, these findings reflect those from other studies which find that both extraversion (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Ross et al., 2009) and introversion (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Blachnio, Przepiorka, Balakier & Boruch, 2016) influence social media adoption and use in different ways.

## ***8.5 Informing the careers service and improving employability amongst young people***

To address RQ3, the following sections outline how knowledge gained about job search networking - including the role of social media as tools for networking - can be incorporated into careers services to improve employability levels amongst 16-24 year olds in Scotland. As shown by the focus group with SDS careers advisers, it is an integral feature of service provision to advise young people about using networks during job search. However, it is also evident that this advice can be developed to encourage a more holistic approach to information seeking via contacts.

Efforts are also made to advise customers on social media use in relation to careers. In this respect, a prominent consideration is the safety of young people online, and making them aware that employers can see what they post about themselves on public platforms. Additionally, there is a concerted attempt to engage with customers on SDS's organisational pages, where they can access a range of job search information types. However, little attention is given to advising young people on using social media as tools for networking, or using them to source information that is not found on SDS pages. The participants agreed that, in general, service provision is lagging behind technological developments. They also indicated that careers advisers face significant barriers to giving advice about social media, mainly regarding a lack of:

- 1) Insight on the means by which young people use social media platforms for general purposes, and;
- 2) Training on the means by which social media platforms can be appropriated as tools for job search.

These issues are addressed below, by drawing on the findings discussed earlier in this chapter.

### **8.5.1 Training on networks and the role of social media as networking tools**

Young jobseekers must be advised that networking can help them to address a range of information needs, and that network contacts can be consulted

throughout the job search to update existing knowledge. For example, contacts can help them to develop and refine job search goals, improve the quality of their job search products (e.g. applications, CVs, interview techniques), and direct them towards job opportunities or other contacts and leads. In this regard, using networks should be presented as more than just identifying contacts who work within specific companies and asking them about job openings, although this *is* an important part of networking. Rather, it is an exercise where information is crowdsourced in a bid to navigate the totality of the recruitment process. Indeed, when applying for any job, young people should be aware that people and organisations can help them with every task, and that doing so will increase their chances of achieving positive outcomes.

The significance of planning and forethought in relation to networking activities should also be relayed to jobseekers. To this end, they should be encouraged to devise a list of contacts who could provide them with information. The following sections contains advice on how best to appropriate different types of existing network contacts during job search, and suggestions on the role of social media platforms. In each instance, the young person should make it explicit to contacts that they welcome forthcoming advice or assistance.

### **8.5.1.1**     *Speaking to family members*

Family members, and particularly parents, are the most likely contacts to help with a young person's job search. These exchanges are linked with positive outcomes. Therefore, it is vital that young jobseekers involve family in the search process. In doing so they should:

- Determine whether any family members can provide industry job/knowledge, links to knowledgeable contacts (e.g. friends, extended family etc.), or insight about the recruitment process.
- Ask for feedback from family members on job search tasks (e.g. applications, interview preparation) and help finding information (e.g. conducting vacancy searches)
- Provide family members with regular progress updates, making them aware of any pressing information needs

Social media can be useful as communication tools for networking with family members. For example, young people can encourage their parents or other family contacts to send them direct messages to relay any useful information they find. In general, they should raise awareness amongst family members that they can be contacted via social media.

### **8.5.1.2 Speaking to friends**

Most young people speak to their friends about job search. However, they are not necessarily gaining any information benefits from these exchanges. To address this, jobseekers should:

- Identify and speak to friends who may have relevant information for the job roles or industries being targeted (e.g. industry information, leads, or vacancies)
- Identify and speak to friends who may be able to provide recommendations on job search products (e.g. CVs, applications, interview tips), information sources (e.g. job site, social media pages), or leads – for example, friends who have made successful labour market transitions
- Ask friends to contact them if they acquire relevant information that would assist their job search
- Offer to reciprocate by sharing useful information with job seeking friends.

Social media can be particularly useful as communication tools for networking with friends, given the propensity for young people to have everyday exchanges on these platforms. They can ask friends to send them direct messages to relay job search information. If possible, functions such as Facebook groups can be used to communicate with cohort groups (e.g. classmates) about job search activities, and to maintain contact over the longer term.

### **8.5.1.3 Speaking to acquaintances**

Young jobseekers should be encouraged to look beyond their close circle of friends and family to identify and contact potentially helpful acquaintances. To this end, they should:

- Spend time making lists of acquaintances who may have useful information about the industry or job role being targeted, or industries/roles that may be of interest when determining a job search goal
- Spend time making lists of acquaintances who may be able to provide generalised advice on job search tasks (e.g. applications, interview preparation) and sourcing relevant information
- If possible, contact multiple acquaintances to increase the pool of information being sourced.

Social media are useful communication tools for identifying and networking with acquaintances. For example, young people can source acquaintances by perusing their list of contacts and considering the occupations those people hold. Direct private messages can be used to contact acquaintances, at least in the first instance. Posting a public message on social media asking all contacts for information may also be a useful approach, and a means of identifying acquaintances with relevant knowledge.

### **8.5.1.4 Speaking to professionals**

Professionals (e.g. careers advisers, teachers/tutors, support workers) are very important contacts for jobseekers. Not only can they provide high quality information, but they can also be invaluable sources of bridging capital. This is especially the case for jobseekers with few established contacts in the roles they are targeting. To use them effectively, young people should:

- Identify professionals who can provide them with assistance
- Build a rapport with professionals over time
- Actively seek information from professionals when completing job search tasks, or identifying/creating job search goals

Social media can be used to maintain contact with professionals. For example, the group function on Facebook can be useful for students and lecturers/tutors to share information. Where possible, young people should also engage with formal individuals and/or organisations on social media pages. However, although such functions facilitate passive information acquisition, jobseekers should also

actively search pages regularly to keep up to date with information they may have missed.

**8.5.1.5 Speaking to employers**

Employers can be direct sources of information for young people about the industries and jobs they are seeking. To network with them effectively, jobseekers should:

- Identify employers within the industries being targeted, or who recruit people within their preferred job roles
- Contact these employers via the available/appropriate channels to ask for information
- Ask for information about specific vacancies, and also for any other advice that the employers are willing to provide for young jobseekers seeking entry to the labour market.

Social media can be used to create and maintain contact with employers who have a presence on digital platforms. Jobseekers can use functions such as pages and groups to gather company and industry/specific information, information on vacancies, and leads to other notable individuals and/or organisations within the industry or sector.

