

How Do Young People Cope with Job Flexibility?: Demographic and Psychological Antecedents of the Resistance to Accept a Job with Non-Preferred Flexibility Features

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La flexibilité est souvent vue comme condition nécessaire à la survie des marchés de travail nationaux et à celle des organisations dans un monde en rapide changement où s'accroît la compétition globale. Elle a adopté diverses formes tels les contrats à durée déterminée, l'externalisation, les horaires flexibles, le temps partiel, les heures complémentaires, le roulement fonctionnel. De plus, il a été déclaré que la flexibilité organisationnelle se doit d'être accompagnée d'une flexibilité personnelle. Quoi qu'il en soit, face aux nouvelles opportunités de travail, les gens diffèrent tant sur le plan de leurs préférences que sur celui de leur comportement.

Le but de cette étude est d'identifier les antécédents psychologiques et démographiques de la résistance individuelle à accepter les demandes de flexibilité tels qu'un emploi sous qualifié, le manque d'occasions d'apprendre, un emploi exigeant (challenging job), un travail en tant qu'indépendant, un emploi qui requière un changement de localité.

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L'étude a été menée sur un échantillon représentatif de 2512 espagnols âgés de 16 à 30 ans de la région de Valence, de Madrid et de Barcelone. Les résultats relatifs aux antécédents démographiques indiquent que l'âge et le sexe (féminin) accroissent la probabilité de résistance au travail en tant qu'indépendant; le statut marital (marié) accroît la probabilité d'une résistance à la flexibilité de lieu; le niveau d'éducation accroît celle aux emplois sous qualifiés et n'offrant pas la possibilité d'apprendre et décroît la probabilité de résistance à la flexibilité de lieu. Enfin, le type d'habitat (résider dans une ville de plus de 100 000 habitants) accroît la probabilité de résistance à un emploi exigeant et à celle à un travail en tant qu'indépendant et décroît la probabilité de résistance aux emplois sous qualifiés et à ceux qui n'offrent pas de possibilité d'apprendre. Les variables psychologiques jouent aussi un rôle significatif pour prédire la résistance à la flexibilité du travail. Des valeurs extrinsèques atténuent la probabilité de résistance aux emplois sous qualifiés et à ceux qui n'offrent pas de possibilité d'apprendre alors que des valeurs sociales ou intrinsèques accroissent la probabilité de résistance aux emplois sous qualifiés, à ceux qui n'offrent pas de possibilité d'apprendre et décroissent la probabilité de résistance à un emploi exigeant. L'initiative personnelle favorise la résistance aux emplois sans possibilité d'apprendre et, à l'inverse décroît celle de résister à un emploi exigeant, à la flexibilité de lieu et au travail en tant qu'indépendant.

Ces résultats sont discutés à partir de l'économie (théorie du capital humain) et des résultats de recherches antérieures en psychologie du travail. Sont également indiquées les implications de ces résultats pour les individus et les organisations et leur utilité en vue d'améliorer les stratégies permettant de faire face aux flexibilités du marché du travail.

Flexibility is considered to be a necessary response to global competition and it clearly has an impact on labour markets and organisations. It has adopted several forms such as temporary and fixed term contracts, outsourcing, flexible time, part-time working, overtime, job rotation, or functional mobility. Furthermore, it has been claimed that organisational flexibility must be accompanied by personal flexibility. However, people differ in their preferences and behaviours in face of the new job opportunities. The goal of the present study is to identify demographic and psychological antecedents of individual resistance to accept job flexibility demands such as: underqualified job, lack of opportunities to learn, a challenging job, self-employment and jobs that require moving from the city of residence. The study was carried out on a representative sample of 2,512 Spanish youngsters, aged between 16 and 30 years from the Valencian region, Madrid and Barcelona. Results on demographic antecedents show that *age* and *sex* (women) increase the probability of resisting self-employment. *Marital status* (married) increases the probability of resisting locational flexibility. *Education level* increases the probability of resisting an underqualified job and one that does not give opportunities to learn and decreases the probability of resisting locational flexibility. Finally, habitat (living in a city bigger than 100,000 population) increases the probability of resisting a challenging job and self-employment and decreases the probability of resisting an underqualified job and one that does not give opportunities to learn. Psychological variables also play a significant role in predicting resistance to job flexibility. Extrinsic work values decrease the probabilities of resisting an underqualified job and one that does not offer opportunities to learn, while intrinsic or social values increase the probabilities of resisting an underqualified job and one that does

not offer opportunities to learn and decrease the one of resisting a challenging job. Personal Initiative increases the probability of resisting a job without opportunities to learn and conversely decreases the one of resisting a challenging job. Finally, passivity in career planing decreases the probability of resisting an underqualified job and one without learning opportunities and increases the chances of resisting a challenging job, locational flexibility, and self-employment. These results are discussed from economic (human capital theory) and work psychology previous research findings. The implications of these findings for individuals and organisations and their usefulness in improving strategies to cope with labour market flexibility in the future are also pointed out.

INTRODUCTION

Working life has been subjected to tremendous changes over the last decades of the 20th century. Economic changes, technological innovation, industrial restructuring, and accelerated global competition have proved to be crucial factors influencing labour markets, the organisations, the nature of jobs, and work activity. Flexibility is often seen as the necessary condition for the survival of national labour markets and organisations in a fast-moving world of growing global competition (Reilly, 1998). Labour flexibility has been defined as the possibility to vary the quality and the quantity of personnel to suit changes in the market or the organisation's ability to adapt through the use of labour (Gouswaard, Kraan, & Dhondt, 2001). Flexibility will probably increase during future decades and will be one important feature of work and organisations in the times ahead.

