

# Accept or Refuse a Job? How Graduates Decide

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**Summary.** In this paper, we discuss aspects of a behavioural model of new graduates on the labour market. The model regards the search for, possible refusal, and acceptance of a job by graduates of the University of Padua. Some jobs are considered a makeshift with respect to expectations the graduates matured along with degree achievement. We will analyse data collected by the University of Padua through a long-lasting perspective survey on its own graduates. We compare, in particular, the behaviour of graduates who worked before graduation with that of graduates who did not.

**Keywords:** Job search; Job refusal; Makeshift job; SHOT Model; Survey on graduates; University of Padua,

## 1. How graduates choose a job

After degree achievement, a graduate has to define his or her own life strategies. The first decision is that of deciding if, and when, either look for a job, or enter higher university courses, or start an internship, or, otherwise, settle down and create a family before deciding about work and further studies.

Whatever the schedule, the graduate has to face the job market. Fabbris *et al.* (2002) represents this hierarchy of decision with a model, named SHOT – *Search for, Hold back Opportunities, Try again*, where the main choices are made explicit and the graduates who worked before graduation are kept apart from the others who look for a non-episodic job after degree achievement.

The application of SHOT model is appropriate to University of Padua graduates because the local economy is florid and labour market is near full

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employment and, so, graduates can really choose. On the other side, they have to be competitive and possess, or be willing to achieve, the required competences.

Regarding those who offer work, the graduates are often faced with more than one occupational opportunity, not to just obtain an income, but also to realise professional roles that exploit his/her formative investments.

In such a social environment, graduates feel they could refuse some job offers and accept the most consistent with his/her strategic expectations. In the following, we will discuss the graduates' choice parameters according to the study curriculum and social and personal characteristics of graduates.

For graduates who worked before degree the decision to maintain the current occupation – often chosen to get an income but often different from their expectations – may proceed along with the search of a new position. The novel position may be either a new role within their company, or a new job in another company. Besides, the change of position will not be an issue in this paper.

In the least favourable situations, if the gap between the offered job and the graduate's expectations cannot be filled, he/she may consider the opportunity to look for further education. Even this issue is left aside in this paper.

In the following, we focus on movements of bachelor and master graduates in the labour market (Section 3), the work roles they accept or deny (Section 4) and the possible makeshift position towards low-competence jobs if they are not able to find one that suits their expectations (Section 5).

We conclude in Section 6 with some issues that may weave the plot of the arguments developed in our analyses and may ground future research hypotheses on graduates' work roles and relationships with their companies.

## 2. The survey on University of Padua graduates

The University of Padua (Fabbris, 2003) has collected the data we analysed with a perspective survey started in 2000 and ended in 2005. Delayed cohorts selected from the graduates list of five adjacent graduation sessions (Figure 1) form the panel.

Cohort	...2000	...2001	.....2002	.....2003	.....2004	.....2005
1	S	----- 1	----- 2	----- 3	----- 4	----- 5 ----- 6
2		S	----- 1	----- 2	----- 3	----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6
3			S	----- 1	----- 2	----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ---
4				S	----- 1	----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 -----
5					S	----- 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4

Figure 1. Panel design of the University of Padua CATI survey (S=sampling)

Interviewing of cohorts was realised in two stages:

1. at time “zero”, i.e. at graduation, a web questionnaire was completed by all students who asked to discuss their graduation thesis. This CAWI – *Computer Assisted Web-based Interviewing* procedure generated a database where general data and references (mail, telephone, and internet) of students were made available. A stratified sample of graduates was selected from this database;
2. every six months after graduation, for three years, the panel was contacted by telephone with a CATI questionnaire. So, all panellists were contacted four times and most six times, apart from the time-zero occasion. Interviews have been realised by the Statistics Department of the same University by means of a system named CAPTOR – *Computer Assisted Personal Telephone and Oneself Reporting* (Capiluppi, 2000).

The data we analysed concern all interviews within three years of data collection. To this data the time-zero interview was linked. The size of the samples are 2954, 2955, 2847, 2763, 2630, 1467, 735 respondents at the six semester-cadenced occasions. The sizes differ due to cumulative non-responses.

The cohort size was designed to give reliable estimates for single faculty. Faculties themselves defined the estimates’ reliability. So, faculties were asked to add (a sum for interviewing) a number of sample units sufficient for the stated reliability target. This way, units entered the sample with varying probabilities and weights had to be used for unbiased estimation (Fabbris, 2003).