**8.5.2 Everyday exchanges and building new contacts**

Despite the importance of planning networking activities, young people should not be deterred from making the most of everyday exchanges and spontaneous opportunities, wherever it is reasonable to do so. As discussed previously, networking behaviours often generate unplanned opportunities. Jobseekers should also be mindful about creating new contacts if they need access to specialised information. Social media is helpful in this regard, as it can be used to create, maintain, and mobilise new contacts. For example, they may find the LinkedIn profiles of people who work in jobs they are targeting and send them direct messages asking for information, or make online connections with people they meet in offline environments.



### 8.5.3 Steps to ameliorate networking barriers

Many young people face substantive barriers to job search networking. These are likely to persist in spite of information campaigns or awareness raising about networking. Those who are furthest from the labour market are at a particular disadvantage. The focus group with careers advisers highlighted this point, and how the concept of networks is difficult when the young person is dealing with a number of other fundamental issues associated with their personal lives. In such cases, it may be that gradually introducing some of the concepts covered above is the best approach.

Confidence is a common issue for many young people, and was recognised as such by the focus group participants. To address this, the SDS advisers employ bespoke interventions tailored towards individuals' needs. These include confidence building exercises which are not always directly related to job search networking. To complement these exercises, the following could also be incorporated into service provision:

- Standardised materials (e.g. web content, videos) outlining the different ways networks can be useful information sources during job search, and how best to approach/speak to different types of contact
- Practical training courses where young people are given the opportunity to simulate networking activities, learn how best to ask for assistance with job search tasks
- Supplementary advice/training on using social media platforms during job search.

The focus group with careers advisers indicated that issues with confidence are embedded at an early age in young people. Notably, SDS has a School Service Offer which involves contact with pupils in primary 5 (i.e. aged 9-10 years olds), their teachers, and parents/carers. Potentially, the concept of getting information from people and organisations could be incorporated into the service offer at this early stage. For example, materials showing how speaking to people of interest (e.g. someone with an interesting occupation) can lead to new knowledge about career paths, or how everyday tasks and activities can be completed by asking contacts for help. However, the focus group also highlighted that networking is

sometimes perceived negatively by young people. As such, it may be best to avoid using the term networking, and to frame the process of asking for help with different tasks as a very positive and normal thing to do.

Barriers to using social media for job search are complex. A fundamental issue for a small proportion of young people is having mobile access to the Internet. An obvious solution to this is for all young people to be provided access to phones with online access through public funds. However, the practicality of doing so may be rendered non-existent by a complicated litany of economic, ethical, and political factors (amongst others), which are beyond the scope of this thesis. However, inequality of access to technology is a discussion that must take place amongst those associated with the careers profession to ensure young people are not faced with information poverty - especially given the potential for social media to be used as platforms for bridging capital. Another common barrier to social media use is a lack of awareness that they can be appropriated for job search, and the means by which they can be useful. However, if young people can be made aware of *how* social media can be useful for their specific needs, they are far more likely to appropriate them. Indeed, the results in this thesis indicate that increased awareness leads to increased use, and in turn, a more positive attitude towards social media as job search networking tools.

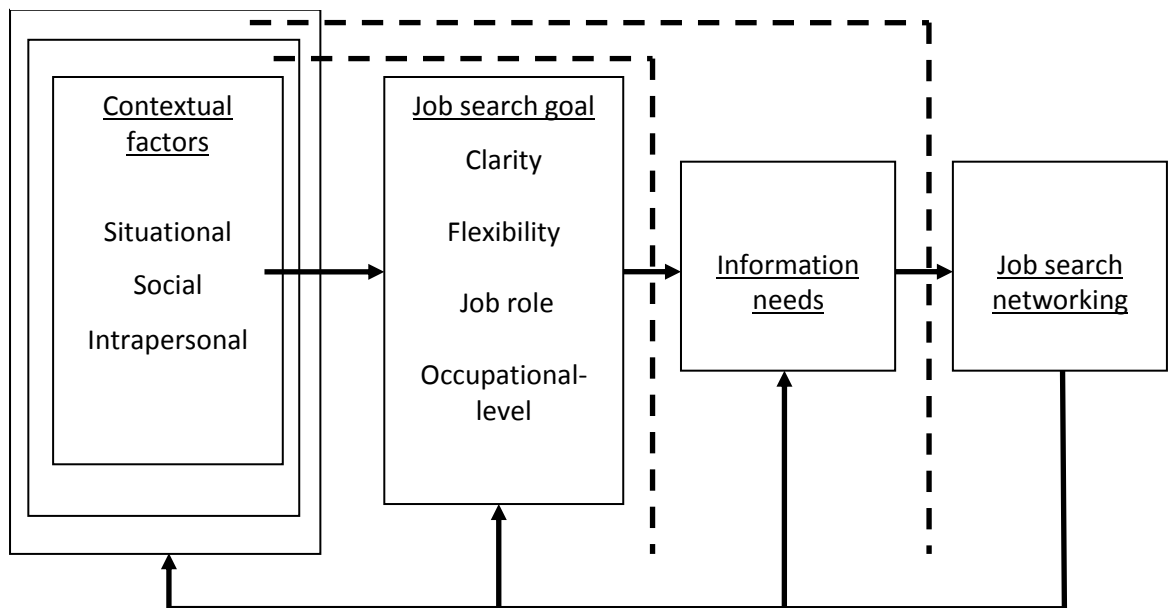
### ***8.6 Discussion of Wilson's information needs and seeking model***

Wilson's information needs and seeking model (see Chapter 3) was used as a framework for the empirical work discussed in this thesis. He identifies the context from which need arises as being crucial to the direction of information behaviours, and notes how intervening variables (e.g. barriers and enablers) are often related to context (Wilson, 1981). He also states that information needs - subjectively experienced by individuals - are often intractable for researchers, but that they are secondary to basic human needs (e.g. the need for water or shelter).

The findings presented in this study demonstrate the efficacy of exploring the context of information need in relation to job search networking. Indeed, contextual factors are shown to be crucial antecedents of networking, whilst also being closely related to intervening variables. As such, utilising Wilson's model

has facilitated a deeper analysis of job search networking as an information behaviour. However, it is necessary to clarify how concepts such as contextual factors, intervening variables, information needs, and basic human needs interact with networking as an information behaviour during job search. To do this, a reworking of Wilson’s model (see Figure 20) is discussed in the following paragraphs.