This phenomenon has been researched mainly from the perspective of organisations but has received hardly any attention from the side of the employee. Organisations faced with a complex and dynamic environment require flexibility to adapt to diverse and changing requirements (Snow & Snell, 1993), and employers are moving, in varying degrees, toward increased "flexibility" in how they manage their organisation (Sverke & Hellgren, this issue).

Flexibility has adopted several forms such as temporary and fixed term contracts, outsourcing, flexible time, part-time working, overtime, job rotation, job enrichment, etc. Reilly (1998) provides a broad categorisation of flexibility grouping around the policy intention of the employer:

- Numerical flexibility; allows the numbers of staff used to vary according to the needs of the business. It includes fixed-period contracts, temporary, seasonal or casual employment, outsourcing, subcontracting, etc.
- Functional flexibility; allows employers to achieve a more effective internal allocation of labour through improved deployment. It can result, for instance, from removing work demarcations or training staff to be able to undertake a variety of tasks.

- Temporal flexibility; involving variation in working hours. It includes overtime, shift working, flexitime, part-time working, etc.
- Locational flexibility; describes the various ways of using employees outside the normal workplace. It includes forms such as home-workers, teleworkers, relocation, etc.
- Financial flexibility; allows wages and associated benefits to rise and fall with economic conditions (e.g. profit-related pay, performance-related pay, etc.).

However, the most common taxonomy was proposed by Atkinson (1984). This author groups different forms of flexibility using two dimensions: internal vs external, and quantitative vs qualitative (see Table 1). *Internal* refers to how organisations can vary their own labour they use, in quantitative (e.g. overtime) or in qualitative terms (e.g. job rotation). *External* is associated with the ability of the organisation to alter the staff employed. Numerical or contractual flexibility is external. It can be quantitative (e.g. seasonal employment to cover “peaks” of work demands) or qualitative (employing supra-qualified people because the labour market situation is difficult). Temporal or time flexibility and functional flexibility are internal, but time flexibility is quantitative and functional flexibility is qualitative. Very often, human resources practices of organisations combine several flexibility types like time and location or functional and financial flexibility.

The strategies put in action by organisations involve new demands on labour. More and more in western societies it is emphasised that organisational flexibility must be accompanied by personal flexibility. This issue has been recognised by different experts and analysts. For instance, Krumboltz and Worthington (1999) state that there is a need for worker flexibility as work requirements change more frequently. Sparrow (1998) points out that organisations are seeking to increase their versatility by tapping the adaptability of the workforce. Finally, for Cascio (1995) workers have to be able to adapt to changing circumstances and be prepared for multiple careers. Thus, all these changes in the labour market are reshaping the meaning of work and the strategies people use to cope with this increasing work and job flexibility. Flexibility and polyvalence, as the ability to perform different tasks with

TABLE 1
Types of Flexibility (Atkinson, 1984)

	<i>Internal flexibility</i>	<i>External flexibility</i>
Quantitative flexibility	Time flexibility	Contract flexibility
Qualitative flexibility	Functional flexibility	Contract flexibility

high competence, seem to be basic characteristics of the worker of the 21st century. However, as has been stated by Goudswaard et al. (2001, p. 10),

the factors driving flexibility of labour cannot be described from the perspective of the company alone, but also need to be viewed from the employee's perspective. To an increasing degree, business will be faced with a diversity of employee desires. The ultimate strategy is the product not just of the external business environment or features, but of a response or (better yet) interaction with the staff features.

However, people differ in their preferences and behaviours in the face of new job opportunities. In fact, different flexibility features are more or less attractive for different groups (Klein Hesselink & van Vuuren, 1999). Then, individuals can vary in their readiness to accept different job flexibility features in responding to changing work requirements (e.g. extending their individual skills and being disposed to receive training, or tolerating a non-preferred job in terms of time schedule, locational mobility, contractual flexibility, etc.). These attitudinal and behavioural differences can, in turn, have an influence on individuals' experiences of job insecurity that, in general, are accompanied by more health complaints and less organisational commitment (Klein Hesselink & van Vuuren, 1999). Also non-desired flexibility requirements may have an impact on individuals' unemployment and career development as well as on their job behaviour, psychological contract, well-being, affective responses, and other personal outcomes. In fact previous research has demonstrated some empirical evidence on the relationships between different features of job flexibility and some the above-mentioned effects (Aronson, 1999; Martin, 1999; Munton, Forster, Altman, & Greenbury, 1993; Purcell & Purcell, 1998; Sparks, Cooper, Fried, & Shirom, 1998; Sparrow, 1998; Kogi, 1997).

As these effects are, at least partially, dependent on individual preferences (Kandolin & Huida, 1996; Klein Hesselink & van Vuuren, 1999; Kogi, 1997), it is important to identify the antecedents that influence these preferences and the readiness or resistance to accept a job offer with a specific flexibility feature. However, this issue has received hardly any attention from research till present. The goal of the present study is to identify demographic and psychological antecedents of individual resistance to accept different job flexibility demands. More specifically, we will focus on the resistance to accept a non-preferred job that requires the following demands of flexibility: (1) poor job content (under-qualified job), (2) lack of opportunities to learn, (3) challenging job demands requiring higher qualification, (4) self-employed or autonomous work, and (5) jobs that require moving residence to another town or city. The first three job flexibility features are related to the richness of the content of the job and learning opportunities, that is functional

flexibility (under-qualified jobs, jobs without learning opportunities, and challenging jobs). The fourth one is related to the contractual relationship with the providers of the work (an employer or a client) and requires entrepreneurial competencies, and the fifth one is related to the readiness to move residence as a means to improve job opportunities. Demographic (age, sex, studies, marital status, and habitat) and psychological variables (labour market perceptions, work values, personal initiative, and passivity in career planning) will be considered as antecedents of resistance.