With the data collected, it is possible to organise either a cross-sectional database, or a longitudinal one. The cross-sectional database may be organised as in Table 1, where graduates interviewed at the same time from graduation are put together to define a set six months away, and others twelve, eighteen, and so on, months away.

The longitudinal data are specific for the analysis of time-dependent phenomena. The linkage of panel data collected at subsequent time points allows the analysis of data in a dynamic, rather than cross-sectional, perspective and

**Table 1.** Databases to be organised with the survey on the University of Padua (P=Population; S=Sample)

Cohort	Time						
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	P <sub>1</sub>	S <sub>1</sub>	S <sub>1*</sub>				
2	P <sub>2</sub>	S <sub>2</sub>	S <sub>2*</sub>				
3	P <sub>3</sub>	S <sub>3</sub>	S <sub>3*</sub>	S <sub>3*</sub>	S <sub>3*</sub>	S <sub>3*</sub>	
4	P <sub>4</sub>	S <sub>4</sub>	S <sub>4*</sub>	S <sub>4*</sub>	S <sub>4*</sub>		
5	P <sub>5</sub>	S <sub>5</sub>	S <sub>5*</sub>	S <sub>5*</sub>	S <sub>5*</sub>		

(\*) A star indicates the survivors of the sample selected for time 1 interview.

the estimation of individual *ceteris paribus* variability that is unconditional to variables whose effect could disturb our analysis.

The population was stratified according to the following characters:

- *Faculty*. Padua University faculties are: Agriculture, Economics, Pharmacy, Law, Engineer, Humanities, Medicine, Veterinary, Psychology, Pedagogy, Science, Political Science, and Statistics;
- *Bachelor or master programme*. Master graduates in Medicine are not included in the sample because they need a post-lauream period of specialisation at University so long that they are useless for this survey purposes.

The data were processed with SAS package (SAS Institute, 1999, 2000) at the Department of Statistics, the University of Padua.

### 3. Contacts and contracts with companies

The largest part of university students is nearly exclusively devoted to their studies until receiving their degree. However, a substantial number of students (31%), dedicate some of their time to work during their university studies (Table 2). If a minor part of their time is dedicated we refer to them as '*student workers*', and if they dedicate a major part, '*working students*'.

Some student workers do "odd jobs", that is to say jobs with normally unstable contracts, often low profile and paid in cash, however economically useful for completing their studies. All students show very different behaviour upon receiving their degree:

- The '*working students*' try to utilize their degree as soon as it is received and focus on career advancement or a change of professional duties within the company for which they work. Otherwise, in order to reposition themselves on the market, they must undergo a new selective process and, in various cases, suffer a period of unemployment. At six

**Table 2.** Percentage distribution of graduates of the University of Padua, according to conditions concerning work during university studies and the time passed since graduation

<i>Conditions</i>	<i>Time passed since receiving degree (months)</i>						
	<i>0</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>Employed</i>	31.1	59.5	68.8	76.8	82.2	87.2	88.7
<i>Unemployed</i>	68.9	39.8	30.4	22.5	16.8	11.5	8.8
<i>Other condition</i>	=	0.7	0.8	0.7	1.0	1.3	2.6
<i>Total (n)</i>	100.0 (2954)	100.0 (2955)	100.0 (2847)	100.0 (2763)	100.0 (2630)	100.0 (1467)	100.0 (735)

months from graduation, 18% of the new graduates that had been working are unemployed (Table 3). The percentage drops a little at 12 months to 16.9% and at 24 months to 9%. The proportion of employed among the unemployed graduates at graduation tend to converge soon with that of the student workers in the same period (Figure 2). The act of receiving a university degree therefore standardises the expectations of employment and career of the graduate, enforcing the professional consideration of the new graduate already inserted in activities for which a high school degree is sufficient and those who have never been employed and about productive companies have a merely hypothetical representation.

- *The proportion of unemployed graduates that find employment in the first few months after receiving degree exceeds 49%. Please note closely*

**Table 3.** Percentage of graduates of the University of Padua that work at various dates, according to the conditions with respect to work at the moment of receiving their degree and for the time passed since receiving degree.