**Figure 20 Revised version of Wilson’s information needs and seeking model reflecting the factors related to job search networking**



Illustrated in Figure 20, the findings in this thesis show that a complex array of situational, social, and intrapersonal factors, aggregate towards the articulation (or lack thereof) of an overall job search goal. Basic human needs are influential at this juncture, and are manifest in each of these factors. For example, the young jobseeker may live outside the familial home, through choice or otherwise. This situational condition is related to the basic human need for sustenance, and social conditions (e.g. access to resources) and intrapersonal conditions (e.g. motivation, education level, personality traits, qualification type, work experience), these conditions combine to alter the nature of the goal, in terms of its clarity, flexibility, the actual job role being sought, and the occupational level of the role. Many of the contextual factors that impact job search networking have been identified in the qualitative findings presented in Chapter 4, through

participant reports. However, these examples cannot be considered exhaustive. To learn more about these, further qualitative studies of jobseekers are required.

Figure 20 also shows that different information needs inhere within the process of achieving job search goals. This is evidenced by the results presented in this thesis. For example, young people seeking jobs of higher occupational level are more likely to approach acquaintances for advice, whereas those seeking lower occupational roles are more likely to consult employers face-to-face. The nature of these information needs can be identified by studying the actual behaviours of jobseekers. However, it is important to recognise that information needs are not always perceived by individuals. As stated by Wilson (1981, p.7), “many decisions are taken with incomplete information or on the basis of beliefs”. Therefore, whilst information needs inhere within goals, jobseekers may not be aware of them for a variety of reasons. This has been factored into Figure 20. The model shows that intervening variables (represented by a dashed line) emerge from contextual factors, which may inhibit - or indeed enable - cognisance of information needs. Note that contextual factors are presented in layers to convey the potential for different types of conditions to impact goals, needs, and job search networking, respectively.

The final stage of the revised model shows that information needs can be addressed by the engagement in job search networking behaviours, which have been described in this chapter. The addition of arrows reconnecting back to each stage of the model also indicate that networking can alter context (e.g. by building new contacts), goals (e.g. by identifying interesting job roles), and information needs (e.g. by creating an awareness of new information sources), thus highlighting the temporal dynamics involved in job search. Again, the model illustrates how intervening variables (also represented by a dashed line) emerge from contextual factors to inhibit or enable these behaviours. In such cases an information need is perceived by the individual. For example, he or she may be aware that approaching employers face-to-face is the most effective way to find out about job opportunities, but avoids doing so due to a lack of confidence. Alternatively, the jobseeker may perceive a need but be unaware that networking, either offline or on social media, is a means of satisfying the need.

## **8.7 Conclusion**

The discussion presented in this chapter underlines the potency of job search networking as an information behaviour. Indeed, it shows that young jobseekers gain an advantage at all stages of job search by engaging frequently with network contacts. To this end, the range of information they receive can help them to devise suitable search goals, tailor job search products such as CVs and job applications, and source more job vacancies. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn also play a crucial and oftentimes overlapping role as networking tools for young jobseekers. For example, they create platforms to create and maintain hundreds of network ties, facilitate efficient communication and continuous information acquisition, and make otherwise elusive contacts accessible (e.g. employers and important industry figures). Combined, frequent networking both offline and on social media is associated with positive job search outcomes.

Despite the above, it has also been shown that the nature and extent of networking varies considerably per jobseeker. Indeed, this is where the application of Wilson's model as a framework for the research is particularly useful in developing a holistic understanding of networking. By adopting its focus on contextual factors, this thesis reveals crucial antecedents of networking with different types of contacts. It also helps in the process of identifying specific barriers young people sometimes face (e.g. awareness and confidence) which can moderate their behaviours. This detail makes it possible to explain networking phenomena, by creating a cogent narrative on the role of network contacts and social media platforms during job search. In turn, this new understanding facilitates tailored recommendations for careers practitioners, based upon the specific impact of different contact types and social media platforms.

## Chapter 9 Conclusions

### **9.1 Introduction**

The purpose of the research reported in this thesis has been to investigate the role of networking and social media tools during job search amongst 16-24 year olds living in Scotland. Although numerous types of resources can be sourced from network contacts (Lin, 1999, p.31), networking has operationalised in this work as a process whereby jobseekers acquire information from contacts. By using Wilson's (1981) information needs and seeking model as a framework, the concept of networking has been developed from a theoretical perspective that has been absent from previous research on the topic.

In this chapter, the key research findings are revisited, and conclusions are drawn as to their overall significance. Following this, the means by which this work has contributed to existing knowledge on job search networking is stated. Finally, recommendations are provided:

- (1) For academics, on future research directions relating to this topic.
- (2) For practitioners and policy makers, on implementing changes based upon the evidence presented in this thesis report.

### **9.2 Summary of the research findings**

It is useful to consider the key findings in relation to the research questions they help to address. The first question posed by the study is as follows:

**RQ1** What are the key networking behaviours employed by young jobseekers living in Scotland?

Interviews, a focus group, and a survey of young jobseekers were used to gather data relating to this question. In doing so, a base knowledge has been established on the means by which young people network during job search. Within this, it has been shown that networked information can be actively sought or passively consumed from existing contacts. Additionally, proactive individuals create new contacts specifically to acquire information from outside of their established networks.

The information attained through networking is diverse in nature, and can be useful at both the preparatory and active phases of job search. For example, it can be used to tailor search goals, improve search products (e.g. applications and CVs), and to identify a wider range job opportunities. This has a demonstrably positive impact on job search outcomes. Indeed, frequent networking behaviours are linked with receiving more interviews and being contacted more often with job search information and advice.

Further insight into job search networking has been provided by identifying the different types of contacts – both individuals and organisations – mobilised by jobseekers. Some are informal, such as family members, friends, and acquaintances. Others are formal, such as teachers, tutors, careers advisers, employers, and schools. In terms of potency, networking with family members and employers (via face-to-face contact) contribute the most to receiving interviews. However, with the exception of friends, the findings show that frequent interactions with all contact types have a positive impact on job search.

Important contextual factors have also been provided, which help to explain the networking habits of young people. Whilst these are multifaceted and complex, notable trends do emerge from the findings. For example, those seeking jobs of lower occupational status are considerably more likely to network with employers in person. As contended by this work, it is likely that this reflects the prevalence of informal recruitment processes adopted for lower status jobs. In turn, informal recruitment is likely to explain the effectiveness of contacting employers in person as a means of receiving interviews.