The Spanish labour market is particularly suited for analysing these issues for several reasons. First, rates of unemployment for young people are very high compared with those of the other European Union member states (39 per cent for people 16–19 years old, 28 per cent for 20–24 year olds, and 17 per cent for people aged 25–29 years old) and understanding the resistance to accept different types of job can contribute to improving this situation. Second, temporary contracts were introduced in labour legislation quite recently, after the 1984 reform. Nevertheless, the Spanish labour market has reached the highest level of temporary contracts of all the countries in the OECD since then; 91 per cent of the contracts registered by the Spanish Employment Office during the year 2000 were temporary. Besides, the Spanish system for temporary contracts allows the renewal of short duration contracts during several years, even if there is no change in labour conditions, and it implies a high level of uncertainty for workers. In this situation, most of the jobs offered to young people at the time we carried out the survey presented a number of flexibility features and the youths' first experience with the labour market was of temporary jobs and high turnover. Third, in part as a consequence of this situation and also due to cultural values about family in Spanish society, role transitions to adulthood are being deferred. In a survey carried out by García-Montalvo and Peiró (2001), 38.2 per cent of young people still live with their parents when they are 30 years old, 40.79 per cent remain single, and 63.90 per cent do not have children. In addition, when young people are asked about how important in their life was the family, work, studies, leisure, and community, family was, on average, ranked first (3.38) followed by work (2.21). In fact, family is considered as an important source of support that often prevents youngsters from accepting a job if it presents some features which are strongly undesired.

DEMOGRAPHIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ANTECEDENTS OF RESISTANCE TO JOB FLEXIBILITY FEATURES

Little is known about personal antecedents of resistance to job flexibility. However, several *demographic characteristics* can be hypothesised as significant antecedents of the resistance to accept flexibility features, as traditionally they have appeared as relevant to understanding employment, work, and

organisational behaviour. In the present study we focus on age, sex, education level, marital status, and habitat.

In what concerns *age, sex, and habitat* there is not much empirical evidence about their relationships with resistance to the different features of job flexibility. Neither is there a clear rationale to state the sign of their influence, thus we formulate the following exploratory hypothesis:

H₁. Age, sex, and habitat will influence the probability of presenting resistance to a non-preferred job flexibility feature.

Research on human capital has produced evidence showing that people with a higher level of education have a higher probability of finding a job than those who have invested less in education. Furthermore, jobs obtained by more highly educated individuals are better fitted to their qualifications and better paid (Becker, 1993). Thus, it can be expected that youngsters with a higher level of education will have better opportunities to resist a non-preferred job than those with a lower level of education, especially in the case of those flexibility features related with job content or functional flexibility.

However, youngsters with a high level of education will be more willing to accept locational flexibility in order to find a job according to their qualification. There are a couple of reasons that can explain the high locational flexibility among the more educated individuals. First of all once an individual has obtained a higher education degree the investment made in order to get it can be considered as a sunk cost if it does not provide returns. Additionally the higher the level of education the better the job that a youngster can find. Therefore if looking for a job from unemployment is more efficient (more time available for searching) than looking for a job once employed then the higher the educational level of the youngster the greater would be the value of waiting, for instance, for an adequate and highly paid job (even if he has to move to another location) instead of taking a job with low requirements. Moreover, not resisting functional flexibility or the low requirements of a job can also have a negative effect on the whole career path. In fact, if there is asymmetric information about the productivity of the youngster (he/she knows how productive he is but the employer does not) then not resisting functional flexibility contains a signal about his/her productivity that will reduce his present and future salary. Second, demand for employees with high levels of education is not distributed homogeneously across a particular country or region. In fact the demand is generally larger in urban areas.

H₂. Level of education will positively increase the probability of resisting a job which offers no opportunities to learn or implies underqualification. Furthermore, it will reduce the resistance to locational mobility.

Moving residence from one town or city to another is more complex for young couples than for single youngsters. This is especially true in countries like Spain where there are no housing policies to promote locational mobility across cities and regions. In fact, the proportion of Spaniards who own a house instead of renting is the highest in the European Union, with the exception of Ireland, due among other factors to the high effective subsidy to home ownership embedded in the Spanish income tax legislation. This high ownership rate generates an additional impediment to locational mobility. Furthermore, in a culture where links with the extended family are highly valued, young couples look to live near their families in order to benefit from their social support. On the other hand, marriage is often linked to economic independence, thus married people will resist less a non-preferred job if that implies, as is the case, a reduction of their income. In addition, marriage generally goes along with buying a house.

- H₃. Marital status (being married) will increase the probability of resisting a job offer requiring locational flexibility and will reduce the probability of resisting a job offer implying functional or contractual flexibility.

Some *psychological variables* can also be relevant antecedents of the resistance to job features related with flexibility. *Labour market outlook* refers to individuals' perceptions of the labour market situation, including issues such as the probability of finding a job that fits personal qualification or experience, or the probability of finding a job in a company that fits personal preferences. García-Montalvo, Palafox, Peiró, and Prieto (1997) found that employed youngsters had better perceptions of the labour market than those who were unemployed, and youngsters having a job fitted to their qualifications had better perceptions than those having an underqualified job. Thus, it can be expected that a positive perception of the labour market outlook will have an influence on the resistance to accept a non-preferred job. So,

- H₄. The more positive is the perception of the labour market the higher will be the probability of resisting a non-preferred job flexibility feature.