Upon Receiving Degree	Time passed since receiving degree (months)					
	6	12	18	24	30	36
Employed (n=876)	82.0	83.1	86.9	91.0	92.9	92.8
Unemployed (n=2079)	49.6	62.7	72.5	78.4	84.3	86.2
Total (n=2955)	59.5	68.8	76.8	82.2	87.2	88.7



**Figure 2.** Percentage of graduates of the University of Padua that work at various dates, according to the conditions with respect to work at graduation and time passed since receiving degree

that this is a gross amount, and includes a denominator of those that have decided to continue the formative activities with other courses for degrees, for masters, or of a university specification, in Italy and elsewhere. The percentage of new graduates employed raises rapidly to 62.7% at 12 months, to 78.4% at 24 months and to 98.4 at 36 months, always a gross number of the formative activities over a long period.

- *At just a year since receiving a degree, about 90% of those that have found work act as if their position were stable.* The tendency to stabilise at work is estimated based on the proportion of employed graduates for at least two successive surveys. The proportion of those employed that last for at least six months is 82% following six months from graduating, to 87.7% at a year and to 95.5% at 24 months (Table 4).
- *If for no other reason except to try, all seek employment after receiving university degree.* Among those who do not find it within a year or so, over half decide to obtain ulterior formal instruction or create the situation to be able to register for a professional board. In the first six month there are, instead, many frequent brief formative programmes, for professional refinement (English courses, computer skills, and others), or stage *post lauream*, eventually associated to an European Social Fund (ESF-FSE) funded course.
- *6.9% of graduates employed within six months from their degree change occupation.* The proportion falls rapidly at just a year from receiving the degree (1.4%) and oscillates about 2% between 12 and 30 months (Table 5). It is not necessary to conduct a specific survey to imagine that for many graduates it was not easy to find their first employment, many of them had to undergo recruitment interviews and compete with other new graduates for the same job. In conclusion, while those that have found a job immediately after their degree could be presented within a brief time period a possibly better position, those that find employment later do not feel like risking a change and accept more easily an offered employment position.

**Table 4.** Percentage of graduates of the University of Padua that work at various dates, according to their conditions with respect to work at a period of 6 months prior and the time passed since receiving degree

<i>Six months prior</i>	<i>Time passed since receiving degree</i>					
	<i>6</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>Employed</i>	82.0	87.7	93.7	95.5	96.7	98.4
<i>Unemployed</i>	49.6	41.6	37.8	38.5	39.9	23.6
<i>Total</i>	59.5	68.8	76.8	82.2	87.2	88.7
<i>(n)</i>	(2955)	(2847)	(2763)	(2630)	(1467)	(735)

**Table 5.** Percentage of University of Padua graduates that have changed employment at various times since receiving degree, for conditions with respect to the employment 6 months prior, type of work relation, and activity of graduates

<i>Six months upon receiving degree</i>	<i>Months passed since receiving degree</i>					
	<i>6</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>Relation of Employment</i>						
<i>Normally Hired</i>	2.8	1.3	1.0	1.4	0.6	3.2
<i>Independent Contractor</i>	7.2	0.8	1.4	2.9	0.3	7.6
<i>Unusual Contract</i>	4.9	1.6	3.3	5.9	2.6	7.7
<i>For the activity of a graduate</i>						
<i>any university degree sufficient</i>	3.1	1.3	1.2	2.2	1.3	4.3
<i>bachelor degree sufficient</i>	3.0	1.6	2.4	1.1	=	=
<i>specific degree required</i>	4.2	1.2	1.6	3.5	0.8	5.4
<i>Worked 6 months prior and changed work</i>	6.9	1.4	1.5	2.5	0.8	4.5
<i>(n, worked 6 months prior)</i>	<i>(710)</i>	<i>(1469)</i>	<i>(1794)</i>	<i>(1884)</i>	<i>(1160)</i>	<i>(619)</i>

- *There are no longer initial gender handicaps.* In various researches (see among others, Fabbris *et al.*, 2002) it was revealed that, in the productive contexts of substantial full employment, like the area in which a graduate of Padua would fit in, the percentage differences between male and female graduates are within one percentage point (Table 8).
- *Some difference exists for the time frame of employment between Master and Bachelor graduates,* in that the bachelor graduates are more immediately hired of the two.
- *The employment research channels followed by graduates are multiple.* A graduate does not want to preclude himself any possibility and tries every channel, public or private, to find employment. Not excluding the Placement Office of the University of Padua, the personal acquaintances, family, friends, business colleagues and the professor with whom the thesis was realised to have useful contacts for a job interview (Boaretto *et al.*, 2006). There are those who, less secure of their means, use even repeatedly the same channels, as if the number of attempts could increment the probability of success, and others that search only in the places in which they have a high chance to find employment. On average, the graduates test research routes that over 46% are three groups of channels, public, private and foreign (Table 6). The proportion of attempts falls rapidly with the passing months, even if the speed of the decline is different for those that work with respect to those that are still looking for employment. For all, the progressive knowledge of the rules of the market, which comes with the experience of searching for employment and