Finally, numerous barriers and enablers have been identified in relation to job search networking. For example, confidence is a crucial factor. Indeed, the findings show that many young jobseekers do not engage with weaker contacts (i.e. acquaintances) as they are disinclined to ask people they do not know very well for information. Conversely, some young people network less frequently with closer contacts (e.g. family members) because they prefer not to ask people for help. This could be an assertion of their independence or a reflection of their self-efficacy, as the same individuals are just as likely to engage with weaker contacts for information.

The second question addressed by the research was as following:

**RQ2** What role do social media platforms have in the job search networking behaviours of young jobseekers based in Scotland?

Interviews, a focus group, and a survey of young jobseekers were also used to gather data on this question. Using these methods, it was found that only Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are used to any notable extent for job search purposes. In terms of general use, the following is true of each:

1. **Facebook.** Almost all respondents have an account on the platform. Whilst most use the platform several times a day, those with the lowest educational attainment use it particularly intensively. On average, users have several hundred contacts on Facebook.
2. **Twitter.** Around a half of respondents have an account on Twitter. These young people are more likely to be older and to have higher qualifications. Most with an account use it at least once a day, and whilst articulating fewer contacts than on Facebook (on average), the majority have over 200 connections on the platform.
3. **LinkedIn.** A quarter of respondents have an account on LinkedIn. There is a strong positive association between LinkedIn use, age, and education level. Most with an account use it less than once a day, and have fewer than 200 connections on the platform.

As these findings suggest, Facebook and Twitter offer young people the chance to maintain and absorb knowledge from a large pool of network contacts. In this regard, they represent important sources of social capital for jobseekers. Facebook in particular has much potential for engagement between jobseekers and employers, given the high proportion of its users and the frequency with which they appropriate the platform. Indeed, frequent use of Facebook for job search is significantly associated with positive outcomes (e.g. receiving interviews). Frequent use of LinkedIn is also linked with positive outcomes, albeit to a lesser extent, whilst job search on Twitter is linked with only a small positive impact.

Young people actively pursue and passively consume job search information on social media. Regarding the former, they engage in activities such as searching for vacancies, sourcing industry information, and contacting people to ask about



jobs. Facebook and LinkedIn are used more than Twitter for contacting people during job search, suggesting that these platforms are more suited for reciprocal social exchange. In general, social media are also used to create and maintain ties with industry figures, employers, and organisations. The accessibility of such ties is a crucial benefit of digital platforms, and serves to underline their affordances as networking tools.

Regarding passive acquisition, social media increase the efficiency of communication during job search. Indeed, frequent social media use is associated with receiving more information from contacts. Functions such as Facebook groups and pages also make it possible to consume information that automatically appears on newsfeeds, and for those with mobile technologies, to do so on a continuous basis. These are also crucial affordances, which significantly impact the process of job search networking.

Contextual factors relating to social media adoption for job search have also been provided, which help to explain the means by which they are appropriated. Trends can be identified, despite the complexity of these findings. For example, it has been shown that those with lower education levels are especially likely to appropriate Facebook for active search behaviours, whilst those with higher education levels tend towards Twitter and LinkedIn. Indeed, it is possible that Facebook's use by those seeking jobs of lower occupational level – and therefore with more flexible recruitment processes – contributes towards its utility in receiving job interviews.

Lastly, it is important to recognise that despite their utility, social media platforms are used sparingly by most young jobseekers. Indeed, only a small minority use them frequently as a source of job search information. Additionally, young people face many barriers to social media use. Perhaps the most prominent of these is a basic awareness that they can be appropriated when seeking employment. However, the findings show that those who are advised by a professional to use social media for job search are significantly more likely to do so than those who are not advised. In turn, those actively using digital platforms for job search are more likely to value them as useful job search tools.

### **9.3 Contributions to existing knowledge and theory**

The research findings make several contributions to knowledge on job search networking. These are stated below, alongside a synthesis of related themes from previous work, which have been explored in greater depth in Chapter 2:

1. **Network structure.** A large body of work addresses network structure and its relationship with employment outcomes. Within this, there is a particular focus on the strength of network ties. These studies show that network structure influences the flow of job information, and that social ties have a significant role in the distribution of labour. However, they tend to concentrate on information exchanges that immediately precede successful employment outcomes. One of the key contributions of this study is that it moves the focus of information exchange beyond the intersection where contacts tell jobseekers about specific opportunities. Indeed, it explains the wider role of network contacts as sources of information throughout the job search process.
2. **Social capital.** An equally large body of work focuses on the quality of resources contained within individuals' networks. Empirical studies show that social capital indicators (e.g. family background, socioeconomic status, the occupational prestige of contacts) are closely associated with employment outcomes. However, despite theorists highlighting the functional role of information in achieving these ends, this role is largely assumed. Therefore, another contribution of this thesis is that it makes explicit the utility of networked information, and underlines the means by which the social capital manifests itself as a benefit to young jobseekers.
3. **Job search networking.** Only a few previous studies deal with job search networking as an operational concept i.e. the process whereby individuals actually mobilise contacts for assistance when seeking employment. These studies are purely quantitative in nature, and identify some of the antecedents and outcomes of frequent networking during job search. Notably though, they use arbitrary behavioural measures, or measures developed from non-academic literature sources. They also do not refer to the use of digital tools during job search. As such, a third contribution of this thesis is the development of job search networking as an operational concept. To this end,

the actual processes of job search networking are explored in detail, and the impact of various circumstantial factors.

- 4. Social media adoption.** A large body of existing literature relates to the adoption and use of social media platforms within various contexts. However, the majority of studies relating to job search focus on the recruitment side of the labour market i.e. the means by which employers utilise social media to source or screen candidates. Therefore, the fourth and final contribution of this work has been to elucidate the role of prominent social media platforms as sources of information for young jobseekers.

The research reported in this thesis has also made an important theoretical contribution, which is manifest on two key levels. Firstly, job search has not previously been a key focus of research in the field of information science. As mentioned in Chapter 3, it responds to Wilson's (1997, p.570) call for pertinent research topics to be studied from an information behaviour perspective as a matter of urgency. This is important for the development of theory in the discipline, as it facilitates a deeper understanding of the means by which social entities acquire, seek, and use information. This learning is evident via an updated version of Wilson's model (see Chapter 8), which has been informed by the findings outlined in this thesis. Secondly, networking has seldom received focus in isolation from other forms of information seeking in studies of information behaviour. As such, this work contributes to the development of a granular level understanding of networking behaviours as means of acquiring informational resources.