Values have been defined as "desirable states, objects, goals or behaviours, transcending specific situations and applied as normative standards to judge and to choose among alternative modes of behaviour" (Schwartz, 1992, p. 2). Work values are those job characteristics that are desirable and important for an individual and consequently he or she wants to find them in his or her job. In spite of the criticisms (Dyer & Parker, 1975), the most widely used approach classifies work values as extrinsic or intrinsic. Many years ago, Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrod, and Herma (1951) found it necessary to add a third category that referred to social relations. In a

similar way, more recently several authors (Elizur, 1984; see also Borg, 1986, 1990; Elizur, Borg, Hunt, & Beck, 1991; Borg & Galinat, 1990) have classified the work values attending to the modality of outcome as material (or instrumental or extrinsic), social (or affective), and psychological (or cognitive or intrinsic). In our study we use these three categories of values. It is expected that work values will influence the resistance to accept certain flexibility features. People will be less resistant when flexibility requirements don't touch the desirable job features, and more resistant when flexibility requirements imply renouncing valued job features. So,

- H₅. Extrinsic work values orientation will decrease the probability of resisting the acceptance of an underqualified job or one that does not offer any learning opportunity. It will increase the probability of resisting accepting a challenging job, or self-employment. No significant effect is expected on resistance to locational flexibility.

Jobs adequate to the qualifications of incumbents, those that offer opportunities to learn or present challenges to the individuals, and self-employment have a high intrinsic motivation potential and also offer a rich social context. For instance, learning in organisations often takes place through interaction with other members of the organisation (mentoring, tutoring, teamwork, etc.) and challenging jobs more often demand interaction with other people and teamwork; finally, self-employment requires direct interactions with clients and customers. Thus,

- H₆. Intrinsic and social work values orientation will increase the probability of resisting acceptance of an underqualified job or one that does not offer any learning opportunity. It will decrease the probability of resisting the acceptance of a challenging job or self-employment. No significant effect is expected on the resistance to locational flexibility.

Personal initiative (PI) has been defined as an active approach which is characterised by its self-starting nature and overcomes difficulties that arise in the pursuit of a goal (Frese, Kring, Soose, & Zempel, 1996; Frese, Fay, Hilburger, Leng, & Tag, 1997). Self-starting really implies two aspects: to do something new (in the sense of not required) and to be proactive, that is to prepare oneself for negative events and prevent these from happening. Overcoming difficulties implies two aspects too: to be persistent in the face of current obstacles and to be prepared to deal with future obstacles (Frese & Fey, in press).

Frese and Fey (in press) contrasted learning goals (Dweck & Leggett, 1988) and performance goals. The first ones exist if a person takes challenges as chances to learn. In contrast, performance goals imply that one wants to show others how well one is able to do things. In this case, a challenge will

be seen as a problem because it makes it more difficult to be able to shine. Research shows a positive relationship between learning orientation and self-reported Personal Initiative (Heimbeck & Frese, 1999). For this reason, a positive relation between Personal Initiative and readiness to accept a challenging job can be expected, as well as a negative relation between Personal Initiative and readiness to accept a job that does not offer any learning opportunity or an underqualified job.

Personal Initiative is also positively related to the preference of self-employment and to entrepreneurial orientation (Frese et al., 1997). So, a positive relationship can be expected between Personal Initiative and readiness to accept self-employment. So,

- H₇. Personal initiative will increase the probability of resisting acceptance of an underqualified job or one that does not offer any learning opportunity. It will decrease the probability of resisting the acceptance of a challenging job or self-employment. No significant effect is expected on the resistance to locational flexibility.

Personal Initiative is in contrast to a *passive approach to self career planning and development*, which is characterised by the following features: one does what one is told to do, one gives up in the face of difficulties, and one just reacts to environmental demands instead of having a proactive approach to them (Frese & Fay, in press). Thus, people with this personality disposition will resist less the underqualified jobs and those without any opportunities to learn. Conversely they will resist more the challenging jobs and self-employment. Furthermore, they will also strongly resist accepting a job that implies moving residence from one location to another. Thus,

- H₈. Passivity in career planning will decrease the probability of resisting acceptance of an underqualified job or one that does not offer any learning opportunity. It will increase the probability of resisting the acceptance of a challenging job or self-employment, and also those requiring locational flexibility.

METHOD

Sampling Design and Sample

The Valencian Longitudinal Survey of Youth (VLSY) is a survey which has been conducted twice (1996 and 1999) during the last six years. The present study has been carried out with data obtained from the 1999 sample. The population to be surveyed is young people between 16 and 30 years old living in the Valencian community, Barcelona or Madrid. The VLSY is a face-to-face survey of 2,512 young individuals. Sampling selection is a stand-

ard two-stage procedure with stratification in the first stage. The allocation was not proportional across the three surveyed areas but it was proportional within each of the three sub-samples. The stratification was based on county and town size. The number of strata was 106. The primary sampling units were towns. After the proportional allocation within each area (obtained by using the data of the 1991 Population Census) the towns were selected following two criteria: to obtain at least two towns in each stratum and that for each town the minimum number of interviews had to be six. When there were more than two towns in one stratum the selection was performed randomly with probabilities proportional to the size of the group of young people between 16 and 30 years old. In each selected town the sample units were obtained by the procedure of random routes with sex quotas. After two attempted contacts the non-respondents were replaced by a randomly chosen substitute with the same age and sex.

In the sample, 49 per cent of the subjects were male, 41 per cent had finished their primary school, 41 per cent had finished secondary school and 18 per cent had obtained a university degree, 84 per cent were bachelors and 16 per cent were married, 49 per cent lived in large cities (>100,000 inhabitants) and the rest lived in smaller cities and towns. The average age was 23.18 (SD = 3.71).

Variables and Measures

In this subsection we present the variables used in the present study. First of all, we describe the endogenous variables that indicate the degree of resistance of young people to accept a non-preferred job. Second, we will describe the explanatory variables.

The endogenous variables are indicators of resistance to accept a job offer that presents the following characteristics.