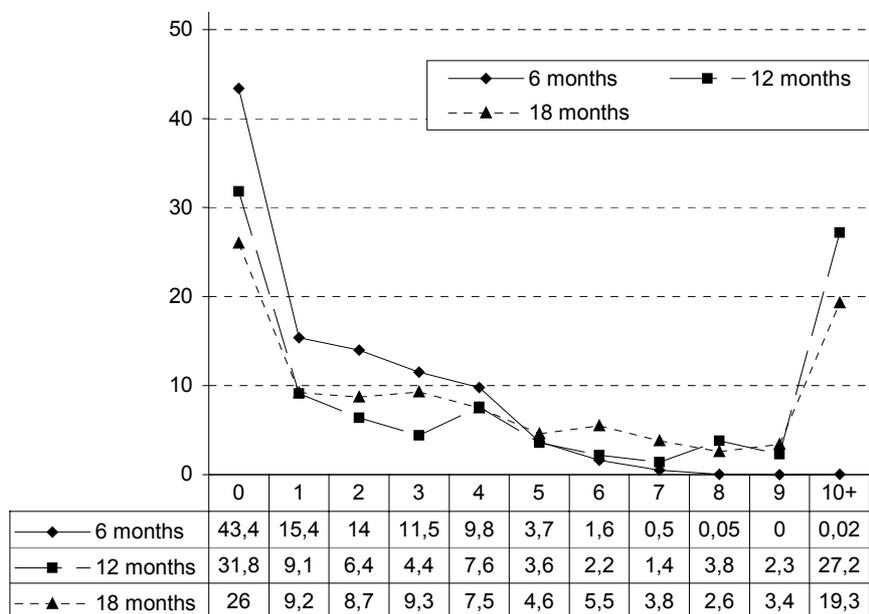
**Table 6.** Average number of employment channels attempted by University of Padua graduates and percentage not researching actively employment, for conditions with respect to employment at graduation, six months prior and time passed since receiving degree (between parentheses the size of the sample)

	<i>Months passed since receiving degree</i>					
	<i>6</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>Upon receiving degree</i>						
<i>Employed</i>	1.24 (876)	1.00 (840)	0.72 (827)	0.40 (781)	0.36 (493)	0.28 (269)
<i>Unemployed</i>	1.61 (2081)	1.27 (2007)	0.87 (1936)	0.54 (1849)	0.47 (974)	0.37 (466)
<i>Six month prior</i>						
<i>Employed</i>	1.24 (876)	0.87 (1683)	0.62 (1916)	0.32 (1974)	0.28 (1203)	0.21 (631)
<i>Unemployed</i>	1.61 (2081)	1.64 (1146)	1.29 (821)	1.07 (633)	1.20 (255)	1.18 (88)
<i>Sector of activity</i>						
<i>Public</i>	2.95 (432)	3.45 (328)	3.08 (226)	2.64 (138)	2.64 (71)	2.47 (25)
<i>Private</i>	2.54 (655)	2.45 (532)	2.47 (287)	2.45 (143)	2.21 (52)	2.29 (25)
<i>Foreign</i>	2.60 (289)	2.56 (205)	2.86 (116)	2.34 (69)	2.41 (46)	2.36 (16)
<i>Self Employed</i>	0.00 (22)	0.00 (17)	0.04 (16)	0.00 (13)	0.00 (7)	0.00 (7)
<i>Total</i>	1.50 (2957)	1.19 (2847)	0.83 (2763)	0.49 (2630)	0.43 (1467)	0.34 (735)
<i>% not researching actively employment</i>	43.7	56.6	67.5	79.1	81.7	85.3

with the tightening of the perception of the possibilities of success, brings a simplification to the ways to effect the search. At 18 months from obtaining a degree, who already works gives slight attempts in only one direction (0.6 channels tested between 12 and 18 months), who does not work depends even more on public placement and maintains contacts with the private one, but the research is more specific (1.3 channels between 12 and 18 months).