#### ***9.4 Importance of the research findings***

In Scotland, advising service users on the effective use of networks is an integral feature of careers policy (SDS, 2012, p.6). This reflects a host of research - spanning decades – on the influential nature of network characteristics to labour market attainment. Despite this, the behavioural manifestation of networking has not been thoroughly explained in previous research. The work reported in this thesis has initiated this process by investigating the phenomenon on a more detailed level than has been attempted in previous studies.

An in depth study of job search networking is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, by concentrating on both networking behaviours and network characteristics, it provides a new lens through which to explore a number of closely related concepts (e.g. information behaviour, network structure, and social capital), and does so by weaving them together. To this end, the findings help to explain the mechanisms through which networked information influences the direction of job search, and contributes towards outcomes. They also show that there is a complexity and multidimensionality to networking that merits greater attention than it has already received, and which has been missed in previous studies. This is especially true when taking into consideration the constantly evolving digital landscape (Office for National Statistics, 2017).

From a policy perspective, the findings are important because they describe these behaviours amongst young jobseekers living in Scotland. This is important, because it allows policy makers in Scotland to develop strategies around the use of networks – both offline and online - that are informed by evidence drawn from the resident population. The heterogeneous nature of the sample is particularly useful in this regard, as it has been possible to determine key trends amongst different demographic groups in the Scottish youth labour market.

Finally, the findings are crucial because they highlight a host of issues relating to job search networking. For example, they give the impression that young people face a number of barriers to engaging with contacts, and that in general, they do not necessarily make the most of the social resources – or the digital tools - at their disposal. Based upon this, careers practitioners can implement changes that address these concerns.

### **9.5 Recommendations for academia**

Whilst the research reported in this thesis has established a significant base of knowledge on job search networking, there remains a great deal to be learned about this important topic. For example, it would be useful to focus on a homogenous sample of young jobseekers, such as university leavers seeking graduate positions, or young people leaving school and seeking full-time employment. This would help to reduce issues with sampling that have been

limitations in this study. It would also lead to more tailored recommendations for practitioners working with specific customer groups.

Useful insights could also be obtained by focusing on jobseekers at different career stages. Indeed, the current study has shown that contextual factors have a significant bearing on subsequent behaviours. As such, it is likely that older jobseekers with more work experience engage with contacts differently, both offline and on social media. They are also likely to face different barriers to networking. It may also be useful to focus on homogenous groups of jobseekers when taking this approach, such as individuals pursuing jobs within specific industries or sectors. This is likely to generate more robust and comparable findings. For example, it would be possible to assert with a greater degree of confidence the influence of specific behaviours by focusing on a group of individuals pursuing very similar goals.

Various alternative research designs could also be applied to the study of networking. For example, a longitudinal approach could be implemented to map the progression of jobseekers, using interviews and/or diary methods. This would help to overcome issues with participant recall, and would provide rich new insights into the means by which jobseekers engage with contacts. Such large qualitative studies would also be particularly advantageous to information scientists interested in creating detailed behavioural models of jobseekers' networking activities. Another approach would be to study recently employed individuals, to map the activities of successful job searches.

## ***9.6 Recommendations for practice and policy makers***

To develop recommendations for practitioners, the following research question was devised and has been addressed in this thesis report:

**RQ3** How can knowledge gained from (RQ1) and (RQ2) inform the work of careers services in order to assist young people achieve better job search outcomes?

Answering this question involved a combination of the findings summarised above, and a focus group with SDS careers advisers. A comprehensive discussion of the findings on this question, including detailed recommendations for practice can be found in Chapter 8. These include advising young people that:

1. Asking contacts for help with *all* job search tasks is a useful activity (e.g. creating a job search goal, learning about industries, answering application questions, finding vacancies).
2. Family members (or care givers) should be encouraged to help in any way possible – whether or not they have special knowledge on the type of job being sought. They should also be kept up to date with job search progress.
3. It is useful to think about all of the people who can potentially help with job search, and to contact them individually to ask for advice. This should include professionals (e.g. careers advisers, teachers), acquaintances (e.g. people the jobseekers do not see very often), and potentially useful organisations (e.g. the careers service).
4. It is useful to contact employers directly to ask about jobs. All appropriate channels should be used for this (e.g. face-to-face, email, telephone, and social media).
5. If they do not know anybody who can give them useful (or specialist) information about the job they are seeking, they should consider means of sourcing new people to ask for help.
6. Generally talking about job search in everyday situations can lead to unplanned opportunities, such as leads to other knowledgeable contacts or access to useful information sources.
7. Social media platforms can be used for fast and efficient communication with contacts – for example, jobseekers could advise contacts that they can be contacted on Facebook if their contacts have new information for them.
8. Social media platforms can be used to maintain connection with new contacts, or to reach out to a large pool of acquaintances.
9. In many cases, social media platforms can be used to connect with – and contact - industry figures and organisations. A means of finding them could be to conduct online searches to determine whether they have an online presence.

10. Social media group pages can be useful to pool information within cohort and/or other mutual interest groups (e.g. classmates/tutors or people in the trade/industry). If jobseekers are unaware whether relevant groups/forums exist that meet their needs, they should be encouraged to search for them or ask others who might know.

The findings show that raising awareness on the benefits of networking and social media use is a potent means of encouraging jobseekers to engage in these behaviours. However, it should be noted that young people face other barriers to networking. Of these, confidence is a crucial issue. On this basis, an important recommendation for policy makers is to consider providing resources on networking. For example, practical courses on different methods and strategies for approaching contacts for assistance. Standardised materials could also be disseminated, such as educational video content on the benefits and processes of networking. Particularly with regards to social media use, new training and educational resources should also be made available to careers advisers.