Underqualified jobs (UQJ). This variable measures the resistance to accept a job that implies the performance of tasks that require lower levels of qualification than the one the subject has. In order to do that the following question was presented to the subject:

“Between two jobs identical in all aspects except in the level of competencies required: (A) requires competencies below your qualification and (B) requires competencies that are adequate to your qualification, which one would you prefer?”

- (a) Below my qualification;
- (b) Adequate to my qualification;
- (c) Indifferent.”

The subjects that preferred the job adequate to their qualification were subsequently asked for the reduction of salary (in percentage) they were

ready to accept in order to retain the preferred job. The *UQJ* indicator is a dummy variable that takes the value 1 for young individuals that showed resistance to a job not adequate to their qualification (they were ready to accept some reduction of their salary instead of accepting the non-preferred job) and 0 otherwise. We followed a similar procedure to obtain the other indicators that are described below.

Job without any opportunities to learn (NOL). Resistance to accepting a job that offers the subject no opportunities to learn (1 = resistance; 0 = No resistance).

Job that implies location flexibility (LM). Resistance to accepting a job that implies changing the location of residence (1 = resistance; 0 = No resistance).

Challenging job (CJ). Resistance to accepting a challenging job that requires additional learning (1 = resistance; 0 = No resistance).

Self-employment (SE). Resistance to working as a self-employee instead of working for a company (1 = resistance; 0 = No resistance).

The explanatory variables considered in the present study are the following:

Sex. This is a dummy variable that takes the value 1 if the individual is a male and 0 otherwise.

Marital status: dummy variable that takes the value 1 if the individual is married and 0 otherwise.

Education, Secondary: dummy variable that takes the value 1 if the individual has secondary education and 0 otherwise.

Education, University: dummy variable that assigns the value 1 to university graduates and 0 to the other subjects.

Habitat: dummy variable that takes the value 1 if the individual lives in a city where the population is over 100,000 people, and 0 otherwise.

Labour Market Outlook was measured by two items that were selected from the Employment Outlook dimension of the Career Exploration Survey developed by Stumpf, Colarelli, and Harman (1983) (“In the present situation of the labour market, I can find the kind of job for which I am prepared or I have experience”; “In the present situation of the labour market I can find a job in a firm that I like”). Respondents answered using a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree). Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was 0.79.

Extrinsic Work Values were measured on a scale of seven items that asked for the importance of extrinsic work outcomes such as hours of work, good career prospects, job security, high salary, physical environment, without excessive stress or pressure, and long vacation periods. Respondents answered using a 5-point scale (1 = not important at all, 5 = very important). Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was 0.74 (see MOW, 1987).

Social Work Values were measured on a scale of five items that asked for the importance of the following social work outcomes: good interpersonal relationships with co-workers, support from the supervisor, good interper-

sonal relationships with clients and users, work useful for society, work with high social recognition. Respondents answered using a 5-point scale (1 = not important at all, 5 = very important). Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.75 (see MOW, 1987).

Intrinsic Work Values were measured on a 7-item scale that asked for the importance of the following intrinsic work outcomes: task variety, opportunities to learn, skills required, autonomy in the job, meaningful work, opportunities to take initiative, job with responsibility. Respondents answered using a 5-point scale (1 = not important at all, 5 = very important). Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.87 (see MOW, 1987).

Personal Initiative was measured by three items taken from the self-reported initiative at work questionnaire developed by Frese et al. (1997) ("Whenever there is a chance to get actively involved, I take it", "I take initiative immediately even when others don't", "Usually, I do more than I am asked to do"). Respondents answered using a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.69.

Passivity in Career Planning was measured by three items taken from the self-report questionnaire of passivity developed by Frese et al. (1997) ("At the moment it is not useful to make any plans", "My occupational maxim is: let's wait and see"; "I only make plans when I know what is going to happen in the future"). Respondents answered using a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.72.

Statistical Procedure

To test our hypothesis we have estimated a logit model to evaluate the determinants of the probability of not accepting a job offer under alternative circumstances. The model is specified as

$$Pr\ ob(Y = 1) = \frac{e^{\beta X}}{1 + e^{\beta X}} = \Lambda(\beta'X)$$

where Y is the dummy variable that indicates the resistance to accepting a job under a particular circumstance (being an underqualified job, not providing learning opportunities, implying locational mobility, etc.), β is the vector of unknown parameters and X is the set of explanatory variables mentioned above. The interest of the analysis is more related to the effect on the probability than with the estimated value of each parameter given that they do not have a direct interpretation in terms of probabilities. In order to be able to calculate the impact on the probability of a change in the explanatory variables we have to calculate the derivative of the expected value with respect to the explanatory variables. This calculation leads to

the identification of the marginal effect of the explanatory variables on the probability of resistance. For the logistic distribution

$$\frac{\partial \Lambda(\beta'X)}{\partial(\beta'X)} = \Lambda(\beta'X)(1 - \Lambda(\beta'X))$$

Therefore the marginal effect of the explanatory variables can be obtained in this model using the formula

$$\frac{\partial E(y)}{\partial X} = \Lambda(\hat{\beta}'\bar{X})(1 - \Lambda(\hat{\beta}'\bar{X}))\hat{\beta}$$

where the hat implies the vector of estimated coefficients and the bar over the X means the average over the sample.

RESULTS

Most of the subjects in the sample (almost 90 per cent) resist accepting an underqualified job or one that does not offer opportunities to learn. On the other hand resistance to accepting a challenging job is only presented by about 45 per cent. The resistance to the other job features studied lies in between these two figures. Self-employment is resisted by 54.5 per cent and a job that implies changing residence from one city to another is resisted by more than 70 per cent (see Table 2).