The multiple regression analysis (Fabbris, 1997), applied with the number of research *channels* tested in the first six months from graduation as criterion variable and forcing the faculties as predictors<sup>2</sup>, arrives at the following considerations (Table 7):

<sup>2</sup> Faculty estimates refer to the Faculty of Political Science.



**Figure 3.** Number of active research channels tested by University of Padua graduates, according to time passed since receiving degree

**Table 7.** Synthetic results from the application of the analysis of regression referred to the number of research channels of employment tested by graduates of the University of Padua in the first 6 months since obtaining degree

	<i>Estimate of <math>\beta</math></i>	<i>s(<math>\beta</math>)</i>	<i>p value</i>
Intercept	-0.546	0.283	0.054
Agriculture	1.582	0.282	< 0.001
Economics	1.639	0.298	< 0.001
Pharmacy	0.758	0.283	0.008
Law	1.087	0.273	< 0.001
Engineer	1.449	0.270	< 0.001
Humanities	1.837	0.268	< 0.001
Medicine	0.566	0.301	0.060
Psychology	0.607	0.273	0.026
Pedagogy	1.329	0.275	< 0.001
Science	1.571	0.266	< 0.001
Political Science	2.026	0.279	< 0.001
Statistics	2.189	0.288	< 0.001
Gender 1=M 2=F	0.436	0.074	< 0.001
Employed at 6 months	0.259	0.070	0.002
Employed at 0 time	-0.446	0.073	< 0.001

- *The behaviour of the graduate on the employment market depends on the department of origin.*
- *The female graduates search for employment more hardly than men do.* If the number of tested channels is a reflection of the confidence of their own means, the male graduates are shown to be more confident than the female graduates are. It should be noted that female students numerically prevail in the humanities and that the degrees supplied by these faculties are “weaker” in the research for a first employment. Hence, the faculty obscures the analytical relevance of the gender of the graduates, meaning to say that the major mobility in the employment research is observed between feminine vs non-feminine faculties.
- *The unemployed do research that is more active at time of the degree, while those that already had a job during their studies search in a more specific way.* At six months from obtaining the degree, those that had a job are searching more than those that did not have one. That is probably because the former ones already had a taste of the employment market, while many of the latter ones, originally uncertain whether to prolong their studies or search intensively for a job, may have decided to enter another period of training at the university. Hence, six months from obtaining a degree are enough for Master or Bachelor graduates to define their life strategies.

#### 4. The refusal of offered jobs

In conclusion of the processes of the employment research, a good part of the graduates of the University of Padua is employed.

At six months, 82% of the Bachelor graduates are employed and 58% of the Master graduates. Altogether, 61% of those who obtained a degree at the Uni-

**Table 8.** Percentage of University of Padua graduates that work, according to the time span since obtaining the degree, gender and type of degree

Type of degree		Months passed since receiving degree						
		0	6	12	18	24	30	36
<b>Males</b>	<i>Master</i>	28.2	58.9	69.8	76.3	81.6	87.2	89.2
	<i>Bachelor</i>	38.7	71.3	76.9	81.1	88.8	94.9	97.4
	<i>Total</i>	29.5	60.4	70.7	76.9	82.5	88.2	90.4
<b>Females</b>	<i>Master</i>	30.0	55.0	64.4	74.4	80.3	84.9	85.1
	<i>Bachelor</i>	41.7	90.2	91.3	94.2	95.5	95.4	96.5
	<i>Total</i>	31.3	58.8	67.5	76.8	82.1	86.4	87.2
<b>Total</b>	<i>Master</i>	29.3	56.7	66.7	75.2	80.9	85.9	87.0
	<i>Bachelor</i>	40.3	81.7	84.9	88.7	92.6	95.2	96.8
	<i>Total</i>	30.5	59.5	68.8	76.8	82.2	87.2	88.7

**Table 9.** Percentage of graduates of the University of Padua that have refused at least one employment offer in the first six months after obtaining a degree, according to the study programme, conditions at the time of degree and motive for refusal