A final policy recommendation based upon the findings in this work is to reconsider use of the term 'networking' (and also potentially 'networks') when advising young people. There is some evidence to suggest it is misunderstood, and/or has negative connotations. Instead, less daunting language could be appropriated. For example, networking could be framed as simply asking people for help with different job search tasks. In doing so, it may be possible to normalise such behaviours, and to promote them as an everyday means of seeking information.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A Interview schedule and checklist

### Jobseeker interview: schedule

Section 1: Participant information
<p><i>Date of interview:</i></p> <p><i>Location of interview:</i></p> <p><i>Participant age:</i></p> <p><i>Participant gender:</i></p> <p><i>Participant education:</i></p>
Section 2: The context of information needs and goals
<p><i>I'd like to start by asking you some questions about your current employment situation and job search.</i></p> <p><b>1) How would you describe your current employment situation?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prompt: Employed, registered unemployed, registered long-term unemployed, unregistered unemployed?</li><li>• Probe: Highly engaged in job search?</li></ul>
<p><b>2) How would you describe the kind of job you are looking for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prompt: Industry? Salary?</li><li>• How flexible?</li></ul>
<p><b>3) What drives you to look for employment?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physiological reasons? Cognitive reasons? Social acceptance?</li><li>• Career option/short-term solution?</li></ul>
Section 3: Network and non-network sources of job information
<p><i>I'd now like to ask you some questions about the information sources you use during job search.</i></p> <p><b>4) Could you please tell me about any job search engines or newspaper advertisements that you have used during job search?</b></p> <p><b>a) If job ads/job search engines:</b></p>

- Which ones and how often?
- Where?
- Is it useful method?
- Any difficulties?

**5) Could you please tell me about any organisations that you have used for assistance during your job search?**

**If YES:**

- Which organisations and:
  - How was contact initiated?
  - Information sought?
  - Frequent contact?
  - Useful?
  - How contact is maintained (e.g. online)?
  - Barriers (or enablers) to contact?
  - Would social media be helpful?

**If NO:**

- Awareness of organisations?
- Plans to do so?
- Reasons why not?
- Would social media contact help?

**6) Could you please tell me about any people you know who have assisted throughout your job search?**

Prompt: friends, family, friends of friends, ex workmates etc.

**If YES:**

- a) Which people and:
  - Relationship (friend, family, associate)?
  - Social position (job)?
  - Tie strength (e.g. weak, intermediate, or strong)?
  - Information sought?
  - Useful?
  - How is contact maintained (e.g. online)?
  - Barriers (or enablers) to contacts?
  - Ongoing?

b) General approach

- Listed and approached people?
- Speak with people about job search regularly?
- Comfortable talking about job search?
- Is asking a useful method?
- Capable of approaching people?

### Section 3: The role of social media tools in job search

*I'd now like to ask you some questions about social media.*

**7) Could you please tell me about any social media websites you visit, and what you use them for?**

If **YES**:

- Which social media sites?
- Social, functional, informational?
- How often?
- Who are these online connections (friends, family, other)?
- How do you access social media sites (mobile phone, laptop etc.)?

If **NO**:

- Is there a reason?
- Access issues (physical, cognitive, skills-based)?

**8) Could you please tell me about any social media sites you use for job search?**

If **YES**:

- Which ones?
- Actively? (examples)
- Passively? (examples)
- Functions? (Groups, hashtags etc.)
- Useful?
- Capable of using all functions?
- Comfortable using for job search?
- Advised by careers guidance or teachers?
- Useful for collaboration with CAIG?

For examples of solicited/unsolicited advice online:

- a) Which people/organisations and:
  - How was contact initiated?

- Information sought/given?
- Did it help?
- Contact frequency?
- Barriers/enablers to contact?

**If NO:**

- Is there a reason?
- Ever been a passive recipient?
- Advised by careers guidance or teachers?
- Whether the respondent feels as though they could benefit by utilising social media tools to develop relationships with careers organisations

**Ask questions about measures of career success – job interviews etc.**

## Jobseeker interview: checklist

Context of information need			Information sources			Social media adoption		
Situation	Job type	Motivation	Search engines etc.	Organisations	People	Social media general	Social media & JS	Social media & JS 2
Employed, unemployed	Industry	Basic sustenance	Source	Organisation	Who?	What tools	What tools	Who
Search length	Salary/wage	Need for cognition	Info sought	Info sought/passed	Tie strength	Recreational or functional	Actively/passively (examples)	Tie strength
Search intensity	Level of flexibility	Social acceptance	Frequency	Contact initiated by	Occupation	Frequency	Functions	Occupation
		Other need	Where? (e.g. home)	Followed up	Info sought	Nature of contacts	Capable	Info sought/passed
		Career or short term	Is it useful	Social media element	Contact initiated by	Access via	Comfort	Contact initiated by
			Capable	Is it useful	Followed up		Advised by CAIG	Followed up
			Difficulties	Capable	Social media?		Difficulties	Offline connection
				Comfortable	Comfort?			Useful
				Difficulties	Difficulties?			

## **Appendix B      Jobseeker focus group questions**

### **Focus group: schedule**

#### **Section 1: Participant information**

*Date of interview:*

*Location of interview:*

*Participant ages:*

*Participant genders:*

*Participant education levels:*

*Participant occupations:*

#### **Section 2: Questions**

*I'd like to start by asking you some questions about your current employment situation and job search.*

- 1) How would you describe your current employment situation?**
- 2) What motivates you to look for work?**
- 3) How often do you engage in job search?**
- 4) How likely would you be to take a job that does not match your qualifications?**
- 5) Could you please tell me about any sources you use to find job search information?**
- 6) Could you please tell me about any organisations that you have used for assistance during your job search?**
- 7) Could you please tell me about any people who have assisted you throughout your job search?**
- 8) Could you please tell me about any social media sites you use for job search?**



## **Appendix C Survey questionnaire template**

**Welcome to my survey questionnaire!**

**Please read the notes below and select the "Yes" box if you agree to take part.**

**Who am I?** I am a PhD researcher at Edinburgh Napier University.

**What am I doing?** I am investigating how young people find information during job search. I am also interested in the role of social media during this process.

**Who is funding the study?** The study is part funded by Skills Development Scotland, who provide careers services across the country.

**Why is the study important?** The findings will be used to improve careers services in Scotland, and to help young people find work effectively.

**How long will the survey take to complete?** The survey should take around 10 minutes to complete.

**Is participation anonymous?** All of the responses are anonymous, and participants will not be identified in any report produced by the researcher.

**Is it possible to withdraw from the survey?** Responses are entirely voluntary, and you are free to stop answering the questions at any stage. However, once you have completed the survey you cannot have your data removed, as it will be untraceable at this point.

**Is it possible to ask questions about the study?** If you have any questions please feel free to contact the researcher at: [j.mowbray@napier.ac.uk](mailto:j.mowbray@napier.ac.uk).

**What does it mean if you click "Yes" below?** It means you have read the above information and consent to participate in this study. Your acceptance of this is not a waiver of any legal rights, and you can contact the researcher at any time to receive a copy of this informed consent notice.

Do you agree to participate in the survey questionnaire?