In Table 3, descriptive statistical data of the independent variables, other than those already offered when we described the sample, are presented. The reliability of the measures used and the correlation coefficients between variables are also included. The reliability is satisfactory in all the scales (range between 0.69 and 0.87) and the correlations between work values variables are high and positive while that between Personal Initiative and Passivity in Career Planning is also high but negative.

The results obtained from the estimated logit models performed to evaluate the determinants of the probability of not accepting a job offer that presents each job flexibility feature under study are presented in Table 3. The parameter estimates that appear in the table can only be interpreted as

TABLE 2
Descriptive Statistics of the Endogenous Variables (in percentages)

	<i>UQJ</i>	<i>NOL</i>	<i>CJ</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>LM</i>
1: Resistance to accept the job	87.1	88.4	45.8	54.5	70.9
0: Readiness to accept the job	12.9	11.6	54.2	45.5	29.1
Missing data	7.6	8.8	0.8	13.6	11.7

TABLE 3
 Descriptive Data, Correlation Matrix, and Reliabilities (Cronbach's alphas in brackets) of Independent Variables

	Range	Mean	SD	Age	LMO	WVE	WVS	WVI	PI	PAS
Age	16-30	23.18	3.71	-						
LMO		2.77	1.15	-0.05	(0.79)					
WVE		4.23	0.52	-0.03	0.09**	(0.74)				
WVS		4.18	0.58	0.00	0.10**	0.47**	(0.75)			
WVI		4.19	0.57	0.02	0.13**	0.51**	0.68**	(0.87)		
PI		3.84	0.67	0.10**	0.16**	0.12**	0.09**	0.26**	(0.69)	
PAS		3.16	0.95	-0.07*	0.20**	0.17**	0.10**	0.08**	0.11**	(0.72)

** $P < = 0.01$, * $P < 0.05$

having a positive or a negative effect on the probability of resistance to a job offer. For instance a higher degree of passivity implies a higher resistance to a job that implies locational mobility. In order to know the effect on the probability of each of the explanatory variables, the marginal effect of each explanatory variable is also presented in Table 4.

The results obtained show that the probability of *resisting a job offer with tasks that require a lower level of qualification than the one the subject has (UQJ)* is significantly higher for youngsters after secondary (3.8 percentage points (p.p.)) and after university studies (5.8 p.p.) than for those with primary studies. In addition, it is significantly lower for youngsters living in large cities (>100,000 inhabitants) than for those living in small cities and towns (8.9 p.p.). It is lower for those subjects that give more value to the extrinsic features of work (3.1 p.p. more for an increase of 1 unit in extrinsic values scale) and it is higher for those who give more value to the intrinsic features of work (3.6 p.p. more for an increase of 1 unit in extrinsic values scale). Finally, that probability is significantly lower for those who are more passive in their career planning (2.4 p.p. more for an increase of 1 unit in Passivity scale).

Resisting a *job without any opportunities to learn (NOL)* presents a significantly higher probability for youngsters after university studies (8.7 p.p.) than for those that only have primary studies. On the other hand, it is less probable for youngsters living in big cities (>100,000 inhabitants) than for those living in small cities and towns (9.4 p.p.). Surprisingly, it is also less probable for those youngsters that have a more positive outlook on the labour market (1.9 p.p.). Furthermore, it is significantly less probable for those who value extrinsic features of work (3.8 p.p.) but more probable for those who value the social features of work (4.1 p.p.) and who show higher personal initiative in work (1.8 p.p.). Finally, it is significantly less probable for those who are more passive in their career planning (4.3 p.p.).

TABLE 4
Coefficient Estimates of the Logit Model and the Percentage of Correct Predictions for Every Job Flexibility Characteristic Studied

	UQJ		NOL		CJ		SE		LM	
	Par. est.	(I)	Par. est.	(I)	Par. est.	(I)	Par. est.	(I)	Par. est.	(I)
Constant	2.08**	-0.0	3.28**	-0.0	2.26**	-0.0	-0.65	1.86**		
Age	-0.56	-0.8	-0.09	-0.0	-0.07	-1.6	0.04**	1.1	-0.02	-0.5
Sex: Male	-0.08	-0.0	-0.28	-2.5	-0.00	-0.2	-0.30**	-7.3**	-0.03	-0.7
Married	-0.00	3.8**	0.20	1.8	-0.21	-4.8	-0.18	-4.3	0.61**	12.5**
Ed. Secondary	0.36**	8.7**	0.65**	5.8**	-0.20	-4.7	-0.13	-3.1	-0.26**	-5.4**
Ed. University	0.84**	-8.9**	-1.06**	-9.4**	0.36**	8.3**	-0.12	-3.0	-0.27*	-5.5*
Big cities	-0.86**	-1.0	-0.21**	-1.9**	-0.04	0.9	0.42**	10.2**	0.03	0.6
LMO	-0.09	-3.1*	-0.43**	-3.8**	0.05	1.2	-0.10**	-2.4**	-0.11**	-2.3**
WVE	-0.29*	2.9	0.46**	4.1**	-0.00	-0.0	0.05	1.2	-0.01	-0.3
WVS	0.27	3.6*	0.17	1.5	-0.21*	-5.0*	-0.03	-0.0	0.06	1.4
WVI	0.35*	-0.2	0.20*	1.8*	-0.53**	-12.0**	-0.12	-2.9	-0.09	-1.9
PI	-0.02	-2.4**	-0.48**	-4.3**	0.31**	7.0**	0.06	1.5	-0.09	-1.9
PAS	-0.23**	1789	1794	1794	1794	1511	0.09*	2.3*	0.18**	3.7**
N	1789	87.0	89.0	63.0	63.0	57.0	57.0	70.0	70.0	70.0

(I) Marginal effect on the probability of each explanatory variable (in percentage).
The individual of reference is a woman, with primary studies, single, that lives in a small city.
** Statistically significant at the 5% level. *Statistically significant at the 10% level.