<i>In that period</i>	<i>At time of obtaining degree</i>					
	<i>Employed</i>		<i>Not Employed</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>Master (n=92)</i>	<i>Bachel. (n=7)</i>	<i>Master (n=450)</i>	<i>Bachel. (n=40)</i>	<i>Master (n=542)</i>	<i>Bachel. (n=47)</i>
<i>worked</i>	4.2	12.5	2.7	1.8	2.9	3.2
<i>were not interested</i>	33.3	12.9	28.6	25.9	29.4	24.3
<i>were precarious</i>	0.0	0.0	2.2	0.0	1.9	0.0
<i>were inconsistent with study</i>	5.0	0.0	4.0	3.6	4.1	3.2
<i>were inadequate for degree</i>	0.8	0.0	4.2	5.4	3.7	4.7
<i>were far from home</i>	2.1	0.0	2.9	3.9	2.8	3.4
<i>wanted to continue studies</i>	15.6	12.9	24.6	9.7	23.2	10.1
<i>other motives</i>	57.3	74.5	43.2	63.0	45.6	64.4

versity of Padua are employed. At 12 months from the degree, the percentage of graduates rises to 70% and at 24 months to 82% (Table 8).

The insertion in employment is a bilateral process of offer and acceptance/refusal of a job. In general, a company proposes job positions to the applicants and they refuse some offers. In the first six months from obtaining a degree, half of those that leave with a Master or a Bachelor degree from the University of Padua refuse at least one offer of employment (Table 10).

**Table 10.** Percentage of graduates of the University of Padua that, at different times from obtaining degree, have refused at least one employment offer, according to the employment condition six months prior

	<i>Six months prior</i>		
	<i>Employed</i>	<i>Not employed</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>At 6 months from obtaining degree</i>			
<i>Employed</i>	52.8	47.1	49.4
<i>Not employed</i>	50.6	49.0	49.2
<i>Total</i>	51,1	48,7	49.2
<i>At 12 months from obtaining degree</i>			
<i>Employed</i>	67.5	41.4	55.9
<i>Not employed</i>	50.9	35.2	38.6
<i>Total</i>	55.9	38.5	38.8
<i>At 18 months from obtaining degree</i>			
<i>Employed</i>	0.0	40.5	34.9
<i>Not employed</i>	41.3	32.1	33.9
<i>Total</i>	34.9	33.9	33.9

The proportion of refusals declines with the passing of time, being 39% between the 6 and 12 months and of 34% in the successive six months. The motives of the decrement are double:

- a. the decrease of interest of the companies for the graduates that have not yet found employment after a certain time since obtaining degree,
- b. the decreasing energy of the graduates after repeating the unsuccessful trials of employment research.

The insufficient satisfaction for the accepted job has different causes, as Master or Bachelor graduated categories (Table 11):

- *The bachelor graduates show a low propensity to continue their studies*, both in the cases that before obtaining the university degree they were in employment and that they were without employment experience. The employment offers for the bachelor graduates already in service are rare enough because they must be more advantageous than the position addressed (which is coherent with the possession of a high school degree), and, actually because does not involve elevated positions, are a often regulated by stiff contracts. The refusal of the bachelor graduates is, therefore, much more than those of the master graduates, tied to practical considerations, of existential organisations, and 'affected' toward the owning company.
- The master graduates show behaviours however differentiated according to whether they were employed or not at the time of the degree. Those that were employed, having already their own problem for the existence solved, are able to wait for an interesting occasion to change employ-

**Table 11.** Percentage of graduates of the University of Padua that have changed an employment activity in the first six months after obtaining degree, according to study programme, period in which they changed the activity and motive

Motives	Referral period					
	First 6 months		6-12 months		12-18 months	
	Master (n=417)	Bachelor (n=80)	Master (n=277)	Bachelor (n=28)	Master (n=240)	Bachelor (n=27)
<i>Just wanted to change</i>	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	5.6
<i>Distance from residence</i>	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Inadequate retribution</i>	0.9	3.0	3.0	2.3	2.3	0.0
<i>Professional duties low</i>	3.4	1.6	3.4	12.6	7.9	6.2
<i>Unstable employment</i>	4.3	5.6	3.7	1.5	5.7	22.7
<i>Family problems</i>	0.0	1.7	1.1	0.0	1.1	2.6
<i>Inadequate internal rapport</i>	23.5	16.9	25.2	15.1	25.4	16.2
<i>Expired contract</i>	3.4	1.6	3.3	0.0	3.7	4.3
<i>Military service</i>	0.6	0.5	2.4	0.0	3.7	0.0
<i>Dismissal</i>	8.8	4.9	23.9	21.6	12.1	2.5
<i>Other motives</i>	54.8	64.2	33.8	46.8	37.6	39.9

ment. The unemployed, instead, refuse an employment often to continue their studies. Unfortunately, we are not able to establish if the desire to continue the studies was born after the offers refused, or if it was a pre-defined choice empowered by the perception of inadequacy of the achieved degree in relation to the market. It is, in fact, plausible that the offers of employment advanced by the companies are few for the prestigious positions and many for second calibre ones. However so, the major part of the graduates refuse employment because they feel a hiatus between their aspirations and the desirability of the offer received.