Yes

No

1. How long have you been searching for a job?

- 1 month or under
- 2 to 3 months
- 4 to 5 months
- 6 months or more

2. How strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) I put a lot of effort into finding a job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) I have a clear idea of the type of job I am looking for	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) I am looking for a job with longer-term career prospects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d) I would be open to most jobs in order to earn some money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e) I am willing to be flexible with the hours I work (i.e. I would work evenings and weekends if required)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f) I would be happy to move to a new area in the UK for a job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Please list up to 3 types of job that you have been searching for (e.g. *apprentice plumber, management graduate, shop assistant*).

Note: if you have only been searching for one or two types of job, you can leave the extra boxes blank

Job 1	<input type="text"/>
Job 2	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>

4. How often during this job search have you:

	Never (0 times)	Rarely (1 or 2 times)	Occasionally (3 to 5 times)	Frequently (6 to 9 times)	Very frequently (at least 10 times)
a) spoken about your job search activities with family members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) spoken about your job search activities with friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) spoken about your job search activities to a lecturer/teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d) spoken about your job search activities to a careers advisor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e) spoken about your job search activities to a support worker	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f) contacted a person you haven't spoken to for more than two weeks to ask for job leads or advice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g) been contacted by somebody you know with information about a job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. How often have you contacted employers directly to ask about jobs:

	Never (0 times)	Rarely (1 or 2 times)	Occasionally (3 to 5 times)	Frequently (6 to 9 times)	Very frequently (at least 10 times)
a) face to face	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) on the telephone	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) by email	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d) on social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of these statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) I would be comfortable asking my family for job search information (e.g. job leads, CV help etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) I would be comfortable asking my friends for job search information (e.g. job leads, CV help etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) I would be comfortable asking people I don't know very well for job search information (e.g. job leads, CV help etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d) My family could give me useful job search information (e.g. job leads, CV help etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e) I don't like to ask people for help with my job search	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Do you have a Facebook account?

Yes

No

8. How often do you use Facebook?

- Once a week or less
- A few times a week
- Once a day
- A few times a day
- Throughout the day

9. How many Facebook friends do you have?

- 1 to 199
- 200 to 399
- 400 to 599
- 600 to 799
- 800 to 999
- 1000 or more

10. Are you a member of any Facebook groups where job search information is posted (e.g. *job adverts, CV help*)?

- Yes
- No

11. Have you "liked" any Facebook pages where job search information is posted (e.g. *careers guidance pages, employer pages*)?

- Yes
- No

12. Have you ever posted a status update asking your Facebook friends for job search information (e.g. *job leads, CV help*)?

- Yes
- No

13. How often during job search have you:

	Never (0 times)	Rarely (1 or 2 times)	Occasionally (3 to 5 times)	Frequently (6 to 9 times)	Very frequently (10 times at least)
a) actively used Facebook to look for job opportunities					<input checked="" type="radio"/>
b) contacted somebody through Facebook and asked them about a job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) used Facebook hashtags to find information about job search (e.g. #jobs, #jobsearch)					<input checked="" type="radio"/>

14. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of these statements:

	Strongly disagree	<del>Disagree</del>	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) I know how to use the features on Facebook for job search activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) I think Facebook is a useful tool to find information that helps me with my job search	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) I regularly post updates on Facebook (about any subject)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. Do you have a Twitter account?

Yes

No



16. How often do you use Twitter?

- Once a week or less
- A few times a week
- Once a day
- A few times a day
- Throughout the day

17. How many Twitter followers do you have?

- 1 to 199
- 200 to 399
- 400 to 599
- 600 to 799
- 800 to 999
- 1000 or more

18. How many accounts do you follow on Twitter?

- 1 to 199
- 200 to 399
- 400 to 599
- 600 to 799
- 800 to 999
- 1000 or more

19. Do you follow any Twitter accounts which provide job search information (*e.g. careers guidance accounts, employer accounts*)?

- Yes
- No

20. Have you ever posted a Tweet asking for job search information (e.g. job leads, CV help)?

- Yes  
 No

21. How often during job search have you:

	Never (0 times)	Rarely (1 or 2 times)	Occasionally (3 to 5 times)	Frequently (6 to 9 times)	Very frequently (10 times at least)
a) actively used Twitter to search for job opportunities					<input type="radio"/>
b) contacted somebody through Twitter and asked them about a job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) used Twitter hashtags to find information about job search (e.g. #jobs, #jobsearch)					<input type="radio"/>

22. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of these statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) I know how to use the features on Twitter for job search activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) I think Twitter is a useful tool to find information that helps me with my job search	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) I regularly post Tweets (about any subject)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

23. Do you have a LinkedIn account?

Yes

No

24. How often do you use LinkedIn

- Once a week or less
- A few times a week
- Once a day
- A few times a day
- Throughout the day

25. How many LinkedIn connections do you have?

- 1 to 199
- 200 to 399
- 400 to 599
- 600 to 799
- 800 to 999
- 1000 or more

26. Are you a member of any groups on LinkedIn which provide job search information (e.g. *job adverts, industry information*)?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

27. How often during job search have you:

	Never (0 times)	Rarely (1 or 2 times)	Occasionally (3 to 5 times)	Frequently (6 to 9 times)	Very frequently (10 times at least)
a) actively used LinkedIn search for job opportunities					<input type="radio"/>
b) contacted somebody through LinkedIn and asked them about a job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) shared an update or published a post on LinkedIn					<input type="radio"/>

28. Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of these statements

	Strongly disagree	<del>Disagree</del>	Neither agree nor <del>disagree</del>	Agree	Strongly agree
a) I know how to use the features on LinkedIn for job search activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) I think LinkedIn is a useful tool to find information that helps me with my job search	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) I put a lot of effort into creating my LinkedIn profile	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

29. Have you used any other social media websites (including forums/~~messageboards~~) to help you with job search?

- Yes
- No

If "yes", please provide details:

30. Has anybody you know given you information about job opportunities they have found on a social media website?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

31. Have you been advised by a professional (*E.g. teacher, tutor, careers adviser, support worker*) to use social media websites as part of your job search?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

32. Have you ever been shown by a professional (*e.g. teacher, tutor, careers adviser, support worker*) how to use social media websites to help you with job search?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

33. Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of these statements

	Strongly disagree	<del>Disagree</del>	Neither agree nor <del>disagree</del>	Agree	Strongly agree
a) Social media is my main source of job information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) I am more comfortable speaking with people on social media than face-to-face	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) I worry about sharing personal information on social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