The resistance to accept a *challenging job (CJ)* is significantly more probable for youngsters living in large cities (>100,000 inhabitants) than for those who live in small cities and towns (8.3 p.p.). However, the probability is lower for those who value intrinsic features of work (5 p.p.) and for those who have higher scores in personal initiative (12 p.p.). On the other side, the probability of resisting such a job is higher for the youngsters who are more passive in their career planning (7 p.p.).

Older young people present a higher probability of resisting *Self-employment (SE)* than the youngest ones (probability increases 1.1 p.p. per year of age). Furthermore, resistance is significantly less probable for males than for females (7.3 p.p.) and is higher for those subjects living in large cities (>100,000 inhabitants) than for those living in small cities and towns (10.2 p.p.). Finally the youngsters that better perceive the labour market (2.4 p.p.) and those who are more passive in their career planning (2.3 p.p.) both have higher probabilities of resisting such a job.

Finally, *jobs that imply moving residence from one city or town to another (LM)* are more probably resisted by married than by single youngsters (12.5 p.p.) but less probably by youngsters with secondary (5.4 p.p.) or university studies (5.5 p.p.) than by those that only have primary studies. Finally, they are less resisted when youngsters better perceive the labour market (2.3 p.p.) and more resisted when youngsters are more passive in their career planning (3.7 p.p.).

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to identify relevant demographic and psychological antecedents of the resistance to accepting different job flexibility features that organisations demand from labour. The role played by age, sex, habitat, qualification level, and marital status in increasing the probability of resisting the acceptance of several non-preferred job flexibility features was tested according to the hypotheses. The role played by labour market outlook, extrinsic, intrinsic, and social work values, personal initiative, and passivity in career planning was also tested. In this section we will discuss the results previously presented and their implications for the decisions and behaviours of young people that are related to employment, employability, and career development.

Our *first hypothesis* assumed, in an exploratory way, that age, sex, and habitat influence the probability of resisting a non-preferred job flexibility feature. The results showed that *age* and *sex* (being women) increased the probability of resisting self-employed work. Sex differences are consistent with previous findings in the economic literature that show that the proportion of women who are self-employed is lower than that of men (see Blanchflower & Oswald, 1998). For all the other job features studied, these

demographic variables did not play a significant role. These results suggest that younger cohorts are less resistant to work as self-employed, and this resistance is lower for males than for females. Beyond this, the lack of sex differences found for other flexibility features suggests that women's discrimination of work opportunities found in this sample (García-Montalvo & Peiró, 2001) cannot be explained by different degrees of resistance between men and women to accept a non-preferred job.

Interestingly enough, the *habitat* played a significant role in four out of the five flexibility features studied. Subjects living in large cities present a higher probability of resisting an offer of a challenging job or self-employment and lower probability of resisting an underqualified job or one that does not offer opportunities to learn, when they do not prefer those features. The pattern of these results is very clear although the explanation for it requires further study, especially if we take into account that the effect of work values, perception of the labour market, initiative, and passivity of the subjects, as well as their age, sex, marital status, and education have been controlled.

The *second hypothesis* assumed that people with higher level of studies will present a higher probability of resisting a non-preferred job (an underqualified job or one that lacks opportunities to learn) as they have more job opportunities in the labour market, although they will show less resistance to accepting a job that requires locational flexibility. Results support the hypothesis for underqualified jobs and those that do not offer opportunities to learn. However, no differences were found on the basis of the level of studies when a challenging job or self-employment is offered. Taking into account that there is a clear trend in Spain and other European countries to increase the level of education of the active population, it is important to notice that the resistance to accepting poor jobs in the future will increase. Thus, organisations will have to enrich their jobs and job systems if they want to attract and retain a qualified labour force. The results for location flexibility were also significant. In fact, youngsters with secondary or university studies presented a lower probability of resisting a job that requires moving residence when they do not prefer that situation. Again, as the education level will increase in the population the mobility of the labour force will also increase even for those youngsters who would prefer to stay in their current location.

Among married youngsters the probability of resisting locational flexibility is higher as was expected in hypothesis 3. Nevertheless, against the predictions in hypothesis 3, married people do not differ from bachelors in the probability of accepting the other job flexibility features studied. These results suggest that they get as much support from their families as bachelors do to equally resist those non-preferred jobs.

In the present study we also considered the role of a set of psychological variables that previous literature suggested should play a role in under-

standing the resistance of youth to accepting a non-preferred job flexibility feature. In *hypothesis 4* we assumed that the more positive individuals perceive the situation of the labour market to be the higher the probability of resisting a job with a non-preferred job flexibility feature. Results obtained were significant for those jobs with no opportunities to learn, those that require location flexibility, and for self-employment; however, all of them were in the opposite direction than expected. In fact, the results showed that as youngsters better perceive the labour market it is less probable that they present resistance to accepting a job without any opportunities to learn, one that requires a change in residence, or self-employment. One possible interpretation of this unexpected result can be offered taking into account the high rates of youth unemployment in Spain. Under such a situation the youngsters who perceive the labour market relatively better are those who are more ready to accept jobs even if they do not offer opportunities to learn or they require moving to another city or to start self-employment. With a better perception of the labour market they are less discouraged by unemployment. This complex relationship between the perception of the labour market and the resistance to accepting job offers with some flexibility features deserves further study.