A logistic regression analysis, applied on dichotomous variable "refusal of an offered job" shortly after obtaining degree (Table 12) as a criterion variable,

- confirms that the most important variable for the interpretation of the frequency of refusals is the faculty. The faculties with the highest "risk" of job refusal no matter the study programme (master vs. bachelor) and the possible position of worker student are Economy and Engineering.

**Table 12.** Results of the logistic regression analysis referred to the refusal of at least an offered job on University of Padua graduates six months since obtaining degree<sup>3</sup>

	<i>Estimate of <math>\beta</math></i>	<i>s(<math>\beta</math>)</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>Estimate of <math>\psi</math></i>
Intercept	-0.057	0.401	0.887	=
Agriculture	-0.363	0.328	0.269	0.70
Economy	0.494	0.377	0.190	1.64
Pharmacy	0.251	0.339	0.459	1.28
Law	-0.412	0.259	0.111	0.66
Engineering	0.417	0.300	0.165	1.52
Humanities	-0.119	0.278	0.668	0.89
Medicine	0.418	0.906	0.645	1.52
Veterinary	0.226	0.422	0.592	1.25
Psychology	-0.590	0.274	0.031	0.55
Pedagogy	0.244	0.363	0.501	1.28
Science	-0.219	0.254	0.387	0.80
Statistics	0.229	0.378	0.544	1.26
Gender 0=M 1=F	-0.173	0.135	0.201	0.84
Master=0 Bachelor=1	0.382	0.275	0.165	1.46
Worked (=1) at graduation	0.227	0.167	0.174	1.25

<sup>3</sup> Faculties have been forced into the model as explanatory variables. Faculty estimates refer to Political Science Faculty. A stepwise selection technique (Fabbris, 1997) was applied for the selection of other predictors. The other predictors we considered were: (i) employed at 6 months, (ii) age at graduation, (iii) graduation vote. None of these variables reached a significance level of 20%.

- adds a few other significant variables. The *gender*, index of a greater propensity of males to refuse incongruous jobs, *having obtained a Bachelor (vs. Master) degree*, since it is easier for an employer to make offers with a low professional content to lower training figures, *and having been a worker student* indicate that the comprehension of the functioning rules of the employment market makes one evaluate more critically the opportunity offered.

## 5. Makeshift working positions

For a graduate, job dissatisfaction may be caused by the acceptance of a makeshift position. It may be correlated to:

- *unqualified professional duties,*
- *precarious employment contract or remuneration,*
- *unfavourable place and conditions of employment.*

The makeshift attitude of the graduate on undesirable work positions shows various gradations of severity. For a graduate, the acceptance of waged job is probably the least desired condition. In the first six months since obtaining degree, it regards 2.3% of those that have obtained a degree from the University of Padua. Fortunately, the proportion is limited and evaporates with the passage of time, it is reduced, in fact, to 1% at one year and to 0.5% at eighteen months after obtaining degree (Table 13).

The work positions that do not require a university degree are a step lower on the scale of severity of dissatisfaction causes. At six months, 14% of the graduates of the University of Padua affirm that their work could be done by anyone even without a high school degree. Since this proportion remains at 10% at 18 months, it may concern the nature of the activities involved and not an undesired job contract.

During the insertion stage, there are frequent references to atypical contracts, or time-limited contracts, or even working without a contract. These conditions regard one in three activities within 18 months from the degree achievement. Since many employment contracts that pre-exist to graduation are stable, it implies that the major part of the “ex-novo” jobs is with precarious or atypical contracts<sup>4</sup>.

Some graduates undergo a limitation in remuneration instead of a penalization of contract. Less than 600 Euro per month, that represents about half of the average pay, is the earning of 11% of the graduates at six months from obtaining degree, of 6% at one year, and of 4% at 18 months. The graduates that have to face this limitation are included in the periods of apprenticeship, for

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<sup>4</sup> In the handicraft firms, it is not rare to have an offer of an apprentice contract even to engineers destined to do qualified activities.