34. Do you have a mobile phone with internet access?

Yes

No

35. Do you have a tablet, laptop, or any other similar device with internet access?

Yes

No

36. Do you have a computer at home with internet access?

Yes

No



37. How many phone interviews have you had since you started this job search?

- No phone interviews
- 1 phone interview
- 2 phone interviews
- 3 or more phone interviews

38. How many face-to-face interviews have you had since you started this job search?

- No face-to-face interviews
- 1 face-to-face interview
- 2 face-to-face interviews
- 3 or more face-to-face interviews

39. Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of these statements:

	Strongly disagree	<del>Disagree</del>	Neither agree nor <del>disagree</del>	Agree	Strongly agree
a) I am confident that I am making progress with my job search	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) I find job search stressful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) I am confident that I have a strong CV	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d) I am confident in my interview skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

40. How would you BEST describe your current situation?

- High school student
- Further education student (i.e. college)
- Higher education student (i.e. university)
- Not employed, but looking for a job
- Employed, but looking for a job
- Voluntary/unpaid work, but looking for a job
- Other (please specify)

41. What previous work experience have you had?

Please select all that apply

- Paid employment (e.g. part-time, full-time)
- Unpaid employment (e.g. voluntary work, training scheme)
- School work experience
- Paid internship
- Unpaid internship
- Student placement
- No previous work experience
- Other (please specify)

42. What is the highest school qualification you have achieved or are currently working towards, in any subject:

Please note: if your highest level of school qualification was achieved outside of Scotland then please use the "other school qualifications" box.

- Advanced Higher, Awards, Scottish Baccalaureate
- Higher, Awards, Scottish Baccalaureate
- National 5, Awards, Skills for Work National 5
- National 4, Awards, Skills for Work National 4
- National 4, Awards, Skills for Work National 3
- National 2, Awards
- National 1, Awards
- No academic qualifications
- Other school qualifications (please specify)

43. Does anybody in your immediate family have a university degree?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

42. What is the highest level of academic/vocational qualification you have achieved or are currently working towards, in any subject:

*Please note: if your highest level of qualification was achieved outside of Scotland then please use the "other academic/vocational qualifications" box.*

- PhD
- Postgraduate Degree/Professional Apprenticeship SVQ 5
- Honours Degree/Professional Apprenticeship
- Bachelors Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate
- Higher National Diploma, Diploma of Higher Education, Technical Apprenticeship SVQ 4
- Advanced Higher, Higher National Certificate, Certificate of Higher Education, Modern Apprenticeship
- SVQ 3 Scottish Higher
- Scottish National/Scottish Standard Grade, Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 2, SVQ
- 1 No academic/vocational qualifications
- Other academic/vocational qualifications (please specify)

43. Does anybody in your immediate family have a university degree?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

44. How old are you? Please type your age in the box provided.

45. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

46. Which village/town/city do you currently live in?

Please note: If you live in a remote rural area, please provide the name of the nearest settlement (i.e. village, town, or city) to your home.

47. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

- Yes
- No

48. What is your ethnic group?

- Scottish
- Other British (English, Northern Irish, Welsh)
- Irish
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Any other White background
- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other mixed
- background Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian
- background Caribbean
- African
- Any other Black
- background Arab
- Other ethnic group (please describe)

49. Were you born in Scotland?

- Yes
- No

50. Do you know anyone in the following job roles who you would be happy to ask for a character reference?

Please select all that apply:

Managers, Directors and Senior Officials

*(e.g. councillor, armed forces officer, company owner, senior manager)*

Professional Occupations

*(e.g. doctor, dentist, teacher, lecturer)*

Associate professional and technical occupations

*(e.g. engineer, social worker, paramedic, graphic designer)*

Administrative and secretarial occupations

*(e.g. receptionist, accounts assistant, human resources assistant, administrator)*

Skilled trades occupations

*(e.g. electrician, chef, butcher, farmer)*

Caring, leisure and other service occupations

*(e.g. nurse, hairdresser, teaching assistant, childcare assistant)*

Sales and customer service occupations

*(e.g. shop assistant, pharmacy assistant, telesales phone operator, customer services)*

Process, plant, and machine operatives

*(e.g. lorry driver, construction worker, plant operator, taxi driver)*

Elementary occupations

*(e.g. cleaner, labourer, security guard, warehouse assistant)*

## Appendix C Letter to academics



Edinburgh Napier University  
School of Computing  
10 Colinton Road  
Edinburgh  
EH10 5DT

t 07832 988 617  
e [j.mowbray@napier.ac.uk](mailto:j.mowbray@napier.ac.uk)

18 July 2016

Dear Professor,

I am a graduate of the Glasgow School for Business and Society, having attained a BA (Hons) in Tourism and International Travel Management from Glasgow Caledonian University in June 2008. I am writing with regard to a joint ESRC and Skills Development Scotland-funded doctorate that I am currently undertaking titled: *The role of networking and social media tools during job search*.

A key strand of the research for this project involves a large scale survey questionnaire. In addition to users of careers services, I would like to survey both postgraduate students (in August 2016) and fourth year undergraduates (in October 2016) of selected business schools in Scotland. If possible, I would like to include eligible GCU students in the sample.

The questionnaire was piloted in June 2016 with business students from Edinburgh Napier University. It was distributed by an office administrator to the appropriate students via email. It included a short message about the project and a web link to the survey.

I would be delighted if I could distribute my survey to business students at GCU, and will be in touch by telephone to discuss this possibility with you after the 18<sup>th</sup> July.

Yours Sincerely,

John Mowbray

Enclosure:

Paper copy of the questionnaire

Copy of text from email used for pilot study

A4 page with further details of project

Email exchange with confirmation of ethical approval



EDUCATION IN PROFILE

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## **Appendix D      Email to students**

### **Email to students about survey**

Dear Student,

Are you currently looking for a job?

If so, could you spare 10 minutes of your time to complete this questionnaire about job search and social media?

I am a PhD student at Edinburgh Napier University, and results from this survey will be used by Skills Development Scotland to try and improve careers services across the country.

Your responses are very valuable. By taking part, you will also have the chance to win an Amazon voucher worth £100.

Please follow the link to the survey below:

<https://www.research.net/r/5ZMLYFR>

If you have any questions, please email [j.mowbray@napier.ac.uk](mailto:j.mowbray@napier.ac.uk).

Thanks!

John Mowbray