The role of work values was tested under the general assumption that people will be less resistant when flexibility requirements don't touch their valued job features, and they will be more reluctant to accept a job when flexibility requirements imply renouncing valued job features. Specific predictions for extrinsic work values (*hypothesis 5*) and intrinsic and social values (*hypothesis 6*) were formulated. Results partially confirm both hypotheses. Extrinsic work values reduced the probability of resisting unqualified jobs and jobs with no opportunities to learn when they were non-preferred. Conversely, intrinsic or social work values increased the probability of presenting resistance in front of this kind of job. In addition, intrinsic work values reduced the reluctance to accept a challenging job when it was non-preferred, as was also predicted by hypothesis 6. Against what was expected, work values did not play any role in the resistance to self-employment. Finally, work values did not play any role in the reluctance to accept a job requiring location flexibility as was predicted by the hypotheses. Thus, regardless of the demographic and other psychological variables studied, work values play a significant role in functional job flexibility and this has important implications for the design of work systems and jobs as well as for human resources management in organisations. In the coming decades, work values will require much more attention from organisations in selection, rotation, promotion, and job design if they want to achieve a successful human capital and knowledge management for employees and for their own effectiveness.

Finally, the role of personal initiative and passivity in career planning has been examined. Previous research has shown that these constructs are

relevant to understanding individuals' unemployment, employability, and career development. A converse role of these two variables in the probability of resisting jobs with functional flexibility and self-employment was predicted in *hypotheses 7 and 8*. In addition we hypothesised that passivity in career planning plays a role in the probability of resisting location flexibility. Results obtained for personal initiative partially support the hypothesis as it increases the probability of resisting a job without any opportunity to learn and decreases the resistance to accepting a challenging job. However, personal initiative had no effect on the resistance to accept an underqualified job, or self-employment. Hypothesis 8 was fully confirmed. Passivity in career planning decreased the probability of resisting an underqualified job and one that does not offer any learning opportunity. In turn, it increased the probability of resisting a challenging job, locational mobility, and self-employment. As Frese and Fay (in press) have pointed out, these constructs are becoming critical for work in the 21st century. In a global economy with flexible firms, changes in the labour markets will be more complex, and the opportunities for employment and the diversity of the quality of jobs will increase. These changes will represent different opportunities for different people, and will have different effects on them. Personal initiative will play a role in determining these opportunities and impacts. As previous research has shown (Frese et al., 1997) personal initiative and passivity are significantly related to individuals' unemployment, employability, entrepreneurial behaviours, and job content innovation. Results in the present study contributed to identifying the mediating role that resistance to accepting different job flexibility features plays in those relationships. The probability of this resistance is different in groups with higher or lower personal initiative and passivity and these differences probably will help explain how people differ in their work and career decisions. A deeper study of these complex relationships will improve our understanding of the role resistance plays in the processes that link personal initiative, as a personal predisposition, and the relevant work decisions and behaviour that enhance individuals' employability, effective performance, and career development.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Therefore, what are the conclusions of this study that can contribute to a better understanding of the complexity of youngsters' behaviour in the labour market? First, the analysis of the role played by the demographic variables, following the suggestions from human capital theory, has proved to be relevant to better understand the resistance, and consequently the job choices and career behaviours of youngsters in the labour market. However, the picture obtained is more complex than expected, and different demographic variables play a role for different job flexibility features. Future studies will

have to analyse in more detail these relationships because their knowledge is a relevant input for policy makers and organisations in order to achieve an optimal dynamic fit between demand and supply of human capital within the labour markets.

Second, the consideration of relevant psychological variables has also contributed to a better understanding of resistance to accepting a non-preferred job. This resistance is a critical antecedent of people's decisions and behaviours with a clear impact on unemployment, employability, career development, and work performance. All these phenomena will be crucial for the effectiveness of organisations and employees' personal well-being and development during the decades to come. In our study, individuals' labour market outlook, extrinsic, intrinsic, and social work values, personal initiative, and passivity in career planning have proved to be important antecedents of the resistance to accept a job with a non-preferred flexibility feature. However, further research on these relationships is merited. In addition, results suggest that resistance plays a mediating role between the psychological variables studied and work and career behaviours that will be critical in the labour market and in organisations of the 21st century.

In addition, the interdisciplinary approach of this study, based on the combination of economic and psychological theories and concepts, is rather novel. Given the recent tendency of research in economics it may soon become the new economics with psychological foundations that many economists claim will be the 21st century approach to economics (Akerlof & Kranton, 2001; Kahneman & Riepe, 1998; Hoffman, McCabe, & Smith, 1998; Oswald, 1997; Brekke & Howarth, 2000) and, in particular, to labour economics (Fong & Zhang, 2001; Leete, 2000; Gibbson, 1998; Bewley, 1999; Clark, 1996, 1997; Blanchflower & Oswald, 1998).

Finally, two practical implications must be mentioned. First, the identified antecedents of resistance to accepting a non-preferred job flexibility feature can be used to design more adaptive and tailored strategies to cope with the new labour market and jobs for specific groups of youngsters. Second, they can also prove helpful in the process of job redesign if the groups that show stronger resistance to different flexibility features are taken into account. This could help prevent the negative implications that flexibility has for them.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

These findings have several implications for future work, some of which are related to the limitations of this study. First, future research must go on exploring these and other demographic and psychological antecedents of personal flexibility and extending study to different groups and populations in different countries and cultures, as cultural values appear to be relevant for the relationships studied. Second, the results in the present study suggest

that the antecedents of personal flexibility can vary for different flexibility requirements. Future research should explore more deeply these issues, extending the study to other job flexibility features that are and will be relevant in the current and future labour market. Finally, the pattern of relationships between the different job flexibility features should be studied. Very often jobs present several flexibility features and the positive consequences of some of them may compensate for the non-desired effects from others. Thus the study of individual and organisational strategies for profiting from beneficial features and coping with those which are harmful should be identified. The influences of cultural values, such as the centrality of the family in individual and social life, as well as labour market conditions (youth unemployment rates) on the probability of using different strategies to cope with job flexibility should also be studied.

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