**Table 13.** Indicators of acceptance of makeshift positions on the part of Master or Bachelor graduates of the University of Padua in the first 18 months from obtaining degree, according to type of degree and working conditions at time of graduation

	<i>months since degrees</i>	<i>% factory workers</i>	<i>% degree not necessary</i>	<i>% work contract precarious<sup>5</sup></i>	<i>% remunerated to 600 euro</i>	<i>% work outside region</i>
<i>Padua University graduates</i>	6	2,3	14,2	32,7	11,3	7,6
	12	1,0	11,4	34,3	5,9	5,3
	18	0,5	10,3	33,1	4,0	3,1
<i>Employed at time of graduation</i>						
<i>Master degree</i>	6	1,7	23,3	20,4	14,8	6,4
	12	0,4	14,8	21,7	6,7	4,7
	18	0,3	14,1	20,2	5,7	2,9
<i>Bachelor degree</i>	6	5,5	=	18,3	4,5	3,4
	12	2,4	=	20,6	0,3	1,3
	18	0,0	=	22,5	0,0	0,9
<i>Unemployed at time of graduation</i>						
<i>Master degree</i>	6	1,2	14,1	39,7	12,6	10,9
	12	0,9	12,1	38,5	7,9	8,0
	18	0,3	12,5	36,4	4,9	4,0
<i>Bachelor degree</i>	6	7,6	=	45,4	8,4	4,6
	12	0,4	=	37,7	3,8	0,9
	18	0,9	=	36,5	2,1	1,2

the admission to the State exam, with badly paid and precarious activities. The low pay couples with every other manifestation of difficulty of work insertion.

Graduates only if necessary accept a place of work far from the area of residence. In addition, the majority of them consider working with rotating hours, or during the weekends, exceptional. With the passing of time also the percentage of graduates that were initially employed outside the region diminishes, a clear symptom that the acceptance of an employment that is distant from home is a makeshift choice caused by the difficulty of finding local employment. The proportion at six months is 8%, falls to 5% at one year and to 3% at eighteen months.

## 6. The insertion-and-adaptation process

The research of employment opportunities, the choice between the opportunities offered, the evaluation of the employment position in rapport with the pos-

<sup>5</sup> Percentage ratio of master/bachelor graduates employed with atypical or stiff subordinate contracts and total of master/bachelor employees.

possibility to integrate their own training, the family pressures, all this requires quick and definite choices to graduates. These elements occur in a sequence repeated even more than once, until the decision is made whether to enter the job market or continue with studies in order to obtain a degree that is superior or more specific for the imagined job.

The analysis of the transition to employment of the graduates of the University of Padua demonstrates that getting a job is just a matter of time. The results of the research for employment may depend on the capacity of the new graduates to present themselves adequately to who is offering employment. For the major part of the new graduates, and particularly for those that possess a degree in the humanities or the social sciences, a positive result in the research depends on their ability to adapt to the offers of the market.

In our analysis we have found that graduates who refuse certain jobs are either more prepared on a professional level, or possess a technical or economics degree, or, having worked, know the rules of the employment market. The refusal of an offered job is in direct relation with the image that the new graduates have of their own degrees. However, there is no correspondence between the graduates' ideal image and the market's opportunistic view for the same degree. For instance, the frequent refusal for first employment positions by Economy and Business graduates is not correlated with a proportional offer of high rank positions for the same class of graduates.

The adaptation of the graduates to the market is, instead, progressive. Some modest positions on the professional level, like the positioning in a job as a factory worker or similar, is in fact transitory, and may last even less than six months. A low standard of remuneration may last, for one graduate in twenty, even one or two years, however in the mid run it converges towards higher values.

Massive – above 30% also over 18 months from the insertion – are the percentages of employment with precarious contracts that goes to say atypical, for a limited amount of time, with the possibility of dismissal on the part of the employer, and even “by verbal agreement”. These ways to regulate the first employment rapports are so common that their value is shared, with few exceptions, both by who asks for and by who offers employment. Actually, the most desirable employment positions are regulated by unstable contracts, while the lower ones are accompanied with longer contracts. Although it is a mass phenomenon, the instability of contracts is transitional. That is demonstrated by the progressive flow of the newly assumed toward stable positions and toward productive organizations of more ample dimensions.

